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News in Brief**Africa and the African Union**

The EU and IGAD held an informal ministerial meeting in Brussels on Friday last week (September 29). Those attending included Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Christos Stylianides, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management and the Foreign Ministers of the IGAD member countries.(See article)

A meeting of the Global Environment Facility opened in Addis Ababa on Wednesday. The meeting attracted 150 ministers, experts and donors. Ethiopia's Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change said participants would deliberate on the impact of climate change and ways to cope with its challenges, as well as focus on seeking financial resources for the implementation of Paris Agreement. Participants would be visiting the Reppie waste-to-energy project as well as environmental conservation activities in Enderta in Tigray Regional State.

Africa's main trade show for cotton, textile, apparel, home and technology industries opened in Addis Ababa on Tuesday (October 3). The African Sourcing and Fashion Week, Tuesday to Friday this week, brought together some 230 international producers and exporters from 25 countries, to showcase apparel fabrics, leather goods, fashion and fashionable accessories. Home and household textile providers were also among exhibitors. Exhibitors came from Turkey, the UAE, Tanzania, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, India, Italy, Germany and Ethiopia. Ethiopia's Ministry of Industry, said Ethiopia had earned nearly US\$90 million last fiscal year from the textile and garment sector, largely from industries installed in newly built industrial parks.

Professor Clapham, former Professor of Politics and International Relations at Lancaster University and long-time editor of the Journal of Modern African Studies, and one of the foremost scholars and authorities on the Horn of Africa launched his latest book, "The Horn of Africa: State Formation and Decay", in Addis Ababa at the Goethe Institute on Tuesday this week.

Ethiopia

President Ram Nath Kovind of India paid a state visit to Ethiopia this week (October 4-6). Received at Bole International Airport by the President Dr. Mulatu Teshome, the two presidents held bilateral talks on Wednesday (October 5). During his visit, his first outside India, President Kovind also attended an India-Ethiopia Business Dialogue as well as meeting members of the Indian community in Ethiopia. ([See articles](#))

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn sent condolences to the US President Donald Trump over the mass shooting in Las Vegas. On behalf of the people and government of Ethiopia, the Prime Minister expressed his deepest condolences to the victims and to the families of those killed.

The newly appointed US Ambassador to Ethiopia, Michael Raynor, arrived in Addis Ababa last week. He said his focus would be on building prosperity, improving education and health, strengthening governance and democratic institutions, and promoting regional peace. He also said he would do everything he could to deepen the enduring friendship between the two countries adding "Together we can strengthen the dynamic partnership between the United States and Ethiopia, while helping Ethiopia achieve its fullest potential." Ambassador Raynor is a career member of the Foreign Service and has previously been US Ambassador to Benin as well as serving in Zimbabwe, Namibia, Guinea, Djibouti, and Brazzaville.

The World Bank on Friday (September 29) signed a US\$1.3 billion loan and grant agreement with Ethiopia to improve governance and fund an anti-poverty package that provides financial relief for people facing food shortages. The Bank said a loan of \$700 million would be used to "improve equitable access to basic services and strengthen accountability" in education, health, agriculture and other sectors. The other US\$600 million was a grant to finance the "Rural Productive Safety Net" scheme, which provides cash or food to 8 million people in exchange for participation in public development projects.

The Green Climate Fund's (GCF) 18th Board meeting in Cairo (September 30-October 2), approved Ethiopia's US\$50 million climate resilience proposal "Responding to the increasing risk of drought: building gender-responsive resilience of the most vulnerable communities." ([See article](#))

Renewable Energy Solutions for Africa (RES4Africa) held a two-day high-level conference at the Sheraton Addis this week (October 3-4). Organized with the support of Africa-EU Energy Partnership (AEEP), it aimed to identify gaps and propose solutions for a smooth deployment of renewable energy in Ethiopia. ([See article](#))

The Irreecha festival was celebrated on Sunday (October 1) this year at Lake Hora Arsedi, in the town of Bishoftu, and throughout the Oromia Regional State in central and southern Ethiopia. ([See article](#))

The Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources unveiled a 10-year National Horticulture Development and Marketing Strategy on Tuesday this week (October 3). It is designed to take

lessons from different countries, boost foreign currency earnings and address challenges in the sector including lack of storage and transportation facilities. It will also put in place modern marketing and financial systems, and expand infrastructure and other essential facilities.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs launched a National Employment Policy and Strategy to provide better employment opportunities for the country's large youth population. An estimated 70% of the 100 million population is in the youth category, and ensuring employment for them is vital to long-term prosperity and stability. The policy is designed to eradicate poverty and ease unemployment and it will give particular attention to people with disabilities and women, ensuring equal participation in the labor market. A National Employment Council will be set up shortly to evaluate and monitor implementation.

A National Financial Inclusion Strategy to expand access and usage of affordable and high quality financial products and services was launched on Tuesday this week (October 3). Teklewold Atnafu, Governor of the National Bank of Ethiopia, said usage of regulated financial service was low due to lack of modern payment infrastructures, adequate service and access points, strong financial consumer protection framework and financial capability. The strategy is expected to expand financial infrastructures, mobile banking, and money transfer technologies.

Djibouti

President Ram Nath Kovind of India visited Djibouti on Wednesday this week (October 4), on his first overseas visit. President Kovind, the first Indian leader to visit Djibouti, said the ocean that connected India to Africa might be Indian in name, but “it belongs to all of us. Let it bind us together, as it had centuries ago.” The President thanked Djibouti for helping India in evacuating Indians from Yemen in 2015. The president’s Press Secretary said that President Kovind recognized that Africa and the Indian Ocean were vital for India’s interests. This was why Djibouti and Ethiopia were chosen for his first visit abroad.

Eritrea

The US said this week it was adding new sanctions on Eritrea, limiting Eritreans from engaging in educational or cultural exchange programs with the U.S. This is an addition to sanctions already imposed for failing to comply with minimum standards for eliminating trafficking and not making efforts to do so. Under its Trafficking Victims Protection Act, the US does not provide non-humanitarian, non-trade-related foreign assistance to any country that fails to comply. This comes only a few weeks after Eritrea was also hit by a visa restriction regime imposed on countries that refuse to take back nationals scheduled for deportation from the U.S.

Kenya

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, issued a statement on Wednesday (October 4) calling on all stakeholders to refrain from actions and statements that could derail the democratization process or tarnish the integrity of the planned election. He called on all stakeholders to work with the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission to ensure the election was held as scheduled. A day earlier the AU Commission announced details

of the African Union Election Observation Mission to Kenya for the presidential election on October 26. ([See article](#)).

Foreign Affairs Cabinet Secretary Amina Mohamed is one of 15 eminent personalities hand-picked by the UN General Assembly President Miroslav Lajcák to serve as his advisors. She welcomed the appointment as an honor and attributed it to Kenya's commitment to global values. Their first meeting is on Friday this week to help shape the UN agenda for the coming year with a focus on peace, climate change and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Somalia

Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed made a two-day official visit to Sudan this week (October 4-5). In talks with President Omar Al-Bashir, they discussed strengthening of bilateral relations, security, and cooperation in social and economical aspects, and emphasized the need to enhance economic cooperation. President Al-Bashir said “the ultimate goal [of the talks] is to employ Sudan's potentialities to achieve peace, stability and unity in Somalia”. President Abdullahi's delegation included Foreign Minister Yusuf Garad and the Ministers of Education, Agriculture, Livestock, Youth and Sports and the State Minister for Presidency as well as the Central Bank Governor and the Commissioner of Police.

President Mohamed Abdullahi signed the National Communications law to regulate the country's telecommunication sector on Monday this week (October 2). The President praised the various government agencies involved and said it was an example of the way the country was moving forward. The signing of the bill into law was welcomed by the World Bank. ([See article](#))

Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre and Turkish Chief of Staff, General Hulusi Akar inaugurated Turkey's largest overseas military training center in Mogadishu on Monday (October 2). The facility, will allow Turkish military officers to train 10,000 Somali soldier. ([See article](#))

Following President Abdullahi's visit to Saudi Arabia last week, Somalia has received US\$50 million in new aid. Information Minister Abdirahman Omar Osman said the government appreciated Saudi financial support and called the bilateral relationship “brotherly...and deep”. However, he added that this would not change Somalia's position over the Gulf crisis, saying “There is no need for us to side with one country over the other”.

An international delegation of the Ambassadors of Denmark and European Union to Somalia, and representatives of Finland, France, the Netherlands, and the UK visited Hargeisa on Wednesday (October 4). The delegation met President Silanyo and made clear their support for transparent and inclusive elections on November 13.

South Sudan

Cabinet Affairs Minister, Martin Elia Lomuro, said on Monday (October 2) that the Government welcomed the decision by IGAD to release the official timetable for the revitalization forum to start consultations with South Sudanese leaders and the citizens on the peace process. He

emphasized that the consultation process was an evaluation of the peace agreement to see areas where progress had been made and where there was a need to fast track implementation.

The IGAD consultative meetings will include President Salva Kiir, First Vice President Taban Deng Gai, and members of the ex-detainees participating in the coalition government, rebel leaders, and factions of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement as well as members of civil society organizations and faith-based groups. A team from IGAD, headed by Ethiopia's Foreign Affairs Minister Dr. Workneh, will carry out the consultations.

Ethiopian Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu and Sudan Foreign Minister Ibrahim Ghandour met with the leader of SPLM-IO, Riek Machar in South Africa this week within the framework of preparations for the High- Level Revitalization Forum of all parties to the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS). A statement from the Sudan Foreign ministry said the meeting was fruitful. The two ministers also briefed South Africa's Minister of Foreign Affairs, President Zuma's special envoy for peace in South Sudan, on the details of IGAD's efforts to revitalize the peace process in South Sudan.

After talks last week, South Sudan and Sudan agreed to resume production from the oil field in the Unity region. South Sudan Ambassador to Sudan, Mayan Dut Waal, said at the weekend that Sudan would provide power and technical support to resume production, stopped since December 2013. He said the security situation in the region was now stable and expressed the hope this would increase South Sudan's oil production to over 300,000 bpd instead of the current production rate of 130,000 bpd.

South Sudan announced on Wednesday (October 4) that it was holding discussions with Sudan over utilizing water transport in order to boost trade between the two countries. Trade minister, Moses Hassan Tiel, said the Nile was the main trade route between Juba and Khartoum and re-opening river transport with Sudan would reduce the cost of doing business. River transport was halted in 2012.

Sudan

In a speech to the National Assembly on Monday (October 2) President Omer Al-Bashir stressed that Sudan fully committed to the international partnership to consolidate regional and international peace and security and serious cooperation to combat terrorism, money-laundering and human trafficking crimes”.

The Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday (October 3) that President Omer Al-Bashir had received an invitation to visit Egypt from Egyptian President, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. The invitation was delivered by the Egyptian Ambassador to Foreign Minister Ibrahim Ghandour. During their meeting, Mr., Ghandour and the Ambassador agreed on the importance of high-level visits between institutions and deepening coordination and bilateral consultation in regional and international fora.

Sudan has severed diplomatic relations with North Korea, one of the U.S. additional benchmarks for the lifting of the US economic sanctions on Sudan. President Trump is expected to announce

his decision on lifting the sanctions on October 12. The initial five-track engagement between Khartoum and Washington reached in December 2016, includes the cessation of hostilities in the conflict areas, the humanitarian access to civilians in the war zones, cooperation to address regional conflicts and the support of US counterterrorism efforts.

Trade Minister Mubarak al-Fadel announced last week that Sudan and South Sudan customs and border authorities will meet to discuss the operationalization of the five agreed border crossing points between the two countries. This follows the signing of a deal to start export of 54 products to South Sudan within the framework of a border trade deal. The Sudan Central Bank branch in Kosti will facilitate financial transactions related to border trade.

President Kovind of India's state visit to Ethiopia...

On his first overseas trip, India's President Ram Nath Kovind made a three-day state visit to Ethiopia this week (October 4-6). President Kovind, who arrived in Addis Ababa on Wednesday (October 4) from Djibouti, was received at the airport by President Dr. Mulatu Teshome. President Kovind's visit is the first by an Indian President to Ethiopia since President VV Giri came in 1972.

The two Presidents held bilateral talks on Wednesday (October 5). President Mulatu Teshome noted that President Ram Nath Kovind's visit to Ethiopia was a testimony to the historical and longstanding relations between the two countries. President Mulatu emphasized Ethiopia always highly valued its relations with India, particularly in the areas of investment and trade as well as development assistance in the form of soft loans and technical cooperation. He noted India was one of the country's largest sources of Foreign Direct Investment. India is among the top three foreign investors in Ethiopia with an approved investment of US\$4 billion, and to date there have been a total of 435 Indian projects in Ethiopia, in operation and implementation stage. Those projects have already created more than 50,000 employment opportunities for Ethiopian citizens. Last year, India's bilateral trade with Ethiopia was worth nearly US\$1 billion.

President Ram Nath Kovind said he was very pleased that that his first overseas visit was to Africa, with which "India shares remarkable common histories and aspirations." Commending the transparency, incentives and encouragement of the Government of Ethiopia to Indian investors, President Kovind stressed the need to explore possibilities and diversify into more areas of cooperation to further bolster ties. According to the World Economic Forum, Ethiopia has been a leader in economic growth in East Africa and is projected to become the fastest growing economy in the world in 2017 recording a growth of 8.3 %. During the talks President Kovind disclosed that India had pledged to provide US\$195 million for the expansion of electric power transmission lines and another US\$2 million for medicines through an extended line of credit facility.

Following the bilateral talks, the two countries signed major cooperation agreements in the areas of bilateral trade, Information, communication and the media as well as a Memorandum of Understanding to set up a Joint Working Group on Combating International Terrorism and

International Crime. These cooperation agreements are expected to provide the two countries with an important framework to further reinforce the strategic partnership and raise it to a new level.

President Kovind also met with members of the Indian community. He told them that their work as teachers and educators, as entrepreneurs and as tech-professionals and workers had been at the centre of India-Ethiopia relations. He also noted both India and Ethiopia had large young populations and emphasized that the youth were the future, and it is from them that new ideas would come. He advised the Indian community to make special efforts to connect with Ethiopia's youth. During his visit, President Kovind inaugurated the Indian Technology and Innovation Exposition taking place this week (October 5-7); and also visited the National Museum, where he saw the three million year-old remains of Lucy (Dinknesh). He noted that Ethiopia and India shared immense commonalities as cradles of civilization and the origin of human beings and humanity.

...and an Ethio-India Business Dialogue

To commemorate the 12th anniversary of the India Business Forum in Addis Ababa, an India-Ethiopia Business Dialogue was held on Thursday (October 5). It was organized to coincide with the historic visit of President Kovind who attended the event. President Kovind told participants: "It is my pleasure to be here for the India-Ethiopia Business Dialogue and to address a business community that is, really, the legatee of an age-old relationship." The President said "Ethiopia and India are old civilisations with young populations... Ethiopia is the cradle of humankind. Earlier today, at the National Museum in this city, I was privileged to get a glimpse of the remains of Lucy, who is in a sense our common mother." He added, "It is not without reason that Ethiopia, a steady friend and a sister civilisation for India, is the focus of my first overseas visit since taking charge as President of India."

Mentioning the history of trade between the two countries, a history that dates back to the first century of the Christian era, President Kovind noted that in this new century Ethiopia's remarkable economic growth and progress has been an object of global admiration. He expressed his contentment that India was a partner in this growth through trade and commerce, through investments and the sharing of expertise, as well as through the large and vibrant Indian business community present in Ethiopia. He noted the Business dialogue had helped the Indian side in bridging gaps between the business communities. Most important, it had identified actions the two governments could take to further facilitate investment and trade, whether in the areas of visa policies, banking procedures and laws, or customs regulations and practices. The President closed his remarks by calling upon Ethiopia and India to work together to push for reform in institutions of international financial and monetary governance, and make these relevant to "our age."

President Dr. Mulatu also spoke at the Dialogue, noting that Ethiopia attached great importance to its relations with India and also stressing the significance of these business dialogues for identifying actions the two governments could take to further facilitate investments and trade.

On the occasion, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Aklilu Hailemichael, noted that ever since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, there had been a steady trend underlining the affinity between them. This was now expanding into a partnership in development. As a result, he said, the relationship had grown into multi-sectoral collaboration, expressed in capacity building, investment, trade and technology transfer as well as cultural ties. He noted that India with its wide range of manufactured goods was now the third most important source of imports for Ethiopia, after China and Saudi Arabia. Bilateral trade in 2016 stood at US\$1.37 billion, of which India's exports to Ethiopia were US\$1.30 billion. The State Minister noted with the bright future for both countries, India would continue to be an important partner in development for Ethiopia. Dr. Aklilu quoted former Prime Minister Meles Zenawi: "India had been remarkably generous in offering its support to Ethiopia even before it has completed efforts to lift its own entire people out of poverty."

Ethiopia in fact was the first beneficiary of the Pan African e-Network Project, India's flagship project in Africa. The project was launched in Ethiopia in July 2007. The Tele-Education Centre at Addis Ababa University and the Tele-Medicine Centre at the Black Lion Hospital in Addis Ababa are now nodal centers for tele-education and telemedicine, with remote centers located at Haromaya University and Nekempt Hospital respectively. The tele-medicine linkage to an Indian Hospital for specialist consultation with Ethiopian hospitals opened another area of cooperation. Other links have also been established between Addis Ababa University and the Indian Institutes of Technology at Delhi and Kanpur.

EU and IGAD's informal ministerial meeting on security and stability

The EU and IGAD held an informal ministerial meeting in Brussels on Friday last week (September 29). Those attending included Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Christos Stylianides, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management and the Foreign Ministers of the IGAD member countries. Ambassador Mahboub Maalim, Executive Secretary of IGAD, was also present. This was the second informal ministerial meeting between the HR/VP and the Foreign Ministers from Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda. They also met earlier in the year on the margins of the African Union Summit in Addis Ababa.

This informal ministerial meeting focused on the multiple challenges affecting the security, stability and prosperity of the Horn of Africa ranging from prolonged conflicts and transnational crime to undocumented migration and deprived economic development. High on the agenda were the crisis in South Sudan, the problem of Somali refugees in Kenya, the issue of irregular immigration, human trafficking, development projects and cooperation between the EU and IGAD. In a press statement after the meeting, the High Representative and Vice-President reiterated the "EU's continued engagement and support to the security and stability of the Horn, through close political ties and the EU's substantial cooperation and security commitments, including through its EUCLAP Somalia and ATALANTA missions".

Both sides agreed to underpin collaboration on maritime security, transnational crime and border management in full respect of the rule of law and the protection of human rights. They also exchanged views on concrete avenues for cooperation on cross border trade and investment through EU instruments and programs, notably the new EU External Investment Plan, launched a day earlier.

The European Union welcomed the decision of IGAD's June summit to revitalize the peace process in South Sudan. It commended IGAD's important initiatives to manage the reconciliation processes in Somalia and South Sudan. At the same time, the High Representative and Vice-President emphasized the need for closer regional cooperation in the face of common trans-boundary challenges. Both sides agreed on the critical importance of Somalia's security and state building progress for the stability of the region. Highlighting the need for a fairer burden sharing of the International Community and for a gradual ownership by the region, the European Union reiterated its support for the AMISOM mission in Somalia

In the specific discussions on the humanitarian situation in the Horn, Commissioner Stylianides welcomed the solidarity shown by several countries in the Horn hosting millions of refugees from various places. To ensure an effective and timely assistance and avoid further sufferings, both sides agreed on the importance of providing unrestricted humanitarian access to people in need and for Governments to recognize any occurring crisis without delay. Ms. Mogherini, the High Representative and Vice-President, also commended IGAD for holding its Special Summit on finding Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees, in March 2017, and for the commitment of the IGAD member states to collaborate across the region on the plight of refugees. In a session devoted to the Nairobi Plan of Action, there was general agreement to accelerate support to Somalia to create an environment conducive for returns and for refugees, who are not yet able to return, to integrate into the economic life of their host communities.

Lastly, both sides reaffirmed their readiness to ensure a substantial outcome to the upcoming AU-EU summit to be held in Ivory Coast, November 29-30. All the participants agreed the discussions had been productive and agreed to engage annually in this format. They also decided to set-up an appropriate Steering Group at senior official level. This will be tasked with developing a political framework for joint action and report back to the next Ministerial meeting.

AU calls for resolution of disputes ahead of Kenya's presidential vote

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, issued a statement on Wednesday this week (October 4) underlining the concern of the Commission over recent political developments in Kenya, following the Supreme Court ruling annulling the August 8 presidential election result and the scheduling of a fresh presidential election on October 26. The Chairperson said he was concerned by actions and utterances that "have the potential to adversely affect the holding of the fresh presidential election as scheduled." He called on all stakeholders to refrain from actions and statements that could "derail Kenya's democratization process, tarnish the integrity of the planned election and mar the peace and stability of the country with adverse consequences for socio-economic development." The Chairperson's

statement said it was important that all parties came together to find a peaceful resolution to the current political impasse which he said was being characterized by street protests and proposed amendment to the electoral laws. He also called on all stakeholders to work with the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission to ensure the fresh election was held as scheduled and to refrain from actions and statements that might affect the independence of the Commission.

A day earlier, the Commission announced the details of the AU deployment of long-term experts and short-term election observers for the fresh election. Deployment will be in two phases, the first of the five long-term experts which started on September 24, and will last until November 9. This is to make sure the AU Election Observation Mission carries out a comprehensive observation and analysis of all relevant aspects of the electoral process. The experts will be joined by 80 short-term observers who will be deployed between October 19 and October 31. The Short-Term Mission will be headed by Thabo Mbeki, former President of South Africa.

The statement underlined that objectives of the African Union Election Observation Mission to Kenya would be to provide an accurate and impartial assessment of the quality of the October 26 election, including preparation, voting and results, as well as the degree to which the conduct of the election met regional, continental and international standards for democratic elections. It would also offer recommendations for improvement of future elections based on the findings. It also noted the deployment of the Mission demonstrated the AU's interest to support Kenya's elections and democratization process to and assist in the conduct of genuine elections to contribute to the consolidation of democratic governance, peace and stability in Kenya.

Earlier, IGAD Executive Secretary, Ambassador Mahboub Maalim, also issued a statement (September 24), saying the fresh presidential election offered another opportunity for the people of Kenya to show commitment to their constitution. The statement said IGAD had every confidence that the will of the people would again be expressed clearly in the ballot, and that Kenyans would elect their leaders in the constitutionally mandated manner on October 26. However, IGAD's Executive Secretary also said IGAD was concerned by statements and actions that might undermine people's confidence in the ability of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) to manage the fresh elections, as well as unrealistic demands that could frustrate IEBC from conducting fresh elections, or encourage calls to boycott the election. This could put Kenya on a dangerous path, the statement said. It added that IGAD was confident that IEBC could execute its constitutional mandate to facilitate the expression by the Kenyan people of their sovereignty and said sabotaging IEBC or boycotting the elections would put Kenya in a constitutional crisis. It therefore urged all actors in Kenya to reject those who would seek to interfere with the constitutional order by seeking to disrupt or prevent the court-mandated fresh election. It appealed to the people of Kenya, political parties and their leadership, and all constitutional institutions, to avoid all statements, provocations and acts that could lead to an unconstitutional change of government.

Somalia's President signs the country's telecommunications bill

Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi signed the National Communications law to regulate the country's telecommunication sector on Monday this week (October 2). The law had been long in

preparation. Minister for Posts, Telecoms and Technology, Abdi Ashur Hassan, said drafting started in 2005 and it was only finally endorsed by both Houses of Parliament in August 2017 and by the Cabinet. President Farmajo praised the various government agencies involved and said it was an example of the way the country was moving forward.

The signing of the bill into law was also welcomed by the World Bank which described it as an important step in the challenge of rebuilding the country's economy and institutions. Indeed, it would provide both financial and security support. The bill, the Bank said, would provide regulatory tools to a sector that, until recently, had made no more than a limited, formal contribution to the Somali Treasury, even though it could, potentially, contribute as much as 11% of Somalia's GDP. The World Bank noted Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) had provided relatively high levels of penetration and low prices in Somalia, with private enterprise leading the way. However, in the absence of any formal regulatory framework or independent regulatory body there had been uncertainty, creating vulnerabilities for the development of ICTs across the country.

Somalia is estimated to have over six million mobile phone users out of a 14 million population and some of the lowest costs in the world. There is significant usage of mobile money, with 72% or so Somalis over 16 involved, and total value of transactions amounting to about US\$ 2.7 billion a month. Equally, international capacity, national connectivity, and Internet use lag behind, and as the Bank emphasized, there has been no legal recourse for fraud. The Bank said lack of a solid legal framework for the ICT sector was a significant risk for the economy, particularly for remittances, mobile banking, mobile-money services, and mobile-telecom services. This bill will encourage investment and infrastructure and offer major benefits for users of the ICT services critical to an expanding economy.

The new law will mean Somalis will be able to use an increasing array of mobile phone services, roaming, interconnections, and secure mobile banking services. It offers consumer rights protection, the basis for issuing licenses to mobile operators, and the possibility of levying taxes to generate additional tax revenue for the government. Interconnection among service operators also opens the way for international roaming, allowing for the registration of SIM cards, and important step for national security, and protection for national ICT assets.

The World Bank said it plans to help with the establishment of the independent regulatory body, the National Communications Agency which will have the task of expanding connectivity, improve the efficiency of the sector, and boost market competition as well as regulate telecom and the technical elements of broadcasting and overseeing important regulatory issues, such as the spread of mobile money. The NCA will be required to consult major stakeholders, including consumers and private sector firms. It will be held accountable for its actions.

In its statement, the Bank underlined that the Communications Act and the creation of an independent regulator were "significant steps in the process of reestablishing the rule of law and creating sound public institutions in Somalia." It described the adoption of the act as "a milestone that signals the country is committed to reviving fundamental institutions, ones with solid regulations for vital industries."

A Turkish training center for the Somali army opens in Mogadishu

Turkey inaugurated its largest overseas military training center on Monday (October 2) in Mogadishu. The facility, built at a reported cost of US\$50 million, is designed to allow 200 Turkish military officers to train 10,000 Somali soldiers for the fight against Al-Shabaab extremists. It was inaugurated by the Turkish Chief of Staff, General Hulusi Akar and Somali Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre. General Akar, who noted it was Turkey's largest training base of its kind outside of Turkey, said during the opening ceremony that the Turkish government would "continue to support our Somali brothers until their country becomes stronger militarily". The Turkish ambassador to Somalia, Ambassador Olgan Bekar, said his government wanted to "help the Somalis reclaim authority and restore order in the country." Prime Minister Khayre thanked the Turkish government for opening the training center and said "this academy is part of our commitment to rebuilding our army", and that it would help the government "reconstruct" its national forces and create an army that was "not based on clans...not from a particular place, but well-trained forces that represent the Somali people."

One year from now, AMISOM will carry out the first withdrawal of 1,500 troops from Somalia, the crucial first step toward lifting Somalia's reliance on outside forces to maintain security and control Al-Shabaab. This, of course, depends upon Somali government forces being ready to provide the necessary security for the country. Last month, Somalia's ambassador to the United Nations, Abukar Osman, told the U.N. Security Council that the Somali National Army was not ready to take over the security of the country and said a premature withdrawal of AMISOM might be a "recipe for disaster." This underlines the importance of the opening of the Turkish military training base, and a former director of the National Intelligence and Security Agency described the development as Somalia's best opportunity to acquire a unified, effective army. It would, he said, be "the factory that produces the security forces, to enable the reintegration of a balanced army and to equip them before they are put to operation."

The training facility has been under construction for the last two years. Spread over four square kilometers, it has the capacity to train more than 1,500 troops at a time. Turkish aid to Somalia has also included extensive famine relief, particularly in 2011, as well as both private and government support building schools, hospitals and infrastructure and scholarships for Somalis in Turkey. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has visited Mogadishu twice, and trade between the two nations grown rapidly. In 2010, Turkish exports to Somalia totaled just US\$5.1 million, rising to US\$123 million in 2016.

The Green Climate Fund approves Ethiopia's US\$50 million climate resilience proposal...

The Green Climate Fund's (GCF) 18th Board meeting in Cairo, held September 30-October 2, approved Ethiopia's US\$50 million climate resilience proposal focusing on sustained provision of water for potable and productive use, including the use of solar energy to power the water pumps, and improved land use management to increase ground water recharge and soil nutrient content. The proposal, "Responding to the increasing risk of drought: building gender-

responsive resilience of the most vulnerable communities” aims to change the livelihoods of more than 1 million people in highly vulnerable communities. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation developed the proposal with support from the Climate and Development Knowledge Network. The money will be channeled through the GCF’s Direct Access Mechanism to the National Implementing Entity.

Availability of sustainable water supply for both potable and productive use has been identified as the springboard to unlock other productive capacities in communities, bringing about wider co-benefits. More than 10 million people are highly vulnerable to climate shocks in the country. The proposal targets 10% of these communities and identifies the critical levers to building resilience. The sustainability of the initiative would also be increased by introducing other ways of boosting resilience, such as the use of renewable energy for the provision of water.

The initiative also helps Ethiopia to deliver its national climate commitment to the United Nations – the Nationally Determined Contribution. This is the most ambitious of the Nationally Determined Contributions produced in Africa, and it is also one of very few globally that are commensurate with the effort required to limit global temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius.

The Climate and Development Knowledge Network’s Chief Executive, Sam Bickersteth, said: “The approval of this substantial, nationally led and developed project is a sign of the commitment of the Board of the Green Climate Fund to the demands of climate vulnerable countries and implementing actions around the Nationally Determined Contributions.” He said, for CDKN it had been a pleasure to have contributed alongside national capability and drive to get this proposal underway.

... and Renewable Energy Solutions for Africa launches its Ethiopia program

Renewable Energy Solutions for Africa (RES4Africa) held a two-day high-level conference at the Sheraton Addis this week (October 3-4). Organized with the support of Africa-EU Energy Partnership (AEEP), it aimed to identify gaps and propose solutions for a smooth deployment of renewable energy in Ethiopia. Over 350 participants and more than 90 speakers participated in the conference, held under the theme “Fostering the deployment of renewable energy in Ethiopia: A sustainable roadmap.”

RES4Africa is a network of key international energy stakeholders, utilities, industries, agencies, technical service providers and academia, engaged in promoting clean tech solutions in the Sub-Saharan African continent. RES4Africa President, Antonio Cammiserca, said the objective of the program was to engage in dialogue with government and private institutions in Ethiopia, in order to build up a fair business environment for implementation of renewable energy project. According to RES4Africa, Ethiopia can reap significant benefits from unlocking its vast renewable energy potential. As one of the fastest growing and most populated economies, the country’s increasing electricity demand can be met with renewable energy resources, in particular hydro, geothermal and wind energy. Mr. Cammiserca said, “The most important value added by RES4Africa is that we have international benchmarking because we are working in many African countries including Morocco, Algeria and South Africa”. The aim is to convince governments to engage in multiple projects for the acceleration of tapping renewable energy resources.

Ethiopia's Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr. Gemedo Dalle, said the coming of RES4Africa to Ethiopia would support the country's efforts to maximize the benefit it gets from renewable energy. He told the conference the program would help as an additional input in the implementation of Ethiopia's Climate Resilient Economy Strategy that was launched in 2011. Ethiopia's currently generates 90% of its energy from renewable energy sources based on hydropower, making the country a powerhouse of renewable energy in the Horn of Africa.

The European Union Ambassador to Ethiopia, Johan Borgstam, said access to reliable and environmentally sustainable energy was fundamental for the economic development of Ethiopia and the realization of its ambitious strategy for development of industrialization. He noted energy was one of the core sectors of the EU partnership with Ethiopia. The EU currently provides more than 30 million Euros in support for 16 projects in Ethiopia, and through this over 400,000 Ethiopians in rural areas had gained access to clean energy in the form of biogas for cooking or access to other forms of renewable energy sources. He said the EU was exploring possibilities to support additional energy projects.

The Irreecha festival celebrated at Bishoftu

This year's Irreecha festival was celebrated colorfully and peacefully at Lake Hora Arsedi, in the town of Bishoftu, and throughout the Oromia Regional State in central and southern Ethiopia on Sunday (October 1). Devotees, dressed in traditional white clothes and the red and black of Oromia, in celebration of the festival, had been arriving at Bishoftu over several days to gather at Lake Hora Arsedi, the site of the festival. Bishoftu is a popular resort town famous for its crater lakes and picturesque landscape.

Led by the Aba Gaadas, leaders of the traditional social structure of the Oromo people, those attending expressed gratitude to *Waaqa* (God) at the lake side for the ending of the rainy season and the forthcoming harvest. The Aba Gaadas led the ritual prayers, offering thanksgiving for the past year and wishing the best for the future as well as blessing the crowd gathered for the festival. The celebration brought people from all walks of life from across the country as well as thousands of local and international tourists.

According to the elders, Irreecha is celebrated as a thanksgiving celebration twice a year to praise *Waaqa* for the peace, health, fertility and abundance they have gained. The two celebrations are known to be Irreecha Tulluu and Irreecha Malkaa. Irreecha Tulluu takes place in May at the top of mountains to mark the end of the dry season and the onset of rainy season. This month's celebration is Irreecha Malkaa and it takes place immediately after the end of rainy season. It is celebrated in the middle of the month of Fulbaana when the darkness of rainy season with its foggy days passes and is replaced by the bright season, Birraa.

Irreecha is one of Ethiopia's most important tangible and intangible heritages, holding a unique cultural and spiritual value for the country and for the Oromo people. The celebration has been attracting increasing numbers of people every year including international tourists. As the most

important cultural festival for the millions of Oromos, celebrating the wholeness and magnificence of nature and culture, together with its emphasis on promotion of peace, tolerance and forgiveness, the Ministry of Tourism and other relevant bodies have been working to get this celebration of the Oromo people, registered as an intangible world heritage with UNESCO. The process is already in progress to be registered with UNESCO in December. Inscription of the Irrecha as a heritage site will provide a fitting place for the celebration of the festival and its devotees.