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News in Brief

Africa and the African Union

The UN Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Nikki Haley, was in Addis Ababa this week at the start of a three-nation tour to Ethiopia, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. She held talks with AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Minata Samate Cessouma, and told reporters that she hoped this was the beginning of "a stronger relationship with the AU and our African partners." (**See article**)

The African Union and African countries commemorated the 2017 Africa Human Rights Day on Saturday (October 21) under the theme "Enhancing Youth Contribution - Towards Effective Implementation of the Action Plan of the Human and Peoples' Rights Decade in Africa." (**See article**)

The 2nd International Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) conference opened in Addis Ababa on Tuesday (October 24). The three-day conference under the theme "The Relevance of Technical Vocational and Training (TVET) systems for social and economic development of countries and best practices for improvements" aimed to create a platform to share best practices and experiences. The German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development noted Ethiopia's remarkable success in implementing a standardized TVET system was an example for other African countries. Germany has supported the development of vocational training in Ethiopia to meet the demand of the country's rapid growing economy and it supports over 50 TVET colleges.

Ethiopia

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn on Thursday (October 26) briefed members of the House of Representatives on the President's speech when opening the joint session of Parliament on October 9. The Prime Minister also responded to questions. (**See article**)

Prime Minister Hailemariam met with US Ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley on Monday (October 23). Their talks covered further strengthening the bilateral cooperation between the US and Ethiopia and expanding economic cooperation, as well as regional peace and security. (**See article**)

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, visited Rwanda at the weekend for a working visit, to discuss issues of mutual interest and emerging global dynamics to further bolster the relationship of the two countries to a higher level with Rwanda's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Ms. Louise Mushikiwabo. **(See article)**

Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu met with the EU's new envoy to Ethiopia, Johan Borgstam. Discussions covered the the E.U.'s strategic partnership with Ethiopia and the ongoing peace process in South Sudan as well as the government's substantive reforms and its all inclusive political dialogue.

The World Bank Group has given a global 'Star Reformer Award' to the Government of Ethiopia for its effective foreign direct investment related reforms and the resulting success. A high-level Ethiopian delegation headed by Dr. Arkebe Oqubay, Special Adviser to Prime Minister Hailemariam, received the award at the World Bank Group Investment Competitiveness Forum in Vienna on Thursday (October 26). The World Bank said the 'Star Reformer Award' aims to increase the visibility of transformational reforms and showcase success stories realized by committed governments such as that of Ethiopia. It forms the highest level of international recognition to the efforts of the Government of Ethiopia in attracting and facilitating transformational investments to Ethiopia.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs, Hirut Zemene, led the Ethiopian delegation to the Fifth Nile Basin Development Forum on Monday this week. At least 500 delegates are attending the forum which is focusing on investing in Nile co-operation for a 'Water Secure Future'. The Forum is part of the activities of the Nile basin initiative, the intergovernmental partnership formed by Nile Basin countries of Burundi, DR Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. Ethiopia has recently taken over the chair of the NBI from Uganda.

The third Ethiopia-Morocco Business Forum took place on Thursday this week (October 26) at the Sheraton Hotel in Addis Ababa with representatives from over a hundred companies engaged in various sectors from both countries participating. The Forum was opened by Dr Bekele Bulado, Minister of Trade. **(See article)**

Freedom House, and Oakland Institute, posted blogs last week claiming Ethiopia had halted a resolution in the US Congress (HRes 128) and denigrating Ethiopia's development successes, its progress and its development. **(See article)**

Ethiopian Airlines is due to become the first airline in Africa to receive and operate the Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner on October 27. The 787-9 Dreamliner is the second member of the technologically advanced, ultra-comfortable, fuel-efficient and environment-friendly 787 family of aircraft. The 787-9 is longer than the 787-8 and has more passenger capacity with 315 seats and more cargo space. Ethiopian Airlines flies to more than 100 international destinations in five continents using 93 modern aircraft, 20 of which are 787 Dreamliners, deployed on its long haul routes.

The Ethiopian Investment Commission has announced that the Adama and Dire Dawa industrial parks will be inaugurated at the end of this month. The two parks, specializing in textile, apparel, and agro-processing, will increase the number of parks to five. The Deputy Commissioner in Charge of Industrial Parks, Dr. Belachew Mekuria, said the government had

spent about US\$315 million to develop the two parks, which are expected to provide a total of 50,000 jobs when operational.

An Italian company Enel, through a consortium led by its renewables' arm, Enel Green Power, has been selected for a 100 MW PV project by Ethiopian Electric Power. The solar park project will be built in Metehara in Oromia Regional State and will cost about \$120 million. It is expected to be operational by 2019 and to generate some 280 GWh per year. EEP will purchase all the energy generated under a 20-year power purchase agreement.

The government announced a tender for 400,000 tonnes of milling wheat for use in humanitarian assistance programs throughout the country. Delivery will be expected by February 2018, and the amount will be divided into three tranches, of 200,000 tonnes, 125,000 tonnes and 75,000 tonnes. In August, the government tendered for 70,000 tonnes of wheat to be used for the country's productive safety net project, and earlier it awarded contracts to three international grain suppliers to deliver 400,000 tonnes of milling wheat for the subsidized bread production program.

Eritrea

A conference on "Eritrea and the Ongoing Refugee Crisis" on Thursday last week (October 19) in Brussels, considered the situation of Eritrean refugees in Europe as well as the human rights situation in Eritrea, to highlight the worsening Eritrean refugee crisis and the need to provide protection for Eritrean asylum seekers in the relevant EU host countries. (**See article**)

The International Office of Migration said on Friday last week (October 20) that it had relocated over 15,000 Eritrean refugees in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia since March 1. It was working closely with the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs and the UNHCR to medically screen and transport newly arrived Eritrean refugees from the reception center in Endabaguna in Shire to four refugee camps. A statement said the IOM was currently relocating an average of about 100 persons per day. According to official figures, there were 21,215 Eritrean refugee arrivals in Ethiopia last year, and over 20,000 had arrived in 2017 so far this year. Most are youth and nearly 50% aged between 18-24 years.

Kenya

Kenyans went to the polls for the re-run of the August 8 presidential election on Thursday (October 26). Tens of thousands of police and other security staff deployed to protect voters and polling stations. Opposition leader Raila Odinga, claiming the new election wouldn't be credible because of a lack of electoral reform, withdrew from contest and called for his supporters to boycott the poll. Voting in four counties affected by violence was postponed to Saturday. After casting his vote, President Kenyatta urged people to cast their ballots so the country could move on. "We're tired as a country of electioneering. It's time we moved forward," he said. The electoral commission now has seven days to declare the results.

Heads of Mission in Kenya, in a joint statement before the vote, called on Kenyans to remain calm and reject violence, to uphold the principles of the Constitution, and for stakeholders to hold an immediate, sustained and open "to resolve the deep divisions that have been worsened by the electoral process." The statement expressed disappointment over "the continuing efforts of both parties to interfere with and undermine the independent operation of the electoral commission, the Judiciary, and other essential institutions."

Somalia

President Mohamed Abdullahi returning to Somalia on Wednesday (October 25) after visiting Uganda, Ethiopia and Djibouti to marshal support and resources for a new offensive against Al-Shabaab following the appalling terrorist attack in Mogadishu on October 14, said he had secured the commitment of Uganda, Ethiopia and Djibouti to reinforce the country's military to counter Al-Shabaab. **(See article)**

Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre arrived in Ankara for a three-day official visit to Turkey on Wednesday (October 25). He will be meeting Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim in Ankara on Thursday to discuss bilateral relations, regional and international issues as well as visiting Somali citizens being treated in Turkey following the recent Mogadishu bombing. Thirty-five injured Somalis, including three children, were airlifted to Turkey for medical treatment.

Minata Samate Cessouma, Commissioner for Political Affairs at the AU, speaking at a joint press conference with US Ambassador to the UN, Ambassador Haley, called for more funding, especially from foreign partners of the AU, for AMISOM as it battles to restore peace and security to Somalia.

A meeting of the Joint Crisis Management Team, organized by AMISOM on Wednesday (October 25), was attended by senior UN officials led by the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia, Raisedon Zenenga, and top Federal Government Security chiefs, including the new Chief of Defense Forces, Major-General Abdiweli Jama Hussein. It reviewed the recent bomb attack and agreed on key measures to deter future attacks, including improved security and enhanced coordination. The meeting also agreed to have a standby team to respond to future incidents.

Islamic State militants claimed responsibility for an explosion in Bosasso in Puntland state on Tuesday (October 24). It is the fourth attack claimed by ISIS in two years and came four days after IS militants attacked Injil village in the Bari region, killing two civilians including a child.

South Sudan

President Salva Kiir met with US Ambassador to the UN, Ambassador Nikki Haley in Juba on Wednesday (October 25) and pledged full commitment to the revitalization of the peace agreement. Senior presidential advisor, Nhial Deng Nhial described the talks as "fruitful and constructive". Ambassador Haley said she had a "very frank" conversation with President Kiir about the lack of progress towards peace. **(See article)**

President Salva Kiir will visit Khartoum for talks with President Omer Al-Bashir on Tuesday next week (October 31), according to Sudan's Foreign Minister, Ibrahim Ghandour. Discussions will cover issues of common interest, including the IGAD Revitalization Forum and implementation of the Cooperation Agreement signed in September 2012. Sudan and South Sudan have yet to finalize border demarcation or reach an agreement on the disputed border areas or settle their difference on the proposed Abyei referendum.

200 Ethiopian troops, the first group of its peace keepers for the Regional Protection Force for South Sudan, arrived in Juba last weekend. South Sudan's Foreign Minister was quoted as

saying this was in line with the UN Security Council resolution 2327 last December. (See article)

IGAD's Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism, (CTSAMM), held its 14th meeting in Juba on Tuesday (October 24). CTSAMM Chairman, Major General Molla Hailemariam, gave the opening statement. (See article)

Sudan

President Omer Hassan al-Bashir paid a surprise visit to Riyadh on Tuesday (October 24) and met with King Salman. It followed the Sudan President's three day stay in the Gulf, visiting both Kuwait and Qatar. The Saudi Press Agency said the talks covered bilateral relations, in addition to the latest regional developments, but there was speculation President Al-Bashir was trying to mediate in the Gulf crisis.

The Prime Minister briefs MPs before approval of the President's speech

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn has briefed members of the House of Representatives on the President's speech opening the joint session of Parliament on October 9 and responded to questions. Addressing the MPs on Thursday this week, he also responded to various queries raised by members of parliament including questions on recent political developments.

The Prime Minister said the recent clashes between members of Oromia and Somali ethnic groups had nothing to do with any border issues between the two regional states, but had been instigated by rent-seeking groups who wanted to take advantage of conflict. He said: "The recent clashes were caused by some forces which wanted to gain economic and political benefits through controlling the Khat trade route" along which millions of dollars of Khat are smuggled. He said the government was now working to dismantle the activities of these rent seeking groups along the border, and he referred to the recent seizure of over two million dollars from smugglers. The conflict had unfortunately left hundreds of thousands of people displaced, the Prime Minister said, but, he added, the process of rehabilitation and relocation was now well underway.

Referring to the reasons for the recent resignations of two senior government officials, House Speaker, Abadula Gameda, and Prime Ministerial adviser, Bereket Simon, the Prime Minister said resignations "common in a democratic party and government" and should be expected from time to time. He pointed out both men had been deeply involved in the struggle for change in Ethiopia from their early years. These changes had now been achieved. He said Ato Bereket had made repeated requests to resign in recent years, and he had now reluctantly accepted his request. However, Speaker Abadula's bid to resign from his post as Speaker of the House of People's Representatives was still consideration.

The Prime Minister said the government was holding a series of dialogues with the sixteen opposition political parties on ways to improve the country's democracy, which, he described as still at an infant stage. He noted that agreement had so far been reached on registration of political parties following the discussions held on the electoral law. The dialogue was

progressing under what he described as ‘the principle of give and take’ on the extent of introducing proportional representation and other related issues.

Prime Minister Hailemariam mentioned the dangers of increasing numbers of traffic accidents in the country, and the dangers of resurgence of HIV. He stressed the need to take precautions to avert such dangers. He noted employment opportunities had been created for more than 2 million youth last fiscal year (2016/17), though there were still 6 million unemployed youth in the country. He underlined that the recent devaluation of the birr had been taken to encourage exports and help expand the industrial manufacturing sector. The government, he added, had made preparations to prevent subsequent rise in inflation after devaluation.

The Prime Minister said that Ethiopia’s relations with its neighbors were progressing well and “in a more productive way”. The works launched connect the region through various infrastructural development, such as electric power and railway lines, with Djibouti and Sudan in particular, were successful. He said Ethiopia, under the umbrella of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), had been playing the most important role to bring about peace and security in both Somalia and South Sudan. The Prime Minister said it was important for the international to provide increased support for AMISOM as the terrorist attack committed by Al-Shabaab on October 14 showed that more work was needed to deal with such attacks. As far as South Sudan was concerned, the Prime Minister said that the IGAD High-Level Revitalization Forum, which would bring all warring parties to the table, would be held soon.

At the end of the session, the House of People's Representatives approved the motion of support for President Dr. Mulatu Teshome’s speech to the joint session of the House of People's Representatives and the House of Federation.

US Ambassador to the United Nations, Ambassador Haley, visits Ethiopia...

Ambassador Haley arrived in Addis Ababa on Monday (October 23) at the start of a three-nation tour, taking her to South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Her visit followed US President Donald Trump’s expressions of deep concern over the ongoing violence in South Sudan and in the DRC and his plans to engage more effectively with Africa. Before her visit she said US interests in Africa and the region were certainly humanitarian, but they are also economic and strategic. Ambassador Haley held meetings with Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn and AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Minata Samate Cessouma. She told reporters after her meetings that she hoped this was the beginning of “a stronger relationship with the AU and our African partners.”

Ambassador Haley’s meeting with Prime Minister Hailemariam covered a number of issues, including further strengthening the bilateral cooperation between the US and Ethiopia and expanding economic cooperation between the two countries. Ambassador Haley underlined the importance of further improving operational issues to create a more conducive environment for economic cooperation. The Prime Minister mentioned a number of things that were underway to improve Ethiopia’s economic efforts and attract more FDI. Ambassador Haley commended the growth and development of Ethiopia. Their discussion

also covered human rights and the importance of Ethiopian youth being involved in the ongoing economic developments.

The main focus of their talks, however, was regional peace and security and particularly developments in South Sudan, as well as the Democratic Republic of the Congo where they agreed on the importance of holding elections as well as the need to address the root causes of conflict. On South Sudan, Ambassador Haley and Prime Minister Hailemariam exchanged ideas on how to find a lasting solution to the conflict there. The Prime Minister gave the Ambassador a detailed account of what IGAD has been doing in the past month to revitalize the peace process, and made it clear he appreciated US support for the Revitalization Forum. They agreed the importance of moving South Sudan's peace process forward with High-Level Revitalization Forum to revive the 2015 South Sudan Peace Agreement as soon as possible. They also underlined that solving the situation in South Sudan required sustained engagement and attention from the African Union and others in the region. Ambassador Haley thanked the Prime Minister for Ethiopia's leadership in continuing to receive refugees fleeing conflict in the region.

Following her meeting with Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn, Ambassador Haley met with AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Minata Samate Cessouma, at African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa. They discussed a range of topics of mutual concern on the continent, about peace and security in Africa, including the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and the situations in South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Mali, and the need to increase the role of women in peacekeeping operations. Ambassador Haley expressed the United States' appreciation for the African Union's partnership in UN peacekeeping operations, and reaffirmed the indispensable partnership between the AU and both the United States and the United Nations.

At a joint press conference, Ambassador Haley said: "The U.S. very much sees Africa as the important part of the world. We see great opportunities in Africa. We see challenges in Africa. We want to support and help in those situations. But most importantly we want to see how we can partner together, whether that is through economic development, whether it is through strategic practices, whether it is through political solutions." She said she hoped "that this is the beginning of what is going to be a stronger relationship with the AU and our African partners." She said: "We have always been a strong supporter of the AU and we have continued to give to the AU peace funds; we've continued to give bilaterally; we are going to continue to do all of those things. You will continue to see our support to health programs and many other things we have done in the past will continue. We are going to continue to look to the AU for guidance. The US was interested, she underlined, to work together with the AU and IGAD in order to bring lasting solutions to Somalia, and Commissioner Samate stressed her appreciation of continued US support for AMISOM, adding, "We need the support of all African partners, African Union partners and the international community, to support AMISOM". She said they had also discussed South Sudan and DRC and "We agreed to strengthen our relationship to support cooperation and to find solutions."

Before travelling on to Juba, Ambassador Haley visited South Sudanese refugees in Gambella, on Tuesday (October 24) together with the US Ambassador to Ethiopia, Mike Raynor. Ambassador Haley praised Ethiopia's role in hosting one of the largest refugee populations in Africa and reiterated U.S. commitment to support those efforts. She also stressed the need to seek peaceful resolutions to conflicts in the region. Shocked by the stories of the refugees, she told reporters it was "incumbent on the entire international

community” to say this must stop. She indicated she would press South Sudan’s government for a change. She said: “If you look at the disaster and you look at the families broken apart and you look at the kids that were killed and you just look at the families that were deprived of so much, you must say this must stop.” After listening to what the families went through she said it was impossible not to be totally angry at those responsible, adding that: “If people are denied access to humanitarian needs, conflict that is going on, a government ignoring its people, and a situation deteriorate, this also becomes a breeding ground for extremist groups. That is what we don’t want.”

...and meets South Sudan’s President Kiir in Juba

Meeting with Ambassador Haley in Juba on Wednesday (October 25), South Sudan President Salva Kiir pledged full commitment to the revitalization of the peace agreement, underlining his acceptance to participate in the revitalization of the peace agreement, the declaration of the permanent ceasefire and the cessation of hostilities as well as granting unhindered access to humanitarian organizations for relief activities. Senior presidential advisor, Nhial Deng Nhial described the talks as “fruitful and constructive”. He said the President and Ambassador Haley “exchanged views and opinions on different issues,” focusing on three main areas: “the Revitalization of the peace agreement, the permanent ceasefire, and the cessation of hostilities and access to humanitarian aid.” Ambassador Haley raised concerns on humanitarian access to which President Kiir assured her of his government’s continued support, citing ongoing the collaboration between the Juba government and the UN mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). Mr. Nhial said: “We have been able to establish a mechanism that works jointly to improve and address problems of humanitarian access, and indeed there have been some improvements. The Government acknowledges that more is needed to be done”.

Ambassador Haley said she had what she described as a “very frank” conversation with President Kiir about the lack of progress towards peace. She said Washington would not accept to wait anymore. Ambassador Haley said: “Time for action is now, we are not waiting anymore, we need to see a change and we need to see it right away”. She said she had told President Kiir: It not about the talks, it’s about the action. We have to see a willingness of the Government and the military to stop the violence and stop the abuses that are happening in the country.” She said President Trump would like to encourage regional leaders, and if there was no response from South Sudan, “You will continue to see added pressure coming from the IGAD and I think that the AU obviously is going to continue to move and work with the IGAD as they go forward. Our goal is to have one voice [saying] we have to see peace in South Sudan. We have to see that women are being taken care of. We can’t see any more death. We can’t see any more famine.”

...a Ceasefire & Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism meeting

IGAD’s Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism, (CTSAMM), held its 14th meeting in Juba on Tuesday (October 24). The CTSAMM Chairman, Major General Molla Hailemariam, in an opening statement noted the monitoring mechanism’s appreciation of both the Transitional Government of National Unity and the SPLA for their support and their efforts to ensure facilitation and access for CTSAMM’s recent missions. There were, however, still concerns that needed to be fully resolved. These included the process for access assurance which, he said, was centralized and time consuming. The Mechanism also welcomed the support of the UN Mission in South Sudan

(UNMISS) in providing a protection force and other services to CTSAMM. He said he would like to encourage UNMISS to continue to improve coordination at all levels and the provision of force protection in a timely manner to areas of priority for the CTSAMM mission.

Referring to the general security situation, Major-General Molla said fighting had lessened significantly for several different reasons. Nevertheless, it continued to take place in Upper Nile, specifically Pagak, and northern Jonglei in Waat, with skirmishes in southern Unity in the Leer areas. This fighting, he said, had exacerbated the humanitarian situation in those areas. The Mechanism had also observed “widespread occurrences of rape and criminality including looting and killing in different areas of the country.” He detailed the reconnaissance activities sent to monitor the security situation and register incidents of violations to the peace. CTSAMM had, he said, conducted a number of patrols, fifteen of Long Duration, and monitoring missions in different areas. It had drafted a violation report involving alleged violations of the Peace Agreement, a monitoring report, two initial reports, and one patrol report regarding Pagak.

Major-General Molla also noted that CTSAMM had been ready since August to conduct verification of SPLA forces deployed outside Juba, but this had not yet been facilitated by the Joint Military and Ceasefire Commission (JMCC). CTSAMM, he added, was also ready to verify SPLA-IO (Taban Deng Gai) forces, which are reportedly ready to be assembled once the JMCC made an official request.

The CTSAMM Chairman also noted that CTSAMM had participated in the pre-consultation meetings ahead of the IGAD High Level Revitalization Forum and attended multiple meetings within the IGAD Plus countries with different groups and relevant stakeholders. It had also participated in the 20th JMEC plenary and briefly reported on its activities, submitting four draft reports which related to ceasefire violations by the warring parties in various parts of the country.

... and Ethiopia sends its first 200 troops to Juba for the RPF

Two hundred Ethiopian troops arrived in Juba last week end as part of the Regional Protection Force in accordance with UN Security Council resolution 2327 (2016) adopted in December 2016. The resolution called for an increase of 4,000 troops in the overall force levels of United Nations Mission in South Sudan, raising the permitted numbers to 17,000 military and 2,101 police personnel. There are currently 12,000 UNMISS troops in South Sudan and the phased deployment of the 4,000 Regional Deployment Force troops, UNMISS numbers will reach 16,000. According the Resolution of the UN Security Council Ethiopia, Rwanda and Kenya are the three countries to contribute peacekeepers for the RPF. A company of about 150 Rwandan troops are already in Juba and 600 more from the main Rwanda battalion are expected to arrive soon.

The Head of the Ethiopian Defense Ministry Peacekeeping Department Contingent Training School, Colonel Yirdaw Gebre Medhin said Ethiopian troops were known for their discipline and their approach of working closely with local communities; and the Deputy Head of the Training School, Colonel Teferi Mekonen, noted that Ethiopia’s importance in regional and international peacekeeping had increased. He said this could be attributed to the school’s ability to prepare peace keeping troops effectively on the basis of the standards set by international bodies working on peacekeeping matters.

At a press conference in August, the Head of United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), David Shearer, reiterated that the RPF would not be a separate UN peacekeeping force. It would be under the overall command of the UNMISS Force Commander, Lieutenant General Frank Kamanzi. The press conference made it clear that the Regional Protection Force troops would be based in Juba and would operate in the surrounding area if necessary, carrying out its functions in cooperation with the government as expressed by the Security Council resolution.

The RPF's arrival would, he said, allow some of the existing UNMISS troops already in Juba to be deployed to different locations across South Sudan to protect civilians, support humanitarian assistance and to monitor and report on human rights abuses. Mr. Shearer underlined that UNMISS was consistently assessing its priorities. He said the arrival of additional; troops would mean UNMISS could carry out additional tasks related to its mandate, to protect civilians and support the building of a durable peace. It would, for example, he said, allow UNMISS to put more patrols along insecure roads where there have been attacks on civilian convoys such as on the Juba-Nimule and Juba-Bor road.

Somali President asks Uganda, Ethiopia and Djibouti for more aid against Al-Shabaab

President Mohamed Abdullahi returned to Somalia on Wednesday (October 25) after visiting Uganda, Ethiopia and Djibouti to marshal support and resources for a new offensive against Al-Shabaab following the appalling terrorist attack in Mogadishu on October 14. Addressing the media on his arrival from Djibouti, the President said he had secured the commitment of Uganda, Ethiopia and Djibouti to reinforce the country's military to counter Al-Shabaab. He said: "We travelled to seek support to double the fight to liberate the country from Al-Shabaab and we succeeded by the grace of God", adding that, "The leaders promised they will respond to our request which is strengthening our army by equipping them with the needed tools." The President called for unity to fight Al-Shabaab and stabilize the country, reiterating his earlier call for solidarity with the national army. He said: "In order to avoid the sadness of Zobe from happening again, we have to stand up for the defense of our country and fight our enemy so that they cannot find the opportunity to continue harming us."

The atrocity on Saturday (October 14) has certainly left Mogadishu stunned and angry. A truck laden with explosives was detonated at Kilometer Five, Zobe, exploding next to an oil tanker at one of the city's busiest junctions at one of the busiest times of the week, just after school had finished and before afternoon prayers. The explosion killed 358 people and injured over 400, destroying hotels, government offices and restaurants. The attack eclipsed anything seen before and saw buildings collapse, cars and buses burnt, including a one full of school children, dead bodies incinerated, 150 beyond recognition, and body parts strewn across the site. Some 56 people are still missing. Dozens of the injured were flown to Turkey, Sudan and Kenya for treatment. A protest on Wednesday last week (October 18), at the national stadium, brought thousands out to display unprecedented anger against Al-Shabaab, chanting anti-Al-Shabaab slogans and wearing red cloth around their forehead to show unity and solidarity for the hundreds of people killed and injured. The President, the Prime Minister, many ministers and the Mayor of Mogadishu, all donated blood that evening and tweeted a call for others to do the same: so many came that the football stadium had to be used to allow the hospitals to continue to treat the injured.

President Mohamed said: "Al-Shabaab started to kill 10 people, we kept silent, then they killed 20, and next they killed 100, now, they killed 300 innocent Somali civilians. We are telling [al-Shabaab] that from now on, we are all soldiers and will come to you. We will no longer tolerate a Somali boy being killed and a Somali girl being killed. And we'll defend this flag." Now the government is planning new offensives against Al-Shabaab and has been getting support for strengthening AMISOM and the Somali army for it.

The President started his round of visits in Uganda where he met President Museveni. He said he had fruitful discussions on support for the planned offensive. They agreed on the importance of the fight against Al-Shabaab and to eliminate the risk it poses to Somalia, and to continue to work hard and bring the necessary resources to fight against terrorists.

On arrival in Addis Ababa on Monday (October 23), President Mohamed told the media: "I am here to seek the solidarity of our brothers in Ethiopia, and now I will go to Djibouti to do the same thing and to unite in this war against Al-Shabaab which is real threat to the peace and stability of the region." He told journalists his visit to Ethiopia was part of the plan to meet the leaders of troop-contributing countries to Somalia. Referring to the "the worst single explosion in Mogadishu's history", the President stressed it was critical to "unite against our enemy, Al-Shabaab, who committed such an atrocity on innocent people." He added, "This threat is not only a threat to Somalia but also to our neighboring countries." The President also praised Ethiopia for the medicinal supplies and health professionals it had sent down to Mogadishu to help victims of the bombing.

When President Mohamed met Prime Minister Hailemariam at the National Palace later in the day, the Prime Minister condemned the attack and underlined that Ethiopia would not allow the terrorist group to "dismantle the region". The Prime Minister said his country would continue to work to end the threat of al-Shabaab and bringing a lasting peace to Somali through AMISOM and IGAD. Prime Minister Hailemariam said: "We believe that Al-Shabaab carried this inhuman act of terror against innocent civilians of Somalia thinking that this would its own internal problems." He said "we are set to act against it," adding, "Setting a strategy to urgently and solidly response to this act in a more strategic way and never letting it happen again was the focus of our discussions.". Speaking of Ethiopia's role in peace and security in the region, President Mohamed said, Ethiopia had been very helpful and its sacrifices would not be in vain, adding "but we need to also step up and do more because the terrorists have developed means of mass destruction". The two countries agreed to continue to work hard and bring resources to fight Al-Shabaab.

President Mohamed's visit to Addis Ababa coincided with that of the US Ambassador to the UN, Ambassador Nikki Haley, who discussed Somalia during her talks with Prime Minister Hailemariam and the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Minata **Samate**. **She** expressed her concern over the deteriorating security situation in Somali, and said the US would "continue to support AMISOM". She said the US was interested to work together with the AU and IGAD in order to bring lasting solutions to Somalia, adding, "We need the support of all African partners, African Union partners and the international community, to support AMISOM".

President Mohamed is expected to chair a meeting of the Somalia National Security Council on Saturday (October 28), bringing together heads of regional government and army chiefs. Newly appointed army head, Major-General Abdiweli Jama Hussein said on Monday that the extermination of Al-Shabaab was critical to allow for a smooth exit for AMISOM. He said:

“As time approaches for AMISOM to exit, we will continue to work hard together with AMISOM so that the Somali National Army can assume responsibility for the security of the country; and we will say thank you.”

Foreign Minister, Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, makes a working visit to Rwanda

Ethiopia’s Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, arrived in Kigali, Rwanda on Saturday (October 21) for a working visit, to discuss issues of mutual interest and emerging global dynamics to further bolster the relationship of the two countries to a higher level.

Dr. Workneh met for talks with Rwanda’s Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Ms. Louise Mushikiwabo on Sunday (October 22), in what were described later as productive discussions. Dr. Workneh noted that apart from the cultural and historical ties that link Ethiopia and Rwanda, their relationship has progressed steadily on all fronts over the last two decades. The two Governments have frequently shared best experiences, above and beyond consulting and coordinating their respective positions on matters of regional and international importance. In addition, both countries have been working closely together in assisting and promoting the cause of African unity. Dr. Workneh also underlined that mutual interest and respect were the basis for Ethiopia's engagement in foreign relations. Ethiopia’s successful relations with all its neighbours and near neighbours over the last two decades were a testament to the seriousness with which the country had adhered to those principles, he said.

Foreign Minister Ms. Mushikiwabo also noted that the relationship between the two countries should continue to be a source of cooperation and mutual benefit. Commending previous achievements reached between the two countries, she stressed the need for continued consultation and coordination on matters of regional and international importance. Another major area she underlined as appropriate for further work was Ethiopia-Rwanda trade and investment co-operation.

Ethiopia’s relationship with Rwanda is one of the bilateral relationships that the Government has been working to expand in order to meet their mutual concerns. The two countries have a long relationship with Rwanda opening its first embassy in Ethiopia in 1978, though Ethiopia carried out its diplomatic relations with Rwanda through its embassy in Kampala until opening opened an embassy in Kigali in April this year, during the 2nd Ethiopian-Rwanda Joint Ministerial Commission meeting in Kigali. They have signed some eight agreements and seven Memoranda of Understandings on different issues of increasing bilateral relations, including trade and aviation services.

The third Ethiopia-Morocco Business Forum held in Addis Ababa

The third Ethiopia-Morocco Business Forum took place on Thursday this week (October 26) at the Sheraton Hotel in Addis Ababa with representatives from over a hundred companies engaged in various sectors from both countries participating. The aim was to encourage the trade, investment and bilateral relations between the two countries.

In his opening remarks, Ethiopia's Minister of Trade, Dr Bekele Bulado, noted the historical ties between the two brotherly nations, and stressed the mobilization of community business would strengthen the cooperation and collaboration between the two countries. He underlined that the government wanted to raise and build confidence in the private sector to encourage the business sector and increase the number of international investors. He called on Moroccan investors to take advantage of Ethiopia favourable investment climate and policy and noted their investments would be profitable if they invest in Ethiopia, a country endowed with abundant natural resource and labour forces as well as stable economy.

Dr. Bekele underlined that Ethiopia has a joint development strategy and regional energy efficiency initiatives and industrial parks to encourage the development and export of garment, textile, and other industrial areas. He also noted the opportunity offered by Ethiopia's political stability, minimal capital investment requirements, its relatively cheap energy, the advantage offered by access to COMESA and its proximity to other global markets and its decade-long double-digit growth. This had created an environment much suited to profitable investment opportunities in mining, agro-processing, energy and other sectors.

Mr. Solomon Aferwork, the president of the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectorial Associations (ECCSA) referred to the Memorandum of Understanding that was signed by Ethiopia and Morocco last year promoting the role of the business communities of the two countries. He noted that Ethiopia had an extensive program focusing on the development of small scale, medium enterprises as well as large scale businesses. Cooperation between Ethiopia and Morocco, he underlined, should be based experience sharing and transfer of knowledge. Mr. Daniel Gad, a private sector consultant, also shared his experience of doing business in Ethiopia and listed the existing opportunities for investment. He noted Addis Ababa had become an important destination for different diplomatic missions, adding that the government's willingness to promote the private sector, bringing in know-how technology and making use of other opportunities including tax advantages, financial and other benefits had created a conducive environment for investment.

Mrs. Rakiya, State Secretary of the Moroccan Ministry of Trade, Industry, Investment and Digital Economy (EDERHEM), thanked the Ethiopian government for its support for Morocco's return to the African Union. She said Ethiopia was a strategic partner for Morocco and the main gateway for Morocco's efforts to penetrate into the Eastern Africa region. The creation of a favourable environment for business between the two countries would further consolidate relations between the two brotherly countries, she said. Citing the fertilizer plant being built in Ethiopia with 2.5 billion US dollars as an example, she noted that the two countries needed to strengthen their trade and investment relations in the future. Mrs. Rakiya said Morocco was willing to build economic relations with Ethiopia in the areas of electrical energy, water and sanitation, and ICT. Overall, she underlined, Morocco, she said, was working with the motto "Africa's natural resource for Africa's growth and prosperity."

Commemoration of African Union Human Rights Day

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights came into effect on October 21, 1986, and October 21 has been declared "African Human Rights Day. The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, also known as the Banjul Charter, is an international human

rights instrument intended to promote and protect human rights and basic freedoms in the African continent.

It was in this light that the African Union and African countries commemorated the 2017 Africa Human Rights Day on Saturday (October 21) with the theme “Enhancing Youth Contribution - Towards Effective Implementation of the Action Plan of the Human and Peoples’ Rights Decade in Africa.” Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the AU Commission, in a statement on the occasion noted it was a special day for Africans. The commitment to universal human rights, adopted by the United Nations, was the foundation of the equality of people of all races, and the freedom of all nations. The Chairperson said it was also “a reminder that although we, as Africans, have cast off the shackles of colonial and racist oppression, we need to do more to ensure the full respect of the rights of our people.” His statement emphasized that commemorating human rights also meant remembering the victims of human rights abuses, including mass atrocities and genocide, and he reminded those present that what he called “a modest” memorial to the victims of human rights abuses and genocide had been erected inside the compound of the African Union.

Chairperson Mahamat noted that the past twelve months had marked a significant turning point in the struggle to achieve Human and Peoples’ Rights in Africa; it was the Africa Year of Human and Peoples’ Rights with emphasis on the Rights of Women. The last year had also helped shape the future of the continent with the declaration by the AU Assembly that the next 10 years should be the “Human and Peoples’ Rights Decade in Africa”. This year, 2017, he pointed out is dedicated to rights of youth, as it was declared as the year of “Harnessing Youth Demographic Dividends through Investment in the Youth”. The focus on youth rights, said the AU Commission chair, was a culmination of the African Union’s sustained move towards deepening all dimensions of the human and peoples’ rights culture in the continent.

The AU was therefore committed to engaging with member States in order to take the necessary bold steps to develop youth-driven human and peoples' rights policies and programs, noted the Chairperson. In this regard, the African Union urged all its Member States, as well as the Regional Economic Communities, to embark on similar exercises at the national and sub-regional levels.

Member States also commemorated the day. It was a Working Holiday in Liberia, and President Sirleaf called on all citizens and foreign residents, national and international organizations and all concerned government agencies to join the Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR) in executing appropriate programs befitting the observance of the day. Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights also called upon African governments to foster a culture of respect for human rights on the continent.

Freedom House’s inaccurate denigration of Ethiopia’s development

Freedom House, and Oakland Institute, have a long record of inaccurate criticism and denigration of Ethiopia, and blogs, posted last week, claiming Ethiopia has halted a resolution in Congress (HRes 128), carried on in this tradition. Indeed, the implications and comments in both articles, and their use of false information, are in line with their repeated attacks on Ethiopia and its policies over a number of years.

Freedom House, for example, claimed that “the government of Ethiopia has carefully crafted its reputation as a development success story, a champion of peace, and a bastion of stability in the troubled Horn of Africa region.” The use of the phrase “carefully crafted” is designed to mislead. Ethiopia is, in fact, exactly that: “a development success story, a champion of peace and a bastion of stability”. And, yes, in response to this, international donors have provided substantial quantities of aid to assist in this substantial and sustained pro-poor, green, economic development. For this, Ethiopia is truly grateful. Similarly, Ethiopia is indeed an important partner for the US in counter-terrorism and international peacekeeping. It is, after all, one of the largest providers of troops for UN and AU peacekeeping missions, and it is, rightly, proud of its role as a current member of the UN Security Council and the UN Human Rights Council.

It is typical of these sorts of attempt by Freedom House or Oakland Institute to impugn Ethiopia’s achievements is the way the Freedom House author, in addition to the phrase “carefully crafted, ”immediately adds the claim that international recognition is no more than “a propaganda tool”, exploited “to boost the regime’s increasingly shaky legitimacy at home.” To support this alleged contention, he talks about unrest and state repression, demonstrations driven by deep frustration with decades of ethnic exclusion, claiming “the ruling party’s formal diversity masks the de facto dominance” by one group of all aspects of public life. This comment merely underlines the author’s lack of knowledge of current Ethiopian politics, government, administration, military, policed and economy, repeating well-known Diaspora opposition allegations and underlining his sources of ‘information.’ The protests and demonstrations in 2015 were not, as the articles allege, and as external opposition elements claim, “protests by ethnic Oromos and Amharas over their perceived marginalization”. They were, in origin, genuine and peaceful demonstrations against specific issues of poor governance and corruption. To these the government has promptly responded. Indeed, it had already launched an anti-corruption campaign before the protests emerged, and this has been continuing on an increasing and expanding scale. This has now been coupled with extensive efforts to improve governance, both at federal and regional levels.

The government has shown very clearly that it is aware of the problems highlighted by the protests last year and, equally, that it is determined to deal with them. It has launched a whole series of consultations with community leaders at all levels and is taking steps to hold government officials, in both federal and regional administrations, accountable. It is allocating billions of birr to create additional jobs for youngsters, as well as pushing forward urgently with the creation of industrial parks to help solve the problem of unemployment. It created two million jobs last fiscal year, but as the Prime Minister noted this week the unemployment is still unacceptably high at six million.

The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission was mandated to carry out investigations of last year’s protests and its reports and recommendations have been accepted by Parliament, which adopted a decision to hold accountable those responsible for any use of excess force. This is now being implemented. The government is also involved in political dialogue with the 16 opposition parties on reform of the electoral system to incorporate proportional representation to ensure more diverse opinions in the legislative process and in different levels of government as well as implement other improvements in the electoral process. .

Ethiopia has, in fact, followed a democratic path since 1991. The government fully understands that sustainable pro-poor development can only be achieved through proper implementation of the process of democratization and the implementation of peace and security both within the country and at a regional level. Specifically, it has placed the promotion and protection of human rights at the heart of the Ethiopian Constitution. It has

also adopted its second National Human Rights action plan last December to enhance institutional capability and expand regulatory frameworks. As a responsible partner of the international community, Ethiopia is a member of the UN Human Rights Commission and it fully collaborates in efforts to address challenges and accept recommendations to strengthen its continuing efforts to extend its human rights capacity.

It is clear that the authors of these articles, and indeed the drafters and sponsors of HRes 128, lack any direct recent experience of Ethiopia. This must continue to raise considerable concern about their aims and intent. Their information is all too obviously based on “false facts”, and fed through social media. It has, indeed, become very apparent that even advocacy organizations like Human Rights Watch, which pride themselves on their accuracy, can easily be misled, or rather allow themselves to be misled by relying on information from sources with marked political agendas. HRW, for example, either routinely fails to query the political affiliation of its sources or merely ignores it. Freedom House and the Oakland Institute routinely do the same. It is clear from Representative Smith’s amended preamble to H Res. 128, for example, that his information about the elections of 2005, 2010 and 2015 is both inaccurate and incomplete, and that he has not read the Charities and Societies or the Anti-Terrorist Proclamations carefully. Nor apparently has he seen the reports of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission about demonstrations, or noted their comments on the use of “excessive force”.

This is not the place to go into detail of the way opposition elements try to use “false news” to manipulate opinion in the US or elsewhere, but it is appropriate to suggest that members of the US Congress should look at the ‘evidence’ presented to them carefully and check the political interests of those feeding it to them. It remains disappointing to find that Freedom House and Oakland Institute still refuse to investigate the accuracy of the allegations they receive, but it is hardly a surprise given their past record. Ethiopia engaged diplomatically with the sponsors of HRes 128 because the draft resolution was factually inaccurate and failed to consider recent developments. It demonstrated no insight in to government aims or the country’s development sand prospects. It was not in any sense a constructive approach. We would call upon those interested in considering Ethiopia’s current situation and its future prospects to consider collective accurate, first-hand evidence from Ethiopia, rather than using second-hand and inaccurate allegations from social media and opposition elements in the Diaspora who want to create political instability in the region, and encourage ethnic or sectarian differences in the interest of destabilization. Ethiopia is always open to accept criticism but we would ask for it to be based on accurate information, logic and mutual interest in promoting and protecting human rights!

Conference in Brussels on “Eritrea and the Ongoing Refugee Crisis

The conference on “Eritrea and the Ongoing Refugee Crisis” attracted more than 30 organizations on Thursday last week (October 19) in Brussels, Organizers included the Eritrean Movement for Democracy and Human Rights, EEPA, War Resisters’ International, and the Eritrean Law Society, with European Union policy makers, refugees, experts, scholars, and lawyers attending. They included Eritrean experts as well as international experts on Eritrea, and among those participating were Sheila B. Keetharuth, Dr. Asia Abdulkadir, Alex Jackson, Professor Gaim Kibreab, Dr. Daniel Mekonnen, Dr. Sarah Ogbay, Selam Kidane, Dawit Mesfin, Father Mussie Zerai, Martin Plaut and Dr. Adane Ghebremeskel.

The aim of the conference on “Eritrea and the Ongoing Refugee Crisis” was to consider the situation of Eritrean refugees in Europe as well as the human rights situation in Eritrea, to highlight the worsening Eritrean refugee crisis and the need to provide protection for Eritrean asylum seekers in the relevant EU host countries. By bringing together the voices of experts and refugees, and portraying a clear picture of the situation in Eritrea and raising broader awareness, it hoped to promote responsible European and international response to the continuing Eritrean refugee crisis.

The relevance of the conference was strongly underlined by the comments of Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, the same day when he said there was now "a real chance of closing the Central Mediterranean route" with a view to halting the flow of refugees from the Horn of Africa. At a press briefing on a European Council meeting Mr. Tusk said: "Leaders agreed to offer Prime Minister Gentiloni stronger support for Italy's work with the Libyan authorities." He added, “We have a real chance of closing the Central Mediterranean route." The EU said that illegal arrivals had decreased by almost 70% on the Central Mediterranean route in the third quarter of 2017 compared to the same period in 2016, “thanks to the efforts of the EU and its member states, especially Italy." The Council called “for continued efforts by the EU and support for Member States to stem the flows and increase returns, as well as to build strong cooperation with countries of origin, transit and departure”; reiterating “the importance of working with the Libyan authorities and all neighbours of Libya to enhance border management capacity”.

In a statement, the Conference organizers noted that the EU was already working with Libyan coastguards “to forcibly return Africans to Libyan detention camps in which rape, torture and slavery are routinely practiced.” They emphasized that closing the Central Mediterranean route for refugees desperate to escape Africa’s notorious dictatorships would have a disastrous impact on people, many of them children, who had risked all to flee from repression. The statement said: "We urge European politicians not to adopt this fortress Europe policy, turning their backs on the most vulnerable refugees and betraying the sacred principles enshrined in the human rights and other treaties they are signatories to."

The conference was opened by the UN Special Rapporteur of the United Nations on the situation of human rights in Eritrea, Ms. Sheila B. Keetharuth, speaking on the “Human Rights Situation in Eritrea.” She emphasized that there was no reason to believe that the situation in Eritrea was improving in respect of any of the essential points. She pointed out that the investigation by the UN’s Commission of Inquiry on Eritrea in 2016 had concluded that there were “reasonable grounds to believe crimes against humanity are taking place”. Those human rights abuses, she said, included arbitrary detention, gender-based violence and extrajudicial executions. The large number of minors, often unaccompanied, who flee, illustrated the desperate situation in the country. Nothing had changed.

The first panel of the Conference was on “Challenges of Eritrean Asylum Seekers in the European Union”, and emphasized the changing political climate in Europe. Panellists noted that although Eritrean refugees had historically found a high acceptance rate for their asylum claims because of the severe situation of human rights in Eritrea, this acceptance rate was now under threat. The number of refugees accepted under the Geneva Convention was decreasing and this resulted in lower protection status and in some cases rejection of asylum applications. Speakers emphasized the growing pressure to decrease the number of migrants

coming to Europe through deals on border security with countries such as Libya and Sudan. They called for full protection for asylum seekers as refugees in Europe.

The second Conference panel, “Conscription, Forced Labour and Gender Perspectives”, focused on the situation in Eritrea itself, and on national service, religious persecution and gender-based violence. A female refugee spoke of how she was forced to marry at 16 to avoid conscription in the national service, where abuse of women is common. National service is mandatory for both men and women but women may sometimes be given exemption, if pregnant or married. Other speakers noted human rights abuses in Eritrea, including persecution of religious minorities, was made possible by the complete lack of rule of law, and emphasized the traumatization of Eritrean refugees and the effect of this trauma on society.

The third panel, “The Refugee Crisis – Needs and Perspectives”, focused on the protection needs and future prospects of Eritrean refugees, especially in the Diaspora. Speakers noted that even outside Eritrea, the government worked hard to gain influence over the Eritrean Diaspora. This was illustrated by a recent report commissioned by the Dutch government on the 2% Diaspora tax, which found the tax was part of the mechanisms of control, extracted through intimidation and fear. Speakers emphasized the protection needs of the Eritrean Diaspora as well as the need for accountability for the crimes committed by Eritrean officials. One questioned whether the Eritrean government was a 'real government', referring to it as a 'mafia state'. Speakers underlined that Eritreans in exile who took a stand against the regime continually faced pressure from the regime loyalists in the Diaspora, including threats to the safety of family members still in Eritrea. Several participants at the conference were warned that members of the ruling People’s Front for Democracy and Justice would be attending and recording the conference.