

News in Brief

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News in brief

Africa and the African Union

The three-day Africa 2017 Forum held at Sharm el Sheikh in Egypt, December 7-9, co-organized by the Egypt's Ministry of Investment and International Cooperation and COMESA, attracted several Heads of State, including the Presidents of Guinea, Rwanda, Côte D'Ivoire and Somalia. The Ethiopian delegation was led by Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen. **(See article)**

The European Commission on Tuesday (December 11) announced 13 new actions worth 174.4 million euros under the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa to support refugees and host communities in the Horn of Africa. Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven Mimica said: "we are stepping up our support, to protect vulnerable migrants, to create economic opportunities on the ground and to foster stability in the region." Three of these projects, worth €38.05 million, will focus on creating employment opportunities and providing energy access to refugees and local populations in Ethiopia. Other projects will be channelled to Uganda (€20 million), Djibouti (€15 million), Sudan (€20

million), South Sudan (€31.4 million) and Somalia (€50 million).

Ethiopia reiterated the African Union position at a UN Security Council briefing from the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, Ms. Fatou Bensouda, on the issue of Sudan and the ICC on Wednesday (December 13). The AU has repeatedly called for the suspension of proceedings against President Omar Al Bashir of Sudan and urged the Security Council to withdraw the referral case. Ambassador Tekeda Alemu, Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the UN, said Sudan has been playing a constructive role in fighting terrorism, combating human trafficking and illegal migration as well as dealing with other regional peace and security issues. Taking these and other positive developments into account, he said the international community should change its approach in dealing with the Sudan and the Security Council should reconsider its position on the matter.

The UNDP report on “Income Inequality Trends in Sub-Saharan Africa: Divergence, Determinants, and Consequences report, launched at the Africa Economic conference last week underlines the absence of economic diversification, high concentration of means of production, and limited distributive capacity of the state as the key drivers of inequality. It says leading countries in terms of income inequality are South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Central African Republic, Comoros and Lesotho. Ethiopia, it said, offered a good example of fast growth, rapid poverty reduction and lowest inequality and provided useful policy lessons for other African countries facing low agricultural productivity, high population growth and weak distributive institutions. It recommends that governments focus on population, macro-economic fundamentals, human development and growth, while nurturing the seeds of equity.

The IGAD Partners Forum reaffirmed their strong support to the efforts carried out by IGAD to convene the High-level Revitalization Forum on the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. IPF members are Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Japan, India, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UK, USA, EU and the League of Arab States.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), together with the Office of the Mediator of Djibouti, launched the First Regional Conference for the Mediators and Ombudsmen of IGAD Member States on Tuesday (December 12). **(See article)**

IGAD opened its first regional conference on refugee education on Tuesday (December 12) in Djibouti. It aimed to contribute to global efforts to improve access to quality education for refugees living in the IGAD region, recommending ways to strengthen sustainable access to education for the benefit of both refugee and host community children and young people. Officials from Djibouti, IGAD, UNHCR, UN, the EU Delegation to Djibouti, and Charge' d'affaires of the United States to Djibouti attended the conference.

Ethiopia

The IMF Managing Director, Christine Lagarde, arrived in Addis Ababa on Wednesday (December 13), the first time the head of the IMF has visited Ethiopia. In her three-day visit (December 13-16), she held meetings with President Dr. Mulatu Teshome and Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn and other officials as well as speaking at the Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Union (AU) and visiting the Eastern Industry Zone in Dukem and the Hamlin Fistula Hospital. Ms. Lagarde described her talks with President Mulatu as very productive. She said the Ethiopian economy, which was doing very well in terms of growth, was “clearly at the juncture where it is looking at alternative drivers of growth.” She said she was in Ethiopia to “better understand the economic development model which has been implemented in Ethiopia.”

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn has appointed Ambassador Seyoum Mesfin, former Foreign Minister and Ambassador to China, as Special Envoy to the Middle East. He also appointed Ambassador Girma Biru, former Ambassador to the United States and previously Minister of Trade and Industry, as Special Envoy to North America.

Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen headed the Ethiopian delegation attending the Africa 2017 Forum at Sharm el Sheikh in Egypt last weekend, (December 7-9). **(See article)**

Deputy Prime Minister Demeke held talks with Dr. Mostafa Madbouly, Acting Egyptian Prime Minister at the end of last week. He reaffirmed Ethiopia's position on utilizing the Nile water in an equitable and reasonable way and assured Dr. Madbouly that Ethiopia fully understood the water needs of Egypt. He reiterated that the GERD dam would not cause significant harm to the downstream countries. The two sides noted the need to continue mutually beneficial talks to make meaningful progress on utilization of

the Nile River. Dr. Madbouly underlined the immense benefits the two countries would gain if they broadened and deepened their fields of cooperation.

State Minister Dr. Aklilu Hailemichael met with the Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Nora and Nor Transs Global Logistic, Mrs. Oya Erdogan, on Tuesday (December 13). Dr. Aklilu said having an efficient and cost-effective transport system was valuable and noted Nora and Nor Transs Global Logistic was an experienced company with global networks. He said creating viable partnerships with companies along with building Industrial Parks was of critical importance. Mrs. Erdogan, who expressed her company's desire to expand its presence in Africa, said the company wanted to open an office in Addis Ababa as well as use the LAPSET and Djibouti transport and logistics corridors to develop Turkey's trade relation with East African countries.

The second Ethio-Jordan Business Forum, organized by the Jordan Investment Commission, Jordan's Chamber of Industry and the Ethiopian Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Associations was held in Addis Ababa on Friday last week (December 8). **(See article)**

Representatives of over a dozen Moroccan private companies specializing in agro-processing and other industries visited Ethiopia to participate in business-to-business discussions and a two-day Business Forum (December 11-12). **(See article)**

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson, Meles Alem, said on Friday last week that since the end of the Saudi Arabian amnesty for undocumented migrants, the government had repatriated some 10,000 undocumented citizens from Saudi Arabia between November 15 to December 5. In March, Saudi Arabia offered a 90-day amnesty for undocumented migrants to leave the Kingdom voluntarily and more than 70,000 undocumented Ethiopian migrants returned under the amnesty and its extensions.

The Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Electricity is planning to increase the amount of power it exports to Sudan, Kenya and Djibouti over the next two years as new transmission lines are completed. Currently Ethiopia exports 80 MW to Djibouti, up to 100 MW to Sudan and 10 MW to small border towns in Kenya. Feasibility studies have been carried out and when installation work of transmission lines to Kenya is complete, Ethiopia will export an additional 400 MW to Kenya. According to the MoU signed between Ethiopia and Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, and Zambia, the Ethio-Kenya transmission line will be extended to those countries. South Sudan and Somalia have signed power purchases agreement with Ethiopia.

The Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Electricity said on Wednesday this week (December 13) that construction of the Genale Dawa hydropower dam on the Dawa River had been completed. A spokesperson said the Genale Dawa hydro power project is almost completed except problems associated with filling the dam with water.

Inflation increased to 13.6% in November, up from 12.2% in October. The Central Statistical Agency said the prices of major cereals, teff, maize, and sorghum, showed a slight decline and there was a decline in the prices of meat, milk, cheese, eggs, butter and vegetables, but the price of fruits, sugar, whole pepper and coffee beans increased. Non-food items increased by 8.6% in November 2017, compared to November 2016, due to a rise in the price of chat, clothing and footwear, housing and energy, household goods and furnishings, and health care.

The European Union (EU) on Wednesday (December 13) launched an energizing development program to provide support and solutions for renewable energy technologies and solutions in Ethiopia. In conjunction with German Development Cooperation, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the government of Ethiopia, the program will provide an additional budget of €10.35 million. It will focus on equipping social institutions with solar power, upgrading water mills to micro-hydropower plants and strengthening local markets for solar lanterns, improved cook-stoves and biomass briquettes, aiming to reach around 500,000 people.

Djibouti

The first Ethio-Djibouti Tourism Business to Business Forum was held on Tuesday and Wednesday last week (December 5-6) as part of Djibouti's First International Trade Fair, "Your Gateway to Africa". **(See article)**

Moumin Ahmed Cheikh, Justice Minister and Government Spokesman, said after the latest Council of Ministers' meeting approved the budget for fiscal year 2018, up 5% to 126 billion francs (US\$712.55 million) compared with 2017, that the economy was expected to expand by 7% percent in 2018, up from estimated 6.5% this year. This would be "driven by direct investment and the transport, telecommunications, retail services and buildings sectors." The Minister said the budget focused on

sustainable poverty reduction and social development, consolidation of the health system and improvement of education system.

The CEO of the new Doraleh Multipurpose Port in Djibouti, Wahib Dahir Aden, told journalists last week that the Government of Djibouti had decided to reduce port service prices between 20% and 45%. Doraleh, one of the country's five specialized ports, offers a range of services at its oil, container, bulk, general cargo and other facilities. It began full operations last July and has served 220 ships carrying 1.7 million tons of goods since then.

Mr. Dahir said the remaining one kilometer of railway line to the new port will be completed within the next six months.

Kenya

The Supreme Court explained on Monday (December 11) why it upheld President Kenyatta's re-election, dismissing two election petitions challenging the repeat poll on October 26. The Court ruled that there was no need for fresh nominations after the result of the first poll was voided, and even if Mr. Odinga had withdrawn from the election, the move would not have required cancellation of the poll. In the event, in any case, he failed to fill in the requisite forms for official withdrawal. The Court said the validity of an election could not be challenged on the basis of whether it was not held in all constituencies; and on the issue of irregularities, it said the petitioners had made general allegations without providing any substantial proof.

Somalia

President Mohamed Abdullahi met with Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani of Qatar on the side-lines of the Extraordinary Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) summit held in Istanbul on Wednesday this week (December 13). They discussed issues of common interest and President Mohamed thanked the Emir for Qatar's support to Somalia and its government and its efforts to achieve sustainable development through supporting developmental projects.

Somalia and Pakistan have agreed to further strengthen their relations, bilaterally and multilaterally after a meeting between President Mohamed Abdullahi and Pakistan Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on the side-lines of the OIC Summit in Istanbul on Wednesday (December 13).

Federal Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation, Mohamed Abdullahi Salad says the government is considering the revival of Somali Airlines which collapsed in 1991 when the central government collapsed. Currently, the market is dominated by a number of private companies, including Jubba Airways, Daalo Airlines, African Express, Freedom Airline Express and Ocean Airlines as well as international airlines, Turkish Airlines, Ethiopian Airlines and flydubai. Somali Airlines used to fly to Abu Dhabi, Cairo, Frankfurt, Jeddah, Nairobi, Banjul and Rome.

The IMF projects Somalia's economic growth can be expected to pick up next year and in 2019 after drought and security issues cut growth this year. In a statement on Tuesday (December 12), the IMF said it expected the economy to expand by 2.5% in 2018 and 3% t in 2019, with inflation falling to a range of 2.0 to 2.5%. It also projects the economy to grow 1.8% this year, down from a February forecast of 2.5%. It said drought and sporadic terrorist attacks took a toll on economic activity with drought temporarily impacting the tax collection efforts."

"Protection of Civilians: Building the Foundation for Peace, Security and Human Rights in Somalia," a report from the UN Human Rights Office and the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia, published on Sunday (December 10), documents 2,078 civilian deaths and 2,507 injuries between January 1, 2016 and October 14, 2017. 60% of these were attributed to Al-Shabaab, 13% to clan militias, 11% to State actors, including the army and the police, 4% to AMISOM and 12% to unidentified sources. The report recommends all parties to take all feasible precautions to protect civilians and civilian installations, and encouraged AMISOM to strengthen its accountability. It urged the Federal Government and Federal Member States to adopt the legislative measures to ensure effective investigation and prosecution of violations and abuse.

The African Union Commission on Monday (December 11) rejected allegations of human rights violations by AMISOM troops in the report. It said the report contained "significant misrepresentations" and ignored conclusive investigations carried out by AMISOM's Board of Inquiry. The Commission also pointed out the report had failed "to provide any iota of evidence to support" allegations that AMISOM troops had killed and maimed 178 civilians between January 2016 and 14 October 2017.

General Abdiweli Jama Hussein 'Gorod', head of the Somali federal army visited Garowe on Monday (December 11) to inspect the 2400 soldiers from Puntland that recently integrated into the Somali National Army as part of the National Security Architecture. He also met the head of the Puntland forces, General Said Mohamed Hirsi 'Said Dheere'.

The National Independent Electoral Commission said in a report presented to stakeholders on Monday (December 11) that preparing for elections by 2020 would cost around US\$120 million. About half of this would go to registration of voters, procurement of voting material, security, and mobilization of electoral staff. Other costs would public consultations on the electoral model to be adopted, completion of the electoral laws and regulation, management of the political party systems and media, public sensitization and outreach campaigns, and post-election assessment.

Somaliland's new President Musa Bihi Abdi was inaugurated in Hargeisa on Wednesday (December 13) as its fifth President. President Bihi, the candidate of the Kulmiye party won the election in mid-November, obtaining 55% of the vote.

South Sudan

The UN Security Council on Thursday (December 14) unanimously adopted resolution 2392 (2017), extending the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) until 15 March 2018. A Presidential statement also emphasised the Security Council's support of IGAD's High-level Revitalisation Forum. It said the Council was "deeply concerned about the actions of all parties to the conflict that are perpetuating this" and expressed its strong support for IGAD's High-Level Revitalization Forum. It looked forward to the convening of a fully inclusive Forum and substantive progress on the initiative by the end of December. It strongly urged all parties to engage constructively in the process to revitalize the 2015 peace agreement, and underlined that no party should set pre-conditions for participation.

The members of the Troika, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States, on Wednesday this week (December 13) called on all parties to participate in the IGAD High-Level Revitalization Forum for the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan. It said this was "a unique and critical opportunity to make progress towards peace." **(See article)**

President Salva Kiir declared a state of emergency for up to three months in the three states of Gok, Western and Eastern Lakes, and ordered the army to carry out forceful disarmament with immediate effect, using force to disarm civilians if they did not lay down their weapons peacefully. According to

reports at least 170 people have been killed in tribal clashes in Western Lakes state in recent weeks. The violence has also led to the burning of houses and the destruction of property.

A team of experts from the United Nations Commission on Human Rights began a six-day visit to South Sudan on Monday (December 11) to discuss the current human rights situation. Commissioners, Yasmin Sooka and Andrew Clapham, are meeting government officials, members of civil society, religious leaders, diplomats, and UN staff, as well as visiting camps for internally displaced persons. They will then head to Uganda and Ethiopia, where they will visit refugee camps and settlements along the South Sudanese border. In Ethiopia, they will also meet with AU, IGAD and UN officials as well as other groups.

The UK this week announced an additional £52 million humanitarian package to provide food, medicines, shelter and support to up to 500,000 internally displaced people in South Sudan and assist hundreds of thousands of refugees in Uganda, Ethiopia and Sudan.

Sudan

President Omer al-Bashir went to Istanbul on Tuesday (December 12) to take part in an Extraordinary summit of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to coordinate a response to the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital by U.S. President Donald Trump. The meeting was called by Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, current head of the Organisation.

Foreign Minister Professor Ibrahim Ghandour attended a Sudanese-British Investment Forum in London on Tuesday (December 12). The Foreign Minister also held talks with UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson and spoke at Chatham House. **(See article)**

Ethiopia's Renaissance is ours too: Omar Hassan al- Bashir

The 12th Nations, Nationalities and People's Day was celebrated on Friday (December 8) at Semera in the Afar Regional State with a theme "Our Constitutional and Colourful Multi-nationalism for our Renaissance" in the presence of Prime Minister Hailemariam. The occasion was also attended by President Omar Al-Bashir of Sudan, President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti and the Prime Minister of Somalia. In a message of congratulations, President Dr. Mulatu Teshome said all nations, nationalities

and people of Ethiopia had the responsibility to safeguard the Constitution and ensure its effective implementation.

Sudanese President Omar Hassen Al-Bashir on the occasion said “today we the great people of the Sudan renew our interaction with the great people and government of Ethiopia who is a model to all African’s in achieving peace, unity and growth fulfilling the aspiration of its people. “History and our sisterly tie that brought our two people and country together confirms that enhancing the strategic relation with Ethiopia remains to be our continuous and great target” adding “the renaissance of Ethiopia is the renaissance of the Sudan and vice versa.” on various occasions, Sudan has expressed its unflinching position on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) that its construction would benefit the lower riparian countries and is going to support it until its completion. The president thanked the people and government of Ethiopia for the support rendered to the Sudan in its effort of reconciliation to ensure comprehensive peace and stability in all of the Sudan. “The lifting of the sanctions on the Sudan will have a positive impact in promoting the political and economic relation of the two sisterly nations” adding “It will open a new chapter to the two countries economic tie through the reinforcement of joint collaborations and projects which will help speed up regional economic integration and serve as a model for the whole of the continent, the president underscored.

Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn in his opening remarks said “Celebration of the day symbolizes our democratic unity which stands strong and asserts the fact that our future depends on our collective choice.” “Today’s celebration marks the 23rd year of the endorsement of our golden constitution which has built the freedom, equality and democratic rights of nations and nationalities of Ethiopia on a strong foundation”, the premier underscored. Hailemariam in his concluding remarks noting the various reforms being undertaken by the FDRE government called on the public to support the reforms being undertaken in good governance, corruption and development endeavors.

Djiboutian President Ismail Omar Guelleh said the celebration of the day reflects Ethiopia's unity in diversity. Somalia’s Deputy Prime Minister Mehadi Mohammed Guleh on his part noting the day to be an important celebration marking citizens ownership of the constitution and expression of peace, democracy and acceptance among each other said “It show’s Ethiopia’s maturity, openness and democracy.” “Somalia acknowledges Ethiopia’s bilateral and multilateral commitments and efforts in UN, AU, IGAD and AMISOM to ride out extremist elements from the horn of Africa and bring a lasting peace in Somalia” adding “We also commend the tremendous progress Ethiopia has made in its economy.”

The day also commemorates the time when Ethiopia's Constitution was adopted. It provides the opportunity to capitalize on successes and is celebrated to strengthen democratic unity, as well as encouraging more development and continuation of efforts to resolve current challenges through sustained deep reform. It is a celebration based on respect, concern and mutual socio-economic development for all the peoples of Ethiopia. It is also a day that celebrates the youth of Ethiopia as they are the ones with the responsibility of carrying over this event to the next generation.

Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen at the Africa 2017 Forum in Egypt

Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen headed the Ethiopian delegation to the three-day Africa 2017 Forum held at Sharm el Sheikh in Egypt, December 7-9. Organized by the Egyptian Ministry of Investment and International Cooperation and the COMESA Regional Investment Agency (RIA), it attracted over 2,000 delegates from 75 countries as well as African heads of state and business leaders, including President Alpha Condé of Guinea, President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, President Alassane Ouattara of the Côte D'Ivoire and President Mohamed Abdullahi of Somalia.

The Business and Investment Forum, entitled “Driving investment for inclusive growth” was convened to increase intra-African investments and cross-border collaboration. The message was that entrepreneurship and private sector would be the driving force to transform the continent and President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi reiterated his intent to bring Africa closer together both politically and economically. Speakers, including Heads of State, stressed the need for self-reliance and domestic resource mobilization. The Forum also offered businesspeople with an opportunity to meet investors, engage with political leaders and policy makers and explore new ideas to improve business environment across the continent. The Forum wrapped up with a focus on China-Africa cooperation.

The Forum was preceded by a Young Entrepreneurs Day which brought together over 200 young African entrepreneurs who were meeting investors to pitch their businesses over the two days of the Forum. Egyptian President El-Sisi highlighted the importance of African youth, saying they should be the cornerstone of development plans in the continent as governments strive to promote innovation and technology. President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, co-chair of the Young Entrepreneurs Day, reiterated the

need for more urgency: “We cannot afford to waste opportunities because of unnecessary red tape and associated delays.” Citing the launch of the Tripartite Free Trade Area in Egypt in 2015, he said it was important that African leaders drive the institutional reform of the African Union in order to get the FTA fully operational. Heba Salama, Director of the COMESA Regional Investment Agency, co-conveners of the Forum, in an emotional address reminded the young and the leaders in the room that if your dreams didn’t scare you, then they were not big enough. This did not go unheeded by the entrepreneurs in the room, many of whom had scaled-up businesses that were ready to take off.

Deputy Premier Demeke in his remarks noted that Ethiopia had long recognized the enormous potential of regional infrastructure connectivity for inclusive and sustained economic development and regional integration. As the second most populous country in Africa, he said, it was fully aware of its responsibility to contribute to regional integration, and indeed to African economic integration. He added: “We have, I can say, already gone a long way towards laying the infrastructural basis for consolidating economic ties within the Horn of Africa, through the IGAD community, and even more widely. We have created power interconnections, and road and rail links, and these will be expanded.” He praised China’s contribution to the realization of his country’s strategic plan for infrastructural development within and the region that has been exceptionally helpful and valuable.

Speaking at the “Africa China Partnership” panel, Deputy Prime Minister Demeke said working jointly was imperative to make Africa a destination of investment and business. He underlined the vivid partnership role of China in Africa but pointed out that a lot needed to be done to make Africa, with its rich resources and abundant labor, a preferred destination for investment. He noted China’s immense support to Ethiopia in infrastructural development, transport, energy and manufacturing industries and said with the coming to fruition of the Ethiopian Growth and Transformation plans, Ethiopia’s efforts to expand business and investment opportunities would be further consolidated. He said taking measures that make Africa a preferred investment and business destination and solving problems of the continent, was essential as the China-Africa Partnership was based on the principle of mutualism. Africa, he said, should work better to benefit from China’s new international cooperation roadmap

The final day of the Forum focused on industrial revolution for Africa and China-Africa economic relations. It was agreed that China-Africa relationship was a win-win one. Ambassador Helen Hai, CEO, Made in Africa Initiative-China, said China had a clear strategy for Africa but the continent needed to be

in the driving seat when it came to discussions about the China-Africa relationship. She said the relationship was moving on from resources to partnerships with African countries but they needed to be clear about what they wanted from China. She said 85 million jobs were likely to be exported from China in the next few years as labour costs increased in that country and Africa was well placed to attract them. “If Africa can capture those jobs they can enjoy the same economic transformation China had,” she said.

Carlos Lopes, former Executive Secretary, UNECA, and now Professor, Graduate School of Development Policy and Practice, University of Cape Town, cautioned that it was not inevitable that all those jobs would migrate to Africa. He warned that many jobs that could move out of China might be replaced by robots and automation, not by Africans. Equally, other regions would compete for the jobs that Africa sought, at the lower end of the value chain. “A few African countries will make it, but not all,” he said. He added: “This huge move to get jobs can be elusive if we are not fast enough in creating opportunities. The window is closing very fast. We need to move quickly and do so in a way that is commensurate with the interests of China’s strategy.”

The conference eventually concluded with five recommendations. These were the need to pump new investments into Africa to boost economic growth and development; the establishment of joint projects, particularly in infrastructure, to support investment and trade among African states; to enhance the role of the African private sector to increase investment rates in the continent; to carry out and execute programs that encourage entrepreneurship and the adoption of programs that would increase youth participation in the African economy; and to empower women in all fields of economic activity, considering them as active members in the process of developing Africa and achieving economic stability.

Overall, African leaders reached a strong consensus to focus on regional integration, inclusive growth and youth empowerment in order to achieve continued and sustained growth on the continent. The Forum also underlined its claim to be the premier business platform to nurture new partnerships; meet investors and fast track business objectives in Africa.

The First Ethio-Djibouti Tourism Forum held in Djibouti

Djibouti's First International Trade Fair, "Your Gateway to Africa," held last week, attracted international businesses from across the world, including from Canada, Yemen, Kenya, United Arab Emirates, Uganda and Ethiopia as well as a 52 member Japanese delegation. The event and the accompanying fora promoted Djibouti's commercial place in the region, a position that allows it to be a major supply and redistribution platform of regional trade. It also promoted promising business opportunities for investors in tourism, transport, ports, free zones and banks, for example, drawing attention to Djibouti's average GDP growth rate of 6%. This sustained growth reflects the strength and dynamism of Djibouti's economy, driven mainly by the service sector, but now beginning to diversify, especially through the inflow of foreign direct investment. Cultural shows were held on the side-lines of the week-long trade fair as well panel discussions and fora on regional integration and investment, highlighting the cross-border infrastructure projects between Djibouti and Ethiopia, and on the potential of Djibouti and tourism attractions in the region.

One aspect of the discussions on tourism covered ways to jointly promote Ethiopia and Djibouti as a single tourist destination, and the first Ethio-Djibouti Tourism Business to Business (B2B) Forum was held on Tuesday and Wednesday last week (December 5-6). The aim was to provide the opportunity of linking the tourism of two countries and to create a forum for tour operators of both countries to look into areas of cooperation. The forum was organized by the Ethiopian Tourism Organization collaborating with the National Office of Tourism of the Republic of Djibouti and Ethiopian Embassy in Djibouti. The Ethiopian delegation was composed of government officials from the Ethiopian Tourism Organization as well as private sector tour operators and hoteliers. It led by the Deputy Director-General of the Ethiopian Tourism Organization, Professor Yichaleh Mihret.

The opening session was addressed by the President of the Djibouti Chamber of Commerce, Youssuf Moussa Dawaleh, and by Ethiopia's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Djibouti, Ambassador Shamebo Fitamo. Ambassador Shamebo pointed out the continuing rapid economic growth of Ethiopia and the contribution of tourism to the country's GDP. He gave details of the immense natural resources Ethiopia possesses and of the various tourist attractions that there were in the country. He also emphasized that the service sector was the backbone of the economy, and tourism, as part of the service sector, played a crucial role in building the image of the nation and creating job opportunities among the population.

Following brief presentations on the respective Ethiopian and Djiboutian potentials for tourism and tourist development, a business-to-business meeting was held between Ethiopian and Djiboutian tour operators and hoteliers. The discussion is expected to provide a baseline for the future integration of tour operators from both countries.

The Ethiopian delegation, which also visited various Djibouti tourist attractions, held discussions with Djibouti's Minister of the Economy, Mr. Ilyas Moussa Dawaleh. The Minister underlined the importance of strengthening economic integration between Ethiopia and Djibouti, not only through infrastructure development but also through policy harmonization processes. In addition to political, economic and social relations, he emphasized the need to integrate the tourist sectors of the two countries as well. He suggested hoteliers should work together and tour operators should create a railway tourism package.

As both sides recognized, the major projects, including the standard-gauge railway from Addis Ababa to Djibouti, the power and portable water supply projects are manifestations of the strong political, economic and social relations of the two countries. So, in addition, the two countries should create ties in other sectors as well. The tourism B2B session could be considered as a gateway to integrate the tourism sector of the two countries and a means to further strengthen their people-to-people relations.

A Moroccan business delegation in Ethiopia for agro-business networking

Representatives of over a dozen Moroccan private companies specializing in agro-processing and food and body care product industries were in Ethiopia this week, participating in business-to-business discussions and a two-day Business Forum (December 11-12). They were here to start business-to-business discussions with Ethiopian companies and officials to get to know the business and investment situation as well as look at the possibilities of creating partnerships.

The long standing bilateral relations between Ethiopia and Morocco are now scaling up to more active economic cooperation. The practical cooperative partnership between the two countries has been demonstrated by a number of signed agreements and Memoranda of Understanding in the areas of agriculture, water management, sustainable energies, fertilizers and trade promotion. The two countries have so far agreed to a total of 12 agreements and Memoranda of Understanding. Apart from creating legal agreement frameworks, the two countries have also held several business fora, the first in Addis Ababa in October last year; the second in Rabat in May this year; and the third in Addis Ababa in August.

Welcoming this week's delegation, Mr. Addisu Tekle, Advisor to the President of the Ethiopian Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Associations, emphasized that the trade and business-to-business relations between Ethiopian and Moroccan companies been steadily increasing. He said hundreds of companies had come to Ethiopia to assess the opportunities and business environment during the Ethiopia-Moroccan Business Fora. There had been twice as many at the Ethio-Moroccan Business Forum in October last year that there had been in the previous year.

Agro- business networking, he said, was aimed to scale up the existing trade relations of the two countries as well as encourage the Moroccan companies to engage in the vast opportunities for investment and involvement in the manufacturing sector. Ethiopia, he added, had ample opportunities in the agro-processing sector as well as strongly enabling incentives and a highly favorable business environment.

A representative from Ethiopian Ministry of Industry briefed the delegation on the opportunities and the incentives available in the agro-processing sector as well as giving details of the integrated agro-industry parks now under construction in different parts of the country. Representatives from the Ethiopian Customs and Revenue Authority and the Ethiopian Standard's Agency also briefed the delegation on customs procedures and the country's standardization rules and regulations.

Younes Choukrallah, representative of a Moroccan company engaged in agro-business noted that his company was desirous to develop and sell products in Ethiopia in partnership with Ethiopian domestic business partners. Mr. Choukrallah, who was impressed with the hospitality and kindness of the people in Ethiopia, said his company had immediately accepted the invitation to take part in the Business Forum because of Ethiopia's substantial potential market.

The head of the delegation, Jalal Benbrahim, said the meetings and the Forum had been a good opportunity to exchange workable ideas between the companies of the two countries. He said: "I think it was a fruitful trade mission that helped us to better understand how the market in Ethiopia works and what should be done to establish businesses between the different companies." He noted some Ethiopian enterprises had shown interest in joint ventures and some investors from Morocco also made it clear they were interested in establishing agro-industrial projects. The discussions the delegation had held with Ethiopian businesspeople and officials had helped them to understand the business environment. The delegation managed to hold about 200 business-to-business meetings during their stay in Ethiopia; overall

members of the delegation described the business opportunities, atmosphere and business potential as “big and promising”.

Through a representative, Moroccan Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ambassador Mhamedi said the ties between Moroccan and Ethiopian private sector was the reflection of the growing momentum that characterized the relationship between the two countries. He added that the visit of King of Morocco on November 2016 had opened a new chapter in the bilateral relations between the two countries.

Ethiopia and Jordan demonstrate their enthusiasm for strengthening economic ties

The second Ethio-Jordan Business Forum, organized by the Jordan Investment Commission, Jordan’s Chamber of Industry and the Ethiopian Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Associations was held in Addis Ababa on Friday last week (December 8). The first Ethio-Jordan Business Forum took place in Addis Ababa in 2015 with both countries agreeing to raise existing business relationships to a higher level; since then economic ties, especially in terms of trade, have steadily grown in volume and variety.

Welcoming the Jordanian Business Delegation and accompanying higher officials, Assefa Gebreselassie, Vice- President of the Ethiopian Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Associations, noted that Ethiopia and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan have enjoyed strong and longstanding historic and diplomatic bilateral relations. He emphasized the importance of these links to foster a comprehensive level of cooperation to further expands economic and business ties between the two countries. He noted the current volume of trade between the two countries was in favor of Jordan, and underlined that a lot of work needed to be done to create a trade balance between them. He said business and trade networking platforms such as this forum should be continuous to achieve mutual and sustainable economic relations.

State Minister at Ethiopia’s Ministry of Trade, Ayana Zewide, stressed that Ethiopia, with its significant population size, had the advantage of offering huge internal market opportunities for Jordanian investors and businessmen. He emphasizes that the Jordanian delegation should explore the untapped opportunities of doing business in the different sectors in Ethiopia during their visit.

Underlining that Ethiopia was becoming an emerging manufacturing Hub for Africa, the Vice Commissioner of the Ethiopian Investment Commission, Abebe Ababayehu, also briefed the Forum on

the ways the Ethiopian investment and manufacturing sector were favorable to foreign investors. He noted the advantageous access Ethiopia had to European Union and US markets, the cost effective and highly affordable infrastructure available to support investment, the availability of a trainable and competitive labor force and the extensive investment incentives and facilitation offered to business investors. These were, he said, merely some of the reasons to encourage foreign investors to become involved in Ethiopia, He urged the Jordanian companies to engage in the very substantial investment and manufacturing opportunities available in Ethiopia.

The State Minister for the Investment Affairs of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Muhannad Shehadeh, pointed out that as Ethiopia was one of the fastest growing economies in the world, and Jordan was a focal point for trade within the Middle East and the Horn of Africa, trade, business and investment relations and ties between the two countries would always be mutually beneficial. Ambassador Wasfi Ayyad, Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to Ethiopia said the business forum was aimed to enhance the economic ties of the two countries “through business matchmaking and networking between companies and businessmen of the two countries”. He also noted that at the opening of Jordanian Embassy in Ethiopia had demonstrated the very real intentions of the Jordanian government to scale up its relationship with Ethiopia.

Some 28 Jordanian companies took part in the forum, looking for available market and business partners in Ethiopia; and on the occasion, Assefa Gebreselassie, the Vice-President of the Ethiopian Chambers of Commerce and Sectoral Associations, and Jordan’s State Minister Muhannad Shehadeh, signed a Memorandum of Understanding to cover future relations.

Full participation urged in the South Sudan Revitalization Forum

The members of the Troika, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States, issued a statement on Wednesday this week (December 13) calling called on all parties to participate in the IGAD High-Level Revitalization Forum for the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan

The Troika said the High-Level Revitalization Forum, due to meet at the beginning of next week was “a unique and critical opportunity to make progress towards peace.” A meeting of IGAD’s Council of Ministers will take place at the end of the week, followed by an Extraordinary IGAD Summit of Heads of

State and Government, and the High-Level Revitalization Forum itself December 18-22.

The Troika statement came just days before the Intergovernmental Authority on Development convenes High-Level Revitalization Forum. The Troika statement said: “The humanitarian, economic, security, human rights, and political situation continues to deteriorate with devastating consequences for the people of South Sudan.” Aid agencies say over half the South Sudanese population now lacks enough food to feed themselves; a third of the population has fled from their homes. It is the largest refugee crisis in Africa. The Troika said: “This situation is intolerable to the region and the international community...It cannot continue”.

In recent months, the region and the international community have repeatedly called on all parties to the conflict to participate in the High-Level Revitalization Forum constructively and in a spirit of compromise and inclusion. The Troika said firmly that they “fully expect” the Government of South Sudan to adhere to its repeated public and private commitments to participate in the High-Level Revitalization Forum in good faith, and with the immediate goal of stopping the fighting in the country.

The Troika emphasized that although South Sudan is a member of IGAD, its government was also a party to the conflict and that to achieve a sustainable peace, no party to the conflict can have undue influence or a veto on the process, including the government. The statement said: “The opposition also bears responsibility for coming to the table without preconditions,” adding that “All parties must engage sincerely and make concessions in the national interest; otherwise, the conflict and suffering will continue”.

Norway, the US and UK said they fully supported IGAD’s continuing effort to build peace saying they viewed the High-Level Revitalization Forum as the essential and inclusive forum to advance peace in South Sudan. The statement called for a “genuinely inclusive” High-Level Revitalization process that reflected the political reality of South Sudan.

Among those invited to the High-Level Revitalization Forum is the SPLM-IO. The IGAD Extraordinary Summit on June 12 decided on the convening of a High-Level Revitalization Forum of the parties to the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS), “including

estranged groups.” In a letter addressed to the SPLM-IO last week, IGAD said among key measures to restore a permanent ceasefire were full and inclusive implementation of the peace agreement and provision of realistic timelines and implementation schedules towards a democratic election at the end of the transitional period. The letter notes that all participants to the Forum will be representing their respective parties. It underlines that that IGAD is optimistic the SPLM-IO would seize this opportunity to engage earnestly to revitalize the ARCSS, cease all forms of hostilities, end the conflicts and re-establish a firm foundation to build sustainable peace, stability and democracy in South Sudan.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday this week (December 13), the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) launched a US\$1.72 billion appeal to assist the six million people affected by conflict, displacement and hunger in South Sudan. Alain Noudéhou, Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan said: “There is growing need for humanitarian assistance with displacement, food insecurity, malnutrition, violence and economic decline taking a toll on the health, safety and livelihoods of people in need.” He said: “Today, we are calling for US\$1.72 billion to continue providing life-saving assistance and protection for the six million people most in need in South Sudan,” emphasizing the focus would be on protecting vulnerable groups, especially women and children. Since the fighting began in December 2013, about four million people have been forced to flee their homes, including nearly 1.9 million internally displaced and over 2.1 million in neighbouring countries. OCHA says an earlier than normal start of the lean season will result in an estimated 5.1 million people, or 48% of the population, being classified as severely food insecure in the next three months. In addition, nutrition surveys reveal that approximately half of all South Sudanese children under five experience acute malnutrition. Despite the problems, and the impact of fighting, the South Sudan humanitarian operation has continued to reach millions of those in need, as of the end of November, aid organizations had reached more than five million people during the year;

Mr. Noudéhou called on all stakeholders to continue to play their roles in alleviating the suffering.

Sudan’s Foreign Minister at a UK trade forum and addressing Chatham House

The UK-Sudan Trade and Investment forum on Tuesday (December 12) in London was Sudan’s first global investment summit and the first to be held in Europe since the US lifted sanctions in October. It was hosted by the trade organisation Developing Market Associates under the instruction of the Sudanese

government and was billed as an “opportunity for foreign investors and businesses to obtain first-hand information on the country’s latest development and investment opportunities in key sectors”.

Sudan’s Foreign Minister Professor Ibrahim Ghandour told the opening session of the Forum that he hoped it would help UK companies realize the investment and trade opportunities in Sudan following the lifting of the U.S. sanctions. Sudan’s Ambassador to the UK, Ambassador Mohamed Abdalla Ali Eltom said the forum presented investment opportunities in Sudan, with representatives from the Sudan’s ministries of oil, agriculture, investment, finance and minerals participating as well as private and public-sector companies. The British Ambassador to the Sudan, Ambassador Michael Aron welcomed participants, and the Forum was also addressed by a senior trade advisor for Africa at the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Department of International Trade, and the deputy director of the U.S. States Department’s Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, Office of Sanctions Policy and Implementation.

The Sudanese delegation to the Forum included Dr Abdel-Rahman Osman, Minister of Petroleum and Gas, the State Ministers of Investment and of Economic Planning and Finance, and the CEO of the Bank of Khartoum as well as various business representatives.

The delegation presented details of key sectors of the country’s economy, providing an in-depth look at Sudan’s energy, mining, agriculture and infrastructure possibilities.

During his visit, Foreign Minister Ghandour also spoke at Chatham House on Sudan’s Regional Policies: Key Relations and Engagements. Sudan, of course, is neighbour to seven African countries covering north, central and the Horn of Africa. It also has a maritime border with Saudi Arabia and is a bridge between Africa and the Middle East. An important troop-contributing member of the Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen, Sudan has retained a neutral position over the intra-Gulf dispute, supporting mediation efforts. Sudan is also playing a central role in regional diplomacy in the Horn of Africa, particularly on South Sudan, and is involved in tripartite negotiations over the Nile with Ethiopia and Egypt, as well as engaging closely with the situation in Libya.

In his presentation on Sudan`s foreign policy Professor Ghandour covered a number of issues including the country`s internal peace and stability, and its relations with neighbouring countries, the IGAD Revitalization peace process in South Sudan, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and the Nile as well as the Sudan-Ethiopia Joint Border Force.

On GERD and the Nile, Professor Ghandour stressed that Ethiopia contributing over 85% of the Nile water from its highlands, had the right to construct the Dam in order to meet the energy demands for its development. He noted that Ethiopia was constructing GERD for the purpose of power generation to benefit its own industrialisation and to benefit development in the wider region through export of power. This power would be purchased by Sudan, Egypt and other countries.

Foreign Minister Ghandour noted that the Joint Border Force being set up with Ethiopia has already completed its training and would soon be deployed. In the past, Sudan had successfully set up a joint border force with Chad, and it was, he said, looking forward to achieving the same with other neighbours. It had already held consultations on this process with Egypt, Eritrea and Libya, and with South Sudan. Implementation of a Joint Border Force with South Sudan was expected soon. Professor Ghandour also said that Sudan`s Vice-President was currently in Asmara, meeting with Eritrean Government officials to discuss the stalemate between Ethio-Eritrean. He said the role that Ethiopia played to encourage peace in the region and revive the peace process of South Sudan was immense. He noted that he would be travelling to Addis Ababa later in the week to attend the IGAD Council of Ministers` meeting to revitalize the South Sudan peace process.

During his visit to the UK, Professor Ghandour also met with UK Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson. A Sudan Foreign Ministry Spokesperson said: “The meeting discussed the developing bilateral relations between the two countries and the continued cooperation in all fields under the umbrella of the strategic dialogue between Sudan and Britain, which has been begun since 2016.” They also discussed the economic situation in Sudan following the lifting of the U.S. economic sanctions, and Foreign Minister Ghandour briefed Mr. Johnson on the National Dialogue and its impact, as well as on Sudan`s role in supporting the regional stability in Somalia, South Sudan and the Central African Republic and the ramifications of the Gulf crisis and the war in Yemen. The two ministers also discussed Sudan`s efforts to combat illegal migration and human trafficking.

Foreign Secretary Johnson said in twitter message that he had held “constructive meeting with the Sudanese Foreign Secretary and raised ongoing UK concerns over human rights and the political and economic reforms needed in Sudan. The UK and Sudan held their first strategic ministerial-level consultation meeting in Khartoum for 25 years last year and agreed to exchange visits at the level of senior officials as well as cooperate in the fields of economy, investment and culture.

IGAD’s first Regional Conference for Mediators and Ombudsmen

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), together with the Office of the Mediator of Djibouti, on Tuesday (December 12) launched the First Regional Conference for the Mediators and Ombudsmen of IGAD Member States. The opening session was chaired by Ambassador Shamebo Fitamo, Ambassador of Ethiopia to Djibouti and Chair of the IGAD Committee of Ambassadors, with Mr. Mohamed Ali Hassan, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Djibouti as the Guest of Honour. Also present were the Mediator of the Republic of Djibouti, Dr. Kassim Issak Osman, the host organizer, and the Executive Secretary of IGAD, Ambassador Engineer Mahboub Maalim.

All IGAD States have put in place systems for dialogue and mediation between the people and the State, but the role of an ombudsman is no longer confined to managing purely domestic problems because of the growth of development issues arising from migration and other movements with regional and cross-border dimensions.

The theme of this Regional Conference for the Mediators and Ombudsmen, was “Migration, Public Protection and Human Security in the IGAD Region”. It aimed to establish a regional platform of IGAD Mediators/Ombudsmen on these issues in the IGAD Region; share experiences and develop a regional approach to address the challenges related to Migration, Public Protection and Human Security; and advocate for inclusion of priority interventions of vulnerable groups and segments of the population in socioeconomic development plans. Discussions and recommendations covered how to expand and improve the role of Ombudsmen in IGAD states, to provide with effective solutions to address the challenges and expectations of vulnerable citizens in the region.

Ambassador Maalim welcomed participants to the meeting and noted that the regional approach to many issues was successful. He said it was time to give a regional dimension to the work of Mediators and

Ombudsmen on issues related to migration and the movement of persons within the region. Dr. Kassim Osman highlighted the importance of migration as a pressing issue considering the fact that the IGAD region is a source of migration and a region of transit as well as an area hosting very large numbers of migrants.

Ambassador Shamebo noted the geo-strategic location of the IGAD region, at the cross-roads to the Middle East, Asia, and Europe. The issue of movement of persons was a pivotal one for the region and needed to be considered at all levels. Mr. Mohamed Ali praised IGAD for the many efforts it had made to bring in a regional perspective to issues that required cooperation between Member States.

The conference provided an opportunity for the IGAD Mediators and Ombudsmen to share their experiences and create a regional approach to address the challenges that migration, public protection and human security pose for the region. The result will be to provide a charter to serve as an instrument for national cohesion, but will also outline clear objectives, rights and duties for all IGAD ombudsmen and mediators.