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News in Brief

Africa and the African Union

The 30th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, of the Heads of State and Government, was held on Sunday (January 28) and Monday (January 29), concluding the week-long AU Summit, held under the theme: “Winning the fight against corruption: A sustainable path to Africa's Transformation”. President Paul Kagame of Rwanda took over as AU Chairman for 2018, replacing President Alpha Condé of Guinea. **(See article)**

Among the series of events and sideline meetings were:

The launching of the first AU Agenda 2063 Flagship project, the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) on Monday (January 29) **(See article)**

A Forum on “Renewed Partnership to End Hunger in Africa by 2025”, hosted by the AU Commission with the Government of Ethiopia on Sunday (January 28). **(See article)**

A meeting on the Malabo Declaration Biennial Review and Africa Agriculture Transformation Scorecard on Monday (January 29) **(See article)**

A meeting on the World Health Organization’s latest World Malaria Report 2017 and the need to renew commitment to attain a malaria-free Africa by 2030. **(See article)**

The launch of “Free To Shine”, a new campaign aiming to help end childhood AIDS in Africa by 2030 by the Organization of African First Ladies Against HIV/AIDS (OAFLA) on Monday (January 29). **(See article)**

A meeting on “Equal Access of African Women to High Level Positions at the African Union and in the United Nations Systems” on Sunday (January 28). **(See article)**

The African Business and Investment Forum, a high-level public-private sector dialogue, was held on Tuesday (January 30). **(See article)**

President Macky Sall of Senegal, chair of the New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD)’s Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee (HSGOC) opened HSGOC’s 36th Session on Saturday (January 27). **(See article)**

The IGAD Council of Ministers held an Extra-Ordinary Session on Saturday (January 27) under the chairmanship of Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, Ethiopia's Foreign Minister. The meeting to discuss the High-Level Revitalization Forum on South Sudan was attended by the Foreign Ministers of Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda, the Minister of Cabinet Affairs of South Sudan; the Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC); IGAD's Executive Secretary and the IGAD Special Envoy for South Sudan as well as the Special Envoys and representatives of the AU, UN, EU, the Troika and China, Co-Chairperson of the IGAD Partners Forum (IPF). **(See article)**

The AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) held its 749th meeting on Saturday (January 27) at the level of Heads of State and Government, on the theme: "Towards a Comprehensive Approach to Combating the Transnational Threat of Terrorism in Africa". **(See article)**

AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres signed a Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on Saturday (January 27). This follows the signing of the peace and security framework between the AU and the UN in April 2017. The joint AU-UN sustainable development framework envisions stronger coordination between the two organizations to ensure that the UN's 2030 Agenda and the AU's Agenda 2063 are mainstreamed and integrated into the national planning frameworks of Member States. It stresses the nexus between peace, security and development in the implementation of the two Agendas in Africa and outlines monitoring processes to ensure challenges are addressed. An Action Plan to operationalize the framework will be discussed and agreed when the two leaders meet again in April 2018 for the 2nd Annual AU-UN Conference.

UN Secretary-General Guterres said on Saturday (January 27) that strong cooperation with the African Union was essential for the United Nations to be able to fulfill its mandate: "For the United Nations, the most important partnership is the partnership with the African Union." The UN Secretary-General said that across the three main pillars of the United Nations, development, peace and security, and human rights, the African continent was key to solving global problems. The international community would not be able to have successes in development if Africa did not succeed in development and take advantage of its youth 'dividend'. The global community could not secure lasting peace and security if Africa was unable to manage its conflicts or failed to make strong efforts at conflict prevention and resolution.

Ethiopia

Prime Minister Hailemariam, Sudan President Omar Hassan al-Bashir and Egypt President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, had a successful meeting on Monday (January 29) and underlined that "at all levels the three countries should work as one, not as three" and agreed to meet once a year to enhance relations and cooperation. **(See article)**

Prime Minister Hailemariam met with UN Secretary-General Guterres in Addis Ababa on Saturday (January 27). They exchanged views on regional peace and security and the Prime Minister briefed the Secretary General on the Agreement signed by the parties in South Sudan. He urged the international community to back the efforts being made to maintain peace in South Sudan and called for strong measures against parties that violated the December Agreement signed in Addis Ababa. Mr. Guterres commended IGAD for the efforts

made to restore peace in South Sudan and pledged to push the parties for implementation of the agreement. They agreed on the need for the international community to support Somalia to help it build its state institutions.

Prime Minister Hailemariam, designated AU Champion for the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP), organized the meeting on the Malabo Declaration Biennial Review and Africa Agriculture Transformation Scorecard on Monday (January 29) in collaboration with the African Union Commission. **(See article)**

UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, M. Lacroix at a meeting with Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu on Tuesday (January 30) that the UN would like to see more Ethiopian peace-keepers under the “Blue Helmet.” Ethiopia is currently the number one troop provider to the U.N. with 8,326 peacekeepers on the ground. Dr. Workneh who briefed M. Lacroix on regional peace and security issues, stressed Ethiopia would continue to commit itself to global peace and security.

Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh met with the Minister of the Department of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane at the AU on Monday (January 29). They discussed ways of further boosting bilateral ties through the annual Joint Ministerial Commission and Senior Officials Meetings. The 5th SOM is scheduled to be held in March and the 4th JMC in April. They also discussed the peace process of South Sudan and Ms. Nkoana-Mashabane commended Ethiopia's role in the IGAD-led Revitalization Forum.

Foreign Minister, Dr. Workneh met with China’s Assistant Foreign Minister Chen Xiaodong, on Monday (January 29). They expressed their agreement to strengthen the two countries' strategic partnership, with emphasis on development endeavors. Dr. Workneh said "China is a true partner of Ethiopia in our effort towards development and eradicate poverty." Mr. Xiaodong underlined China's willingness to further uplift the partnership in all areas of common interest.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene received Davaasuren Damdinsuren, State Secretary of the Foreign Affairs of Mongolia on Friday (February 2). **(See article)**

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs said the ban on Ethiopian citizens travelling abroad for employment was lifted by the government on Tuesday (January 30). The ban was introduced five years ago in advance of diplomatic and labour agreements with hiring countries. The government has so far made bilateral labor recruitment agreements with Jordan and Kuwait and is set to sign similar agreements with Lebanon, United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain. An agreement concluded with Saudi Arabia has also been tabled for the government for approval.

The UN Global Emergency Response Fund on Sunday (January 28) released US\$10million to urgently help the most vulnerable people displaced in Ethiopia due to the conflict along the borders of the Oromia and Somali regions. This followed a visit by Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mark Lowcock, to IDP camps where, he said, need was far greater than the response that has been able to be provided so far. He noted the government had taken the lead in the response efforts but said these funds would complement the government’s efforts.

Ethiopian Airlines Group announced on Saturday (January 27) that it had launched a direct freighter flight from Bahir Dar to Liege, one of the largest Ethiopian flower importer destinations. With daily freighter services to Belgium, Liege and Brussels, Ethiopian now transports a total of 130 tons of flowers.

Ethiopia is hosting the Second International Agro-Industry Investment Forum in Addis Ababa from March 5-8. The Forum will focus on food processing, textiles and garments, leather and leather products, as well as allied sectors such as packaging and renewable energy. It will feature participants from the public and business sector, including current and potential investors, international and domestic enterprises, industry associations, international organizations and financial institutions, as well as representatives from the Government of Ethiopia.

Kenya

President Kenyatta, meeting UN Secretary-General Guterres at the AU in Addis Ababa on Monday (January 29), called for more support for AMISOM: “Stability in Somalia is key for the region and anything we can do to ensure the progress so far achieved is sustained, we should do,” he said. He said the UN and the AU should ensure practical and realistic AMISOM exit timelines.

President Kenyatta told the AU Peace and Security Council meeting in Addis Ababa that Kenya had established a strategy to counter radicalization of youths by terrorism groups, operating through its National Counter-Terrorism Centre (NCTC), a multi-agency mechanism.

Somalia

President Mohamed Abdullahi, attending the AU Summit, met with the UN Secretary-General Guterres in Addis Ababa, on Sunday (January 28). He thanked the UN for its continued support to Somalia in the fields of peace and state-building. Mr. Guterres expressed optimism for one-person, one-vote elections in Somalia.

Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre launched Somalia’s 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan on Tuesday this week (January 30) in Mogadishu. The Government-led, UN-supported humanitarian response plan is looking for \$1.5 billion to address the needs of 5.4 million people. It was presented jointly with a Recovery and Resilience Framework, outlining the way forward for recovery and longer-term resilience, to address the root causes of recurring humanitarian crises. The RRF is based on a Drought Impact Needs Assessment (DINA), carried out by the Federal and Federal States, in partnership with the EU, UN and the World Bank. **(See article)**

The new Mogadishu mayor and Benadir governor, Abdirahman Omar Osman (Engineer Yarisow), took the oath for office on Monday (January 29) following a handover ceremony event held in the capital. Abdiweli Sheikh Ibrahim Mudey, acting President and first Deputy Speaker of the House of the People, Federal MPs, Ministers, and civil society members attended

Ambassador Madeira, head of AMISOM said in an interview on Saturday (January 27) that AMISOM's planned withdrawal by 2010 "cannot be met without urgent help from the international community... The U.N. and other partners must understand that this enterprise needs additional resources." 1,000 of AMISOM forces withdraw last year; Ambassador Madeira said he hopes another 1,000 troops will withdraw this year.

Below average rainfall for the fifth consecutive growing season, has aid agencies expressing concern about this year's harvest, expected to begin in April. Food production is expected to be below normal in most of Somalia, according to a recent survey by Somalia's Food Security and Analysis Unit, and without continued large-scale assistance food security is expected to deteriorate in the next five months. FAO says 4.4 million people are in need of support, and nearly three million people are close to a humanitarian disaster.

The AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smail Chergui, on Monday (January 29) called for more support from the UN to realize national elections in Somalia by 2020. He said the AU budget for peacekeeping operations in Somalia would last only until May: "As much as we regain territories, degrade terrorist group Al-Shabaab, we need to train and prepare Somali national forces to take over for these interrelated processes progress to be sustainable."

Lt. General Jim Beesigye Owoyesigire took over as AMISOM Force Commander on Wednesday (January 31), replacing Lt. General Osman Noor Soubagleh, who had held the position July 2016. General Owoyesigire pledged to enhance security across Somalia and continue the work already started, especially capacity building of the Somali National Army. His priorities will include overseeing the gradual and conditions-based transfer of the security responsibility from AMISOM to the SNA and destroying the remaining pockets of Al-Shabaab. He said: "All of us here have one problem, and that is Al-Shabaab. We need to fight him, break his backbone and then finally eradicate him. That's my goal and I will achieve it."

South Sudan

In a joint meeting on the sidelines of the 30th AU summit on Saturday (January 27), UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, AU Commission Chairperson, Moussa Faki Mahamat, and Ethiopia's Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn, Current IGAD Chairperson called for full compliance with the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access. The three organizations "strongly condemned" the violation of the agreement by the parties involved and stressed the need to take actions on parties that violate the peace accord.

Festus Mogae, Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), said members of IGAD must "maintain a unified approach, demonstrate one voice (and) challenge those who peddle self-interest" in the implementation of the peace agreement. They must not "squander" the opportunity of a renewed push to end the war. The next session of the High-level Revitalization Forum is due to start on February 5.

Sudan

President Omar Al-Bashir met President El-Sisi of Egypt on the sidelines of the AU on Sunday (January 28) to discuss recent developments in the region, as well as ways to boost

bilateral relations. They agreed to form a joint ministerial committee to deal with all outstanding bilateral issues.

The Sudan People's Liberation Movement/North (SPLM-N al-Hilu) has extended a unilateral cessation of hostilities in South Kordofan and the Blue Nile for four months just as a government delegation is due to meet with the SPLM-N in Addis Ababa this week to discuss a permanent cessation of hostilities agreement. The SPLM-N Agar faction has refused to participate. AUHIP mediators will also be meeting the opposition Sudan Call to discuss the political roadmap for a negotiated settlement and democratic reforms this weekend.

South Africa and South Sudan have signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in Defence. South Africa's Defense and Military Veterans Minister Mapisa-Nqakula said the agreement would pave the way for the formation of a Joint Defense Committee which will meet regularly. It will allow exchange of knowledge and training in peace keeping and support as well capacity building, and joint exercises. Defense Minister Kuol Manyang Juuk said it will strengthen relations between the two countries.

The 30th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union...

The week-long 30th African Union Summit, held in Addis Ababa, January 22-29, under the theme, "Winning the fight against corruption: A sustainable path to Africa's Transformation", was an eventful summit. It hosted leaders of African Heads of State and Government and other dignitaries as well as leading international organizations, including the United Nations and the European Union. It also provided the opportunity for the world's three leading intergovernmental organizations, the African Union, the United Nations and the European Union, to rekindle multilateral and multispectral partnerships. UN Secretary General António Guterres noted: "The United Nations-African Union partnership on peace and security is fundamental to building a safer world for all."

The two-day Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, of the Heads of State and Government, opened on Sunday (January 28). The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, and UN Secretary General, António Guterres, made opening addresses, focusing principally on the threats endangering the very fabric of global peace and international security, and the need to renew partnerships at various levels, both regionally and internationally. Moussa Faki said: "Our Summit is being held within a context marked not only by the acute challenges facing our Continent but also by the uncertainties weighing heavily on the international system." He expressed his concerns about a declining culture of multilateralism among nation states, including members of the African Union. He said the Summit was convening "at a time when multilateralism is in serious decline, even though its principles seemed to be built on solid foundations." The Chairperson of the AU Commission also expressed his concerns about the looming threat of global uncertainties, terrorism, fluctuating economic conditions of the Continent, and trans-Mediterranean migration of Africans, as well as illicit capital flows out of Africa and corruption and the seemingly never-ending civil wars in various regions of the Continent. Concerned by "the internal trials and tribulations that Africa is going through", the Chairperson urged the Union and the international community to renew their "commitment to the values of solidarity, tolerance and mutual respect."

In the same time, the Chairperson underlined the positive progress being made across the Continent. He expressed his appreciation on the accomplishments registered in the successful completion of the first round of negotiations on the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) and the immense advantages the Single Market for Air Transport in Africa (SMATA) could provide for development of the continent. He stressed the need for the adoption by the Summit of the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons and the African Passport (PFMPAP), to facilitate the “free movement of peoples and goods” within and out of Africa. He also underlined the urgent need to further bolster the ongoing efforts at bringing about peace and stability in Somalia through AMISOM, in South Sudan by IGAD, in Burundi, the DRC (with the New Year's Eve Agreement), in the Central African Republic under the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation, and Mali with the G5 Sahel Joint Force.

UN Secretary General Guterres underlined the intention behind attendance at this year's Summit. He was in Addis Ababa “to seek opportunities to deepen our strategic partnership”. He extolled “Africa as a continent of resilience and hope.” Focusing on still nascent formal partnership between the UN and the AU, Mr. Guterres, commended the improving UN-AU relationship, describing the UN as having entered “a new era of partnership with Africa.” Expressing his gratitude to African nations for their unrelenting support to the maintenance of peace and stability on the globe, the Secretary General lauded the prominent role they played “in contributing troops and police to help save lives and keep the peace around the world.” He said the UN stood alongside the AU in catalyzing the peace processes in places like the Central African Republic and South Sudan. Mr. Guterres, underlining ever-growing and expanding scope of diverse UN-AU partnerships, affirmed that the United Nations-African Union partnership on peace and security was “fundamental to building a safer world for all.” Further acknowledging the strong bond of solidarity between the two institutions, he assured the Assembly of the Union that this also “rooted in solutions that are Africa-owned, Africa-driven and Africa-led.” Concluding, the UN Secretary General, while stressing the sustainable role Africa played in peacekeeping missions around the world, emphasized that “UN peacekeeping is not the solution to all crisis situations.” He said that peace in the Sahel, as in Somalia and the Lake Chad Basin, was a global good, and, indeed, “The world should invest in it.”

The 30th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union was concluded on Monday (January 29) with the Assembly of Heads of State and Government passing key decisions, on various flagship projects of Agenda 2063. These included the coming into effect of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) which will further cement “enhanced connectivity across the continent leading to sustainable development of the aviation and tourism industry with immense contribution to economic growth, job creation, prosperity and integration of Africa”. The Assembly agreed to hold an Extraordinary Summit on March 21, preceded by an Extraordinary Session of the Executive Council on March 19, in Kigali, Rwanda, to consider the Continental Free Trade Area legal instruments and sign the Agreement Establishing the CFTA. Other decisions included the adoption of a protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community (AEC) relating to Free Movement of Persons, Rights of Residence and Right of Establishment and its Draft Implementation Roadmap; and the expansion of the membership of the Committee of Ministers of Finance, concerned with the financing of the Union, from ten to fifteen members on the basis of equitable geographical distribution and rotation.

Much was also achieved on the margins of the Summit in bilateral meetings and High-level Fora including breakfast meetings to discuss aspects of AU policy as well as meetings of AU organizations such as the Organization of African First Ladies Against HIV/AIDS (OAFLA) or the New Economic Policy for African Development (NEPAD).

...A Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) is established...

The African Union Commission launched the first AU Agenda 2063 Flagship project, the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) on Monday (January 29) - nearly two decades after the adoption of the 1999 Yamoussoukro Decision. So far, 23 African countries have subscribed to the Single African Air Transport Market; 44 African countries have signed the Yamoussoukro Decision.

Speaking ahead of the launch event, Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid, AU Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, said: "With preparations continuing on schedule, the launch of the Single African Air Transport Market will spur more opportunities to promote trade, cross-border investments in the production and service industries, including tourism." He added: "This will result in the creation of an additional 300,000 direct and two million indirect jobs, contributing immensely to the integration and socio-economic growth of the continent." The Commissioner stated the aviation industry currently supported eight million jobs in Africa, and SAATM was created with the aim of enhancing connectivity, facilitating trade and tourism, creating employment, and ensuring that the industry played a more prominent role in the global economy as well as significantly contributing to the AU's Agenda 2063.

Following the launch, the Ethiopian government vowed its backing for SAATM. The Ministry of Transport and the Ethiopian Airlines Group, in a joint press conference on Tuesday, announced their full support towards realization of AU's "single African skies initiative." Minister of Transport, Ahmed Shide, said the initiative would "pave the way for other flagship projects such as the free trade area and the free movement of people." The Minister noted that Ethiopia had always been one of the pioneers in promoting free skies in Africa and it was also one of the 11 champion countries that declared their commitment to establishing a single African air transport market. The launch of SAATM would be expected to spur more opportunities to promote trade, cross-border investments in the production and service industries including tourism.

The Minister stressed that the realization of SAATM would be attained through the immediate implementation of the 1999 Yamoussoukro Decision, offering full liberalization of intra-African air transport services in terms of access, capacity and frequency. He also stressed the realization of SAATM was vital to the achievement of the long-term vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, AU's Agenda 2063. Tewolde Gebremariam, CEO of Ethiopian Airlines Group, dubbed the initiative as a "huge milestone for the continent." Noting the intra-Africa trade only provides 20% of the total continental trade, Ato Tewolde stressed that African countries "need to integrate, trade and invest cross border investments among each other." He underlined that, air connectivity was the economic engine that would help augment the tourism, trade and other important sectors in the African continent.

...Leaders and Stakeholders urge meaningful actions to end hunger by 2025...

An urgent call for action to bring hunger on the continent to an end by 2025 was made at the High-Level Forum under the theme “Renewed Partnership to End Hunger in Africa by 2025”, hosted by the African Union Commission in partnership with the Government of Ethiopia with the support of FAO and ECA, on Sunday (January 28). Among those attending were AU Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, Josefa Leonel Correa Sacko; Mr. José Graziano da Silva, Director General of FAO;; Dr. Gilbert Houngbo, President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Chairperson of the Africa Risk Capacity Board; Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States; as well as leaders of development agencies and financial institutions, Ministers of Agriculture, leaders of civil society organizations and the private sector.

The Forum presented the results of the progress made in the Implementation of the AU Malabo Declaration with particular emphasis on Commitment 3: Ending Hunger in Africa by 2025. Participants identified areas of success, as well as specific areas that need to be strengthened both at national and regional levels to drive actions towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and particularly the eradication of hunger. The inaugural Malabo Declaration Biennial Report revealed that the continent was “not on track” with regard to ending hunger indicators. Its score for 2017 was only 1.62, compared to a benchmark of 3.17. The UN State of Food Insecurity Report agreed, showing there was no more that “slow progress” toward achieving food security and nutrition indicators.

Alpha Condé, President of Guinea, outgoing AU Chairman, opened the forum and called on African countries and partners to harmonize their programs and create food hubs to ensure that food is available, accessible and affordable by all in the right quality. In a key note speech, Prime Minister Hailemariam, AU Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) Champion, reiterated that ending hunger required a multi-sectoral and integrated approach. He noted, “As Africans, we should exercise our freedom to make policies and strategies that will make us achieve the different goals we set in the Agenda 2063, the CAADP/Malabo Declaration, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and specifically the “No Poverty” and “Zero Hunger” by 2030 goals.”

UN Secretary-General Guterres underlined the threat to agricultural and livestock productivity, largely due to conflict and climate change, stressing: “Climatic shocks, environmental degradation, crop and livestock price collapse and conflict are all interlinked”. He urged governments to adopt national agricultural policies and investment plans that focus not only on agricultural sector development but also on poverty, hunger, and resilience to climate change. He said: “Climate change adaptation should be promoted as an integral part of conflict prevention, with special attention to sustainable agriculture and pastoralist and semi-pastoralist livelihoods.”

At the conclusion of the meeting, attendees agreed on a joint communiqué spelling out a 10-point action plan for AU Member States to renew their commitment to ending hunger in Africa by 2025. It included substantial investment in sustainable agriculture and the establishing of extensive social protection programs.

... The Malabo Declaration Review and Africa Agriculture Transformation...

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn, designated AU Champion for the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP), in collaboration with the African Union Commission, organized a Breakfast meeting on the Malabo Declaration Biennial Review and Africa Agriculture Transformation Scorecard on Monday (January 29).

The AU adopted the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods in June 2014, with the Assembly committing to mutual accountability for results and actions by conducting a biennial review that involved tracking, monitoring and reporting on the implementation progress. This year was the inaugural report and the Africa Agriculture Transformation Scorecard, tracking progress of the implementation of the Malabo Declaration, was presented to the Assembly. These comprised individual country performance scores on progress made for implementing the goals set out in the Malabo commitments. The aims are to create increased awareness at the highest level, to discuss the best ways of positioning agriculture to secure the required investments to move the agenda forward; and the most effective way of sustaining high level engagement with Heads of State and Government on the status of agriculture, using the scorecard for action and impact.

The Malabo Declaration has seven commitments: Recommitment to the Principles and Values of the CAADP Process; Commitment to Enhancing Investment Finance in Agriculture to 10% of annual budgetary allocation to agriculture; Commitment to Ending Hunger in Africa by 2025; Commitment to Halving Poverty, by the year 2025, through Inclusive Agricultural Growth and Transformation; Commitment to Boosting Intra-African Trade in Agricultural commodities and services; Commitment to Enhancing Resilience of Livelihoods and Production Systems to Climate Variability and other related risks; and Commitment to Mutual Accountability to Actions and Results.

The AATS captures 23 performance categories and 43 indicators for each Member State. The Inaugural Biennial Report was endorsed by the Ministers of Agriculture at the 2nd Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment held in October 2017, in Addis Ababa. The aim is that the AATS will encourage performance across AU Member States and provide a tool that can be used by every actor engaged in agriculture, across governments, the private sector, and non-state actors.

Prime Minister Hailemariam urging Member States to implement the Malabo Declaration said Ethiopia was currently providing 10% of its annual budget to the agriculture sector. As a result, he noted, “We are registering 10% growth in agricultural gross domestic product annually”. Earlier, sharing Ethiopia’s experience on CAADP implementation and efforts on ending hunger the Prime Minister stressed: “Here in Ethiopia, we recognize poverty and hunger to be our arch enemies”. He noted in recognition of this fact and the launch of CAADP, the government had been implementing an indigenous policy for agricultural development and other sectors. “Thanks to the tireless efforts of our agricultural extension workers and hardworking Ethiopian farmers, Ethiopia’s agriculture has continuously registered high growth rate even during unfavorable conditions,” he said. Despite natural disasters such as the 2015 El Nino-induced drought, agriculture and similar sectors had grown at annual rate of 10 percent for the last 15 years in average.

The Prime Minister said key elements in this were the introduction of effective policy and strategy framework, institutional arrangements and the political commitment in allocating resources. He said: “Our commitments in research, development and extension as well as improving institutional capacities remained instrumental in meeting the goals of poverty reduction and hunger elimination.” He mentioned mobile services to provide farmers with information regarding agricultural extension services contributed for improved productivity. Farmers had become beneficiaries of ICT services to access information on improved agricultural extension services from production to marketing and trade points. This, he said, had helped to increase production and productivity significantly. Since the launch of the CAADP, Ethiopia had managed to increase the productivity of cereal crops from 15.7 quintals per hectare to 23 quintals. In the same period, main season crop production by smallholder farmers had increased from 160 million quintals to 219 million. The Prime Minister, underlining that tackling poverty and hunger through rain fed agriculture was insufficient, emphasized the need to expand irrigation schemes and encourage irrigation development. He said that Ethiopia, since the launch of CAADP, had managed to increase irrigation coverage from half a million to 4.8 million hectares”.

...Leaders urged to renew commitment to a malaria-free Africa...

At a high-level briefing on Friday (January 26), leaders stressed that African nations must renew their commitment and strengthen instruments to attain a malaria-free Africa by 2030. Senior health, finance and foreign affairs officials from across the continent were briefed on the latest findings from the World Health Organization’s World Malaria Report 2017, signaling that, for the first time in more than a decade, progress against malaria on the African continent, which accounts for almost 90% of the global malaria burden, had stalled.

Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, underlined the dangers. “Malaria alone is estimated to rob the continent of US\$12 billion per year in lost productivity, investment and associated health care costs.” African leaders have committed to eliminating malaria by 2030. The AU Commission Chairperson said it was critical that the political commitment was sustained, “as articulated in the continental Agenda 2063, to eliminate malaria in Africa by 2030 through increased domestic financing, increased access to life-saving malaria interventions, as well as more robust health systems.”

While some African countries have seen a greater than 20% increase in malaria cases and deaths since 2016, others are showing that beating malaria is possible, according to the report from WHO. Dr. Pedro Alonso, Director of the WHO Global Malaria Program, said “In 2016, just 15 countries carried most of the global malaria burden, together accounting for 80% of all malaria cases and deaths. All but one of these countries are in Africa.” He said, “The report sends a clear warning that we have stopped making progress and that, without urgent action, we risk going backwards.” WHO used the occasion to launch a World Malaria Report 2017 mobile app that provides, at the pressure of a finger, the latest information on malaria policies, financing, interventions and burden in 91 endemic countries.

Dr Kesete Admasu, CEO of the Partnership to End Malaria, said, “African countries are at greatest risk of losing the significant gains made over a decade and must renew efforts to make fighting malaria a priority. Domestic funding needs to be urgently stepped up. These investments, only a fraction of what African nations will save if we succeed in eliminating

malaria, will pay off, in millions more lives saved, health systems strengthened, economies grown and the world back on track to end this disease.”

... OAFLA launches its “Free to Shine” campaign...

The Organization of African First Ladies Against HIV/AIDS (OAFLA) and the African Union on Monday (January 29) launched “Free To Shine”, a new campaign aiming to help end childhood AIDS in Africa by 2030 and keep mothers healthy. The campaign, initiated during the OAFLA General Assembly, will unite people and organizations from local and global levels to advance healthcare delivery to contribute to ending childhood AIDS and support personal and collective understanding of the actions that can be taken to end childhood AIDS. It will work to drive the effective delivery and use of healthcare services to keep mothers healthy, prevent mother to child transmission and ensure fast and effective identification and treatment of children infected by HIV.

Mrs. Roman Tesfaye, Ethiopia’s First Lady and President of OAFLA noted, “While Africa has made unprecedented progress in responding to the AIDS epidemic, the response to childhood AIDS is lagging behind. To end the AIDS epidemic in Africa, we must act now to prioritize the use of knowledge and the implementation of tools that exist, to keep children AIDS-free and their mothers healthy. Preventing new HIV infections will transform Africa’s broader health and development agenda and provide our children with a healthy and hopeful future.” There are up to 1.4 million children living with HIV in Africa, South of the Sahara, over half of all children living with HIV globally.

Dr. Marie-Goretti Harakeye, the Head of Division for AIDS, TB, Malaria and Other Infectious Diseases at the African Union Commission, told the Assembly, “We cannot end AIDS by 2030 if we do not focus on women and children. The Free to Shine campaign will drive for increased investments to strengthen health systems and achieve maximum impact where the burden is highest. She said: “The African Union is committed to ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030, which will lay a strong foundation for Africa’s Agenda 2063 for socio-economic development and structural transformation.”

...Equal Access of African Women to High Level Positions...

A High-level meeting on “Equal Access of African Women to High Level Positions at the African Union and in the United Nations Systems” was held on Sunday (January 28). Among those attending were Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission; Professor Alpha Condé, outgoing Chairperson of the African Union; Mr. Nana Akufo Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana; Heads of State and Government of Member States of the African Union; UN Secretary General Guterres, and Ministers, Commissioners and other officials, highlighting the importance of addressing gender-specific challenges, encouraging gender equality and women’s participation, the placement of women in leadership positions at all levels. Participants recognized and applauded the considerable progress made in this regard at the highest level.

Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, AU Commission Chairperson firmly stated that the African Union was the first inter-governmental organization that had made parity at higher decision-making levels a reality. Applauding the placement of women in management positions in the Commission, he said that between 2013 and 2017 the gender gap had been reduced in

strategic positions and the number of women in Director's posts had increased from 29% to 45%. He said he was cognizant of the fact that yet more needed to be done, adding, "This is the time to renew my commitment to the Network of African Women Leaders and the initiative to launch a Fund to give African women the resources they need to make a real contribution to the economic development and transformation of the continent." This initiative launched by the African Union Commission in partnership with the United Nations would also, he said, serve as a platform "to enhance the partnership of our two organizations in political matters and gender related programs."

Professor Alpha Condé, outgoing AU Chairperson and President of the Republic of Guinea, noted he had appointed Nana Akufo Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, as Champion on Gender and Development in Africa during his chairmanship. He also pointed out that the Republic of Guinea now had the largest ever number women in high office, including the Ministry of Economy and Finance and several National Directorates or Autonomous Services.

...Africa Business and Investment Forum calls for "Partnership not Support"...

The U.N. Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in partnership with US Corporate Council on Africa (CCA), hosted Heads of State from five African countries, at the inaugural Africa Business and Investment Forum, held on Tuesday (January 30) in Addis Ababa. The Forum, in addition to providing a platform for a high-level public-private sector dialogue, aimed to increase opportunities for business partnerships, to secure commitments and to track the adoption of business-friendly policies, and showcase countries and policies that are contributing to an enabling environment for enhanced African regional and global trade and investment, including with the United States.

The event was opened by President Kagame of Rwanda, the new Chairman of the African Union. He was joined by fellow Heads of State and Government, including Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn of Ethiopia, President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, President Mahamadou Issoufou of Niger, President Macky Sall, of Senegal, President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, and President Filipe Nyusi of Mozambique. A series of roundtable discussions covered various areas including Trade and Diversification, Energy, Agribusiness, and Health.

The leaders noted Africa requires partnership, not support, underlining they had a clear mandate to work with both public and private enterprises to ensure that any business environment is favorable and attractive to the international business community.

Vera Songwe, Executive Secretary of the U.N. Economic Commission on Africa, said the Africa Business and Investment Forum demonstrated a real commitment by African leaders that they were "focused on paving the way for private investors in the U.S. and the rest of the international community, to invest in Africa." President Kagame of Rwanda commended the CCA and ECA for their "effort to draw business leaders into this conversation about public-private sector investment in Africa". He added, "This is long overdue and I trust that it will become a regular event during our Summits."

Florie Liser, President and CEO of the Corporate Council on Africa, said, "Today was a great opportunity for UN and AU leadership to hear the voice of international private enterprises and investors who want to do business with Africa, and ensure that business relations

between the U.S. and the continent continue to grow.” She underlined that CCA members and guests at the Forum “were hugely encouraged to hear from our continent’s leaders that Africa is an attractive destination for investment.”

Over 150 CEOs and senior executives of key U.S and African companies, both multinationals and SMEs, participated in the Forum, contributing to the ongoing dialogue in Africa to increase opportunities for business partnerships, secure commitments to as well as track the adoption of business-friendly policies, and showcase countries and policies that are contributing to an enabling environment for enhanced African regional and global trade and investment.

...NEPAD’s Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee meeting

The New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) held the 36th Session of the Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee (HSGOC) on Saturday (January 27). Speaking at the opening Session, HSGOC Chair, President Macky Sall of Senegal said “What brings us together on this day is the common goal of working for the transformation of Africa”. In his opening statement, Moussa Faki Mahamat, AU Commission Chair also highlighted the fact that NEPAD now works in 52 of the 55 African countries.

During the Session, the results-based performance report of the NEPAD Agency was presented by the Agency’s CEO, Dr Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, who has brought the application of a territorial approach to development. The report included the NEPAD Agency’s Results Based Development Dashboard, which displays the organization’s results at national, regional and continental levels. It also demonstrated the NEPAD Agency’s delivery of programmatic results towards achieving Agenda 2063.

President Sall expressed his admiration for the leadership of Dr. Mayaki in bringing the dream of the African founding fathers into reality in helping to realize the goals of Agenda 2063. He stated that infrastructure and energy must remain priority areas needing more focus and investment, as well as the rural electrification fund that must become a reality. The process of agricultural transformation and growth of 6 per cent per year also remained a priority.

President Kagame of Rwanda, this year’s AU Chairperson, also commended the work of NEPAD for being forward looking, positioning itself within the African Union even before the current reform process was on the agenda. He praised the work of NEPAD for the development of Africa and citizens and called for collaboration in building a strong organization for delivery of results on the continent.

Namibia’s Minister of Works and Transport, Alpheus !Naruseb, on behalf of President Hage formally agreed Namibia involvement in the NEPAD Presidential Infrastructure Championship. This is an initiation proposed by President Zuma to accelerate regional infrastructure development through the political championing of projects. President Mnangagwa of Zimbabwe expressed gratitude to the African Union and its bodies, including the NEPAD Agency, for the continued support to Zimbabwe and expressed the readiness of Zimbabwe to engage in business with the rest of the continent. Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Dr Vera Songwe stated that the ECA has been a long standing partner of NEPAD, collaborating in various thematic areas. The session also deliberated on reform of the NEPAD Agency and its governance model. In the closing

session, President Sall urged delegates to continue to support NEPAD in its efforts to attain Africa's common development goals.

The 60th Extraordinary Session of the IGAD Council of Ministers

The IGAD Council of Ministers held its 60th Extra-Ordinary Session on Saturday (January 27) under the chairmanship of Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, Ethiopia's Foreign Minister and Chairperson of the IGAD Council of Ministers. The session was attended by Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Djibouti; Ambassador Amina Mohamed, Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Kenya; Ambassador Ahmed Isse Awad, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Somalia; Dr. Martin Elia Lomuro, Minister of Cabinet Affairs of South Sudan; Professor Ibrahim Ghandour, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sudan; Sam Kutesa, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uganda; Mrs. Hirut Zemene, Ethiopia's State Minister for Foreign Affairs; Dr. Festus Mogae, Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC); Maalim Mahboub, IGAD Executive Secretary; and Ismail Wais, IGAD Special Envoy for South Sudan. Also present were the Special Envoys and representatives of the AU, UN, EU and the Troika (Norway, UK, US) as well China, Co-Chairperson of the IGAD Partners Forum (IPF).

The Progress Report of the IGAD Special Envoy on the implementation of the first phase of the High-Level Revitalization Forum of the Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) was presented. Preparations to convene the second phase of the High-Level Revitalization Forum of the ARCSS were also detailed. The Council welcomed the progress made so far in the implementation of the High-Level Revitalization Forum and in particular the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement on December 21, 2017. Noting the achievements gained so far and the preparations in place to convene the second phase of the High-Level Revitalization Forum, the Council commended IGAD Special Envoy for South Sudan and the envoy's task force for a job well done. The Council affirmed its full support and commitment to encourage the Special Envoy's efforts, in collaboration with the partners until the process of the revitalization is completed in the shortest time possible.

In this context, the Council also expressed its profound appreciation for the solidarity and firm commitment manifested by the AU, UN, Troika, IPF, EU, and China to revitalize the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS). It called upon the partners to continue and enhance their political support, financial and other assistance to the IGAD initiative.

The Council expressed its full support for the commendable task on which the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM) has embarked, on the basis of its renewed mandate under the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. It fully endorsed the reports of violation incidents that the CTSAMM submitted to the Council. The Council condemned in the strongest terms all violators of the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities of December last year and similar prior agreements. It called upon CTSAMM to proceed with urgency and carry out further investigations, identify individual or party violators of the Agreement. The Council said it would then take all necessary measures.

The Council noted with deep regret that in spite of the continuing efforts by IGAD, AU, and UN as well as international partners, the people of South Sudan continued to suffer mainly because of the on-going violence and insecurity that had already caused large scale famine and displacement of millions of the South Sudanese. In this connection, the Council welcomed the decision reached at the trilateral consultation held the same day (January 27) between the Chairperson of the IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the Chairperson of the AU Commission, and the Secretary General of the UN, affirming the determination of the three organizations to work closely together to *inter-alia* support punitive measures against any South Sudanese party that fails to perform its obligation or violates the political settlement that will emerge from the High-Level Revitalization Forum.

IGAD, the AU and the UN also demanded that all the parties must fully respect and comply with the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access. They reaffirmed their readiness to take all necessary actions against individuals and groups that spoil and derail the revitalization process from moving forward. In this regard, IGAD, the AU and UN called upon the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU), and all South Sudanese parties, to focus on the higher goal of the national interest and securing the future of South Sudan. They also reaffirmed their belief that there can only be a political solution to the conflict in South Sudan, and the parties must demonstrate the political will to negotiate a permanent ceasefire and update the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan in order to end the appalling suffering inflicted on the South Sudanese population.

At the end of their 60th Extra-Ordinary Session, the IGAD Council of Ministers approved that the second phase of the High-Level Revitalization Forum should convene on February 5 until February 16, in Addis Ababa. It said the parties to the ARCSS, delegates representing the government, political parties and opposition including estranged groups and Civil Society organizations should engage in good faith in the spirit of compromise, putting the interest of their people and the nation first. The agenda would cover concrete measures to restore a permanent ceasefire; full and inclusive implementation of the ARCSS; and the development of a revised and realistic timeline and implementation schedule towards a democratic election at the end of the transition period.

AU Peace and Security Council discusses combating terrorism

The AU Peace and Security Council (PSC) held its 749th meeting on Saturday (January 27) at the level of Heads of State and Government, on the theme: “Towards a Comprehensive Approach to Combating the Transnational Threat of Terrorism in Africa”. It heard statements from President El Sisi of Egypt, PSC Chairperson for January, AU Commission Moussa Faki, UN Secretary-General Guterres, Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia of Algeria, on behalf of H.E. President Bouteflika, in his capacity as the Leader on the Thorny Issue of Combating Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Africa and Shimelis Wolde Semayat, Executive Secretary of the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA) as well as being briefed by Ambassador Smail Chergui, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, on a comprehensive approach to combating the transnational threat of terrorism and violent extremism in Africa.

The Council subsequently reiterated its strong condemnation of all terrorist acts, methods, practices and incitements, regardless of the pretext under which they are committed. It noted with deep concern the immense threats to peace and security emanating from the upsurge of terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization in Africa and emphasized that terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization cannot be exclusively associated with any one single religion, ethnicity, sect or tribe.

It underscored the AU's continued commitment to inclusive approaches and African ownership, as well as Africa's commitment to the international counter-terrorism regime as outlined in AU treaties and conventions, UN Security Council resolutions, and the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. It encouraged Member States to develop their own comprehensive national counter terrorism strategies focusing on prevention, as well as on timely and swift responses to any terrorist acts and stressed the importance of coordination and complementarity of efforts among Member States and all relevant regional and international actors in preventing and countering terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization.

The PSC commended CISSA, the African Union Mechanism for Police Cooperation (AFRIPOL), and the African Center for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) and the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms (RECs/RMs) for their efforts in supporting Member States in the fight against terrorism. It noted the progress made by the AU Commission to establish the AU Special Fund on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Africa adopted at Kigali, in July 2016, and called upon Member States and international partners to make contributions to the Fund, once operationalized.

It expressed deep concern over the threat posed by the return of Foreign Terrorist Fighters from conflict zones outside the continent back to their countries of origin in Africa and requested the AU Commission and partners to continue to assist Member States in building and strengthening national capacities to effectively deal with this threat. It also called upon Member States to take the required measures to dry up the flow of terrorism financing, by cutting the links between terrorist organizations and organized crime, including trafficking, smuggling and illicit trade.

It called for the mobilization of all the components of the African Peace and Security Architecture in efforts aimed at preventing and combating terrorism in Africa and stressed the need to strengthen cross border cooperation and information sharing between Member States' Intelligence Units, including within the framework of the Nouakchott and Djibouti processes, the different regional fusion centers and AFRIPOL. It encouraged the PSC Counter Terrorism Sub-Committee, once activated, to develop a database of persons, groups and entities involved in terrorist acts, as an African watch-list for use by law enforcement, border security, customs, military, and intelligence agencies. It also reaffirmed the need to counter the use of ICT technologies by terrorist groups and welcomed again the proposal made by Egypt to host an African Event to further discuss the Egyptian Initiative to start an African Dialogue with a view to combating terrorism online and securing cyberspace.

The AU Peace and Security Council also called upon the international community, through individual Member States, Specialized Agencies and Units of the UN, to undertake its responsibilities in assisting AU Member States in identifying areas where they may need

technical assistance and capacity-building, in order to meet the challenges of transnational terrorism. It also urged all Member States, to urgently sign, ratify and domesticate all AU instruments and other relevant international counter-terrorism instruments.

Tripartite Meeting between Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, President Abdel Fatah El-Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt and President Omar Hassen al Bashir, President of the Republic of the Sudan, held what all three participants described as a constructive meeting on issues of mutual interest on Monday (January 29) in Addis Ababa, on the margins of the 30th African Union Summit.

The leaders of the three countries conducted their consultation on a spirit of cooperation, good faith and fraternity. Demonstrating a new spirit of cooperation, the three countries stressed that their overall engagement should be based on a principle that underscores "at all levels the three countries should work as one not three as they have a common destiny."

The meeting was focused on issues of mutual interest with the aim of enhancing and nurturing the tripartite relations and taking these to the next level. To this end they agreed to meet annually at the level of Head of State and Government. They also agreed to explore a mechanism to establish a tripartite fund to enhance cooperation among the three countries and work on common infrastructure projects such as railways and roads. They also agreed to discuss all the issues regarding the GERD through the existing Tripartite National Committee by involving the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Water and they should report the result to the leaders in one month's time.

Prime Minister Hailemariam described the discussions as "very constructive, sincere and frank", and said they would continue in this "very considerable brotherly spirit." He stressed that the three should continue as one not as three countries: "we have to see ourselves as one". The Nile should bond the three countries together in cooperation rather than confrontation. President El-Sisi said that one important thing that spoke volumes was "our determination and willingness to cooperate and that we have engaged in this relationship in a constructive manner.

The three leaders underlined they were fully committed to maintain the spirit of cooperation based on a win-win approach to meet the needs and aspirations of their peoples. In this context, they reiterated that the Agreement on the Declaration of Principles (DoP) on the GERD Project was a milestone to which the three countries were committed. The Agreement on the Declaration of Principles was signed on March 23, 2015, in Khartoum, and commits Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan to ten principles on The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.

Ethiopia and Mongolia look for expanding bilateral ties and cooperation

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene received Davaasuren Damdinsuren, State Secretary of the Foreign Affairs of Mongolia on Friday (February 2). The Mongolian

State Secretary thanked Ethiopia for the successful completion of the 30th AU summit and welcomed the fact that Ethiopia has been one of the fastest growing economies in the world.

The two parties reiterated their commitment to elevate bilateral ties and boost cooperation on various multilateral engagements, most notably through the platform of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs). They underlined the need to review the implementation of half a dozen cooperation agreements and to further reinvigorate the bilateral cooperation in diverse areas of common interest. Both countries belong to the group of LLDCs and as part of furthering cooperation in this regard, they underlined the need to work more closely together to exchange lessons in the areas of boosting trade and advancing aspects of connectivity, as well as relevant research works as applied to the LLDC. The Mongolian State Secretary noted that the first Inaugural Meeting of the International Think Tank for Land Locked Developing Countries (ITT-LLDC) would be held in Ulaan Batar, Mongolia's capital, in June this year and invited Ethiopia to take part. The ITT-LLDC project is a joint initiative of the Government of Mongolia and UNDP, aimed at providing support for strategic interventions to enhance the development prospects of all LLDCs.

State Minister Hirut commended Mongolia for this important initiative, noting that Ethiopia has now ratified the Multilateral Agreement on the establishment of the International Think Tank for LLDCs. She stressed Ethiopia was keen to participate in the upcoming inaugural meeting. The State Minister underlined that although Ethiopia is one of the LLDCs, the country has been massively engaged in the development of power, railway, air and roads connectivity, including the Ethio-Djibouti electrified and a standard gauge Railway. She also mentioned Ethiopian Airlines, flying to over 40 destinations in Africa and 100 globally, with an efficient cargo system. As an LLDCs member country, Ethiopia, she said, would look forward to exploring all venues of cooperation in the fields of promoting connectivity, trade facilitation and exchange of pertinent research works.

The two parties further took note of the fact that Ethiopia, with over 8000 personnel is now the leading contributor to UN peacekeeping missions, while also noting that Mongolia was also actively engaged in promoting collective security. They agreed to look into ways of enhancing cooperation in peacekeeping missions.

Somalia launches its 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan

Somalia's 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan was launched on Tuesday this week (January 30) in Mogadishu. The Government-led, UN-supported humanitarian response plan is looking for \$1.5 billion to address the needs of 5.4 million people. With half the population currently needing humanitarian assistance, there are fears that the *Gu* season (April–June) may become the 5th consecutive poor rainy season in Somalia, limiting the availability of pasture and water, reducing rain-fed crop harvests, and exacerbating levels of acute food insecurity. Aid agencies emphasize that continuing humanitarian assistance and livelihood support in 2018, paralleled by development solutions that focus on job creation, access to finance, and support to public service delivery, remains vital, to ensure that drought never turns to famine again.

The Humanitarian Response Plan was presented jointly with a proposed Recovery and Resilience Framework (RRF), which outlines the way forward for recovery and longer-term resilience, aiming to address the root causes of recurring humanitarian crises. The occasion was attended by Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre and other senior representatives of the Federal Government, as well as the international community.

Opening the event, Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khairé emphasized the Government's resolve to move from crisis to recovery. He said: "Somalia is turning over a new leaf in its history. Important and significant progress is being made on our peace- and state-building agenda. We are determined to overcome the challenges posed by recurring droughts that risk undermining these gains, and we count on our international partners to support us in this endeavor." Noting the magnitude of the humanitarian crisis, Mark Lowcock, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, urged the international community to sustain its life-saving support, but added: "Ending need in Somalia can only be achieved if we respond to immediate humanitarian needs while simultaneously implementing longer-term solutions to build resilience." Mr. Mohieldin, World Bank Senior Vice-President, noting the Humanitarian Response Plan was jointly launched with the RRF, and Somalia was "ahead of the curve in its effort to overcome the challenges", said hard investment was required to implement the RRF. He welcomed Government's efforts to normalize its relations with the international finance system.

The RRF was based on a Drought Impact Needs Assessment (DINA) carried out in partnership with Federal Member States, the EU, the UN and the World Bank. The DINA of the impact of the 2017 drought also identified long-term, durable solutions to address the root causes of recurrent crises. 180 sector experts from the Government, UN, EU and World Bank collected data across 18 sectors, incorporating existing data, and analyzing agriculture, water supply and sanitation, health and nutrition, food security, livelihoods, education and social protection. It provided a calculation of damage amounting to US\$1.02 billion, and losses estimated at US\$2.23 billion. Overall, it estimated the total effect of the most recent drought in Somalia could expect to exceed US\$3.25 billion. It also calculated total recovery needs could reach US\$1.77 billion, with agriculture and urban development and municipal services most affected.

These findings were incorporated into development of the Recovery and Resilience Framework, to provide a comprehensive strategy for policy-making and the institutionalization and financing of economic recovery and long-term development. Together they will enable the Federal Government and Federal Member states to devise medium- and long-term solutions to promote development and address the root causes of vulnerability to drought. They were developed alongside the Response Plan and in coordination with humanitarian partners, to ensure coherence and protect achievements.

In a related development, on the following day, the Government and the UN launched a major innovation challenge to seek ideas from young Somalis on improving the living conditions of people in internally displaced persons (IDPs) communities. The most viable solutions will be supported through entrepreneurship trainings, incubation and access to finance. The challenge is part of an ongoing "Innovate for Somalia" project led by UNDP, in collaboration with Somali government which has conducted two previous innovation challenges to improve the dairy industry and on coding development focused apps. World Bank Senior Vice-President Mohieldin called on young Somalis to maximize the

opportunities provided by the government, civil society and Somalia's development partners under the innovation challenge. He said: "As the World Bank, we do business with governments directly. But we have a very strong private sector arm, and I am pleased to know from my colleagues today that we have a fund of around 10 million U.S. dollars dedicated for Somalia to help the start-ups, small and micro enterprises."

The inaugural "Innovate for Somalia" camp was held in October 2017, where young people were given the opportunity to pitch their business ideas in order to raise start-up funding.