

News in brief

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Heads of State and Government, delegates, entrepreneurs and other distinguished dignitaries gathered in the City of Kigali, Rwanda this week (March 17-21) to deliberate on the flagship project of the African Union under the rubric of Agenda 2063. The principal goal of the Kigali Summit on the CFTA has been the establishment of an African Continental Free Trade Area that could accelerate intra-Africa trade and the gradual integration of the Continent. As the AfCFTA Summit in Kigali is an exceptional landmark in African history, it was concluded on the 21st of March 2018 by the signing of an agreement establishing the AfCFTA, the protocol on free movement of persons and the Kigali Declaration by several Heads of States and Governments representing their respective countries at 10th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly on AfCFTA. The AfCFTA was signed by 44 states, whereas 27 states were signatories to the protocol on free movement of people. **(See article)**

The African Union, in collaboration with Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania organized the First Ordinary Session of the Sub-Committee on Energy, Transport, Intercontinental and Interregional Infrastructure, Energy and Tourism this week (March 21 – 23) in Nouakchott, Mauritania. The meeting aimed at taking stock of the outcomes of the July 2017 summit and the approved Action Plans on energy.

IGAD, the European Union (EU) and the Australian Development Agency (ADA) signed a 42 million Euros agreement that will go towards IGAD's peace and security programs in the Horn of Africa region. The agreement is part of the several initiatives being funded by EU Emergency Fund for Africa, which was established to promote stability and address the root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons. According to a joint statement issued by IGAD, EU and ADA in Addis Ababa on Friday (March 23) the agreement also includes financing from the governments of Austria and Sweden.

Ethiopia

President Dr. Mulatu Teshome extended his warmest congratulations to Vladimir V. Putin on his re-election as President of the Russian Federation. President Mulatu said, "I would like to take this opportunity to express my best wishes for your personal well-being and for the progress and prosperity of the people of the Russian Federation." He added, "I also wish to express my full confidence that the historical and friendly relations existing between our two countries will continue to flourish further during your tenure as President of the Russian Federation."

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu led a high-level Ethiopian delegation to the 10th Extraordinary Session of the African Union Assembly on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) held in Kigali, Rwanda, this week (March 17-21). The AfCFTA aims to create a single continental market for goods and services, with free movement of business persons and investments, and pave the way for accelerating the establishment of the Continental Customs Union and the African customs union; expand intra African trade through better harmonization and coordination of trade liberalization and facilitation regimes and instruments across RECs and across Africa in general; resolve the challenges of multiple and overlapping memberships and expedite the regional and continental integration processes, as well as enhance competitiveness at the industry and enterprise level through exploiting opportunities for scale production, continental market access and better reallocation of resources.

Minister of Trade, Dr Bekele Bulado signed the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement on behalf of the FDRE, during the 10th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of the AU, which was opened in Kigali, Rwanda on Wednesday (March 21).

Speaking at the Commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the Cuban fallen soldiers at the end of last week, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene expressed the profoundest gratitude of the people of Ethiopia "for the determination of the hero and heroine Cuban soldiers, who gave their precious life to defend our country's sovereignty." Mrs. Hirut echoed, "They were great comrades who taught us the pursuit of humanity and sacrifice for the betterment of others." She underlined that the fallen Cuban heroes and heroines and their Ethiopian counterparts pioneered the foundation of common grounds which made the alliance between the two countries to last for more than four decades. **(See article)**

State Minister, Dr. Aklilu Hailemichael met with Mexico's Director General for Africa and Middle East, Ambassador Jorge Alvarez Feuntes on Tuesday (March 20). Dr. Aklilu described the close and enduring partnership between Ethiopia and Mexico as exemplary, particularly as the two countries share converging views on a wide spectrum of issues. Dr. Aklilu noted Ethiopia's fast economic growth, peace and stability, the significant tax incentives that aimed at attracting foreign investment and increasing the volume of foreign trade, and the huge domestic market and international market access, and trained and abundant labor force. In such score, the State Minister encouraged Mexican companies to invest in Ethiopia. Ambassador Jorge Alvarez Feuntes said his government is keen to enhance the bilateral cooperation and further collaborate with Ethiopia in areas of trade, investment, agriculture and other areas of mutual interest.

Dr. Aklilu received a Chinese business delegation from Hangzhou Province on Friday (March 23). Discussions principally focused on ways of further facilitating more Chinese investment in Ethiopia. Dr. Aklilu, expressed his appreciation for China's support to Ethiopia in the areas of infrastructural development, the establishment of industrial parks as well as the construction of high story buildings that house various businesses and government agencies in different parts of the country. Touching upon, the enduring multifaceted relations between Ethiopia and China, Dr. Aklilu stated that, Ethio-China cooperation range all the way from trade and investment to high level political consultations between the leaders of the two countries. He also noted the various initiatives underway to facilitate more Chinese companies investing in Ethiopia in the areas such as agro-processing, support in the generation of renewable energy as well as the facilitation of financial and technical support in the various big projects Ethiopia is undertaking.

The 24th Ethio–Djibouti Joint Border Administrators’ Meeting was held last week (March 12-14) in Semera, the capital of Afar National Regional State that brought together higher officials and delegates from the concerned institutions of both countries. The joint meeting of border administrators aimed at evaluating the implementation of previously agreed issues dealt at the 23rd Ethio-Djibouti Joint Border Administrators meeting held in Dikhil, Djibouti, covering the political, security, social and economic spectrum. **(See article)**

The Government of Ethiopia and the World Bank signed financing agreements amounting to 600 million US dollars in the form of loan and grant. Dr. Abraham Tekeste, Minister of Finance and Economic Cooperation and Ms. Carolyn Turk, World Bank Country Director for Ethiopia, Sudan and South Sudan, signed the agreements in Addis Ababa on Tuesday (March 20). The financing is earmarked to enhance the institutional performance of urban local governments, develop and sustain urban infrastructure, services, as well as support local economic development.

The Command Post, the body overseeing the enforcement of the State of Emergency said this week that the majority of Ethiopians have returned to their villages from Kenya; and this has come as a result of the joint efforts of elders, Aba Gedas, the Command Post and the residents themselves. The Command Post further said peace and stability is now restored in Moyale area.

Israel's Ambassador to Ethiopia, Raphael Morav on Tuesday (March 20) said that his country is keen to work with Ethiopia on space science technology and research, adding that Israel has also been providing short-term training programs to encourage and build capacity in innovation on areas including agriculture, health, and education.

Djibouti

The Office of the President of European Council on Tourism and Trade announced on Monday (March 19) that President Ismail Omar Guelleh has been selected as a World Leader of Tourism and a member of European Tourism Academy for his "recognition of the role and significance of tourism on the world stage." The Council encouraged Djibouti's leadership to continue on the road for development and poverty reduction through the growth of the tourism sector.

Eritrea

The Swiss parliament instructed the Federal Council to intensify its diplomatic presence in Eritrea, with the goal of stemming the flows of refugees from the country. The House of Representatives signed an adapted text that was earlier ratified by the Senate, calling for a reinforced diplomatic presence in Asmara, which does not include establishing a physical embassy in Eritrea.

Kenya

Kenya's Chief Administrative Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ababu Namwamba on Wednesday (March 21) said Kenya is committed to making the World Trade Organization (WTO) stronger, and that his country seeks to implement its obligations.

Somalia

Foreign Minister Ahmed Awad signed the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the Kigali Declaration during the 10th Extraordinary Session of the African Union Assembly held in Kigali, Rwanda, this week (March 17-21).

Minister of Education, Abdirahman Dahir Osman held discussions with the Ambassador of China to Somalia, Wei Hongtian on Monday (march 19), and the two sides discussed on ways to improve Somalia's education sector, and agreed to spearhead efforts to re-establish Public Technical Schools in the country for the first time in decades. Minister Osman said, "We discussed on several issues about Somalia's educational field including China's scholarships to Somali students. We emphasized the need to re-start the country's technical schools and how the government of China could help Somalia rebuild those schools."

A deadly car bomb killed 14 people and wounded several others in Mogadishu on Thursday (March 22). Al-shabaab said it was responsible for the blast and according to government spokesman, the death toll could rise as rescue efforts continue to date.

The UN OCHA has issued Somalia's Humanitarian dashboard for the year 2018 at the end of last week and the report said severe drought conditions have continued to compound the humanitarian situation especially in parts of northern Somalia where water shortages have led to stress induced migration of pastoralist communities in search of water and pasture in several areas. Much due to acute food insecurity, measles resurgence and urgent needs in humanitarian access, Somaliland and Puntland authorities have now called for urgent humanitarian assistance. Overall, the report showed the overall humanitarian situation in Somalia in education, nutrition and food security, health, shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene and the needs and responses required to fund the appeal. **(See article)**

Somalia's State Media reported on Thursday (March 22) that Moalim Gedow Abukar, a senior Al-Shabaab leader in Bay region surrendered to government forces. Abukar is reported to have denounced violence and disagreed with the group's top leaders over attacks against civilians.

South Sudan

The IGAD Council of Ministers issued a statement this week on Monday (march 20), and said it was dismayed to learn that in some parts of South Sudan, the violations of the Agreement on cessation of hostilities continued with impunity. The Council noted its statement on January 25, 2018 regarding serious violations of cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA) which called on the Government of South Sudan and SPLM-IO (RM) to undertake the necessary investigation and ensure accountability of Violators. It also recalled its demand on the parties to provide information of the responsible individuals or groups to CTSAMM within one month from the issuance of the 25th January, 2018 Statement. However, the council noted with regrets that no party has submitted its report to CTSAMM as of the issuance of this statement. It warned that failure to comply with the duty to investigate and report the accountability measures taken against perpetrators of violations of the COHA can be considered as non-compliance to Article 13 of the COHA. The Council of Ministers called on all the parties to the conflict to fully observe their obligation under the COHA. It expressed its firm determination to take appropriate actions on the non-compliance to its statement.

The UN Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) until 15 March 2019. Members of the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2406 (2018) under the United Nations Charter's Chapter VII; and the Council demanded that parties end the fighting and signaled its intention to consider all measures, including an arms embargo against those obstructing peace in South Sudan. The Council demanded South Sudan's leaders to implement the permanent ceasefire declared in the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. **(See article)**

In a statement issued on Wednesday (March 21), the U.S. Department of State said it was taking action against 15 South Sudan oil-related entities "whose revenues have contributed to the ongoing crisis in South Sudan." This meant US as well as non-US companies would need a license to export, re-export, or transfer exports of any US-origin goods or technology to the listed entities. US Department spokeswoman, Heather Nauert said, "By placing these entities on the U.S. Department of Commerce's Entity List, the United States will impose a license requirement on all exports, re-exports, and transfers of any U.S.-origin items to those entities," adding: "We call on the region and broader international community to join us in limiting the financial flows that fuel the continuing violence in the country." In response, the Government of South Sudan on Thursday (March 22) said, sanctions imposed by the United States on 15 South Sudanese oil operators would undermine efforts to restore peace and stability in the country.

The Government of South Sudan deployed Gordon Buay as charge de affairs to Washington after recalling the head of the mission for consultation. The government, in response to the decision by the United States which restricts sales of arms to South Sudan, decided to recall Ambassador Garang Diing Akuong following the announcement of sanctions and an arms embargo.

The Government of South Sudan said on Wednesday (March 21) the visit of the former army chief of staff, Paul Malong Awan to Khartoum would not affect relations between the two countries. Presidential adviser on security affairs, Tut Kew Gatluak said, "Presence of Gen Paul Malong Awan in Khartoum will not affect our relations. Sudan is the member of the IGAD which is now exerting efforts to find a way to end the conflict in the country. So we see Sudanese government as playing a positive role in this regard."

Sudan

President Omer al-Bashir signed the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement on Wednesday (March 21), during the 10th Extraordinary Session of the African Union Assembly held in Kigali, Rwanda, this week (March 17-21).

President Al-Bashir met Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi in Cairo this week on Monday (March 19) and discussed on ways to promote common interests and develop joint projects.

Foreign Minister Ibrahim Ghandour met with United Nations special envoy for Sudan and South Sudan, Nicholas Haysom in Khartoum on Tuesday (March 20), and the latter pledged to support the African Union mediation in its efforts to persuade the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North led by Abdel Aziz al-Hilu (SPLM-N al-Hilu) to sign a cessation of hostilities agreement with the government. In a statement released after the meeting, the Sudanese foreign ministry said the special envoy expressed his confidence that the renewal of the unilateral cessation of hostilities declaration by the government in the Blue Nile and South Kordofan states has positive effects in the two areas.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) Summit in Kigali

Heads of State and Government, delegates, entrepreneurs and other distinguished dignitaries gathered in the City of Kigali, Rwanda this week (March 17-21) to deliberate on the flagship project of the African Union under the rubric of Agenda 2063. The principal goal of the Kigali Summit on the CFTA has been the establishment of an African Continental Free Trade Area that could accelerate intra-Africa trade and the gradual integration of the Continent.

Speaking on 19 March 2018 during the opening of the 18th Extraordinary Session of the Executive Council, AUC Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat underscored the need for Africa to speak with one voice as African Union member states embark on implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Ambassador Thomas Kwesi Quartey, Deputy Chairperson of the AUC, while addressing the Permanent Representatives Council earlier on Saturday (March 17), said, "The AfCFTA Summit is a historic moment and a milestone towards achieving the Africa we Want as it is addressing one of the Flagship Projects under Agenda 2063."

On the margins of the AfCFTA, a full-day AfCFTA Business Forum on "Leveraging the Power of Business to Drive Africa's Integration" was conducted with series of panel discussions on several issues of concern and of Continental interest, themed: "Leveraging the Power of Business to Drive Africa's Integration", "Jobs, Youth and Women: What the AfCFTA means for Africa's citizens?", "Technology, Innovation and Intra-Africa" and the "Financing of Intra-Africa Trade".

The plenary session on "Technology, Innovation and Intra-Africa Trade", reiterated the need for traversing the contours of the brave new world of Digital Innovation in the fields of finance, education, media, trade, social interconnectedness, the cross-border flow of data and leveraging the advantages as a robust and faster way of realizing, not only the oft talked about agenda of

regional integration but also the improvement of African lives and the better propagation of African narratives and the preservation of the African identity on the world stage. Paying due attention to the fact that, these days the cross-border flow of data by far exceeds the flow of goods or people in different regions of Africa as well as the youth dividend that is both a resource and if not well taken care of, a burden, several keynote speakers from the innovative business solutions corps urged governments and entrepreneurs across the continent to take stock of ICT infrastructure, content platforms for African narratives, financial platforms in the form of a Pan-African Digital Currency for an integrated Pan-African Market. They also stressed on the need to secure Identity Platforms to imprint the African identity on the global iconography and trade and trading facilitation platforms are key to a highly promising and innovative CFTA - Smart CFTA - with an immense potential to ensure the job security of the youth and the combined trade competitiveness of the African continent.

As the AfCFTA Summit in Kigali is an exceptional landmark in African history, it was concluded on the 21st of March 2018 by the signing of an agreement establishing the AFCFTA, the protocol on free movement of persons and the Kigali Declaration by several Heads of States and Governments representing their respective countries at the 10th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly on AfCFTA. The AfCFTA was signed by 44 states, whereas 27 states were signatories to the protocol on free movement of people.

In his opening remarks at the Extraordinary Session, the President of Rwanda and the Chairperson of the African Union, Paul Kagame, told Heads of State and Government as well as delegates that "Today's agenda is to adopt the Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, as well as the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, and the Kigali Declaration, which expresses our unity in moving our continent forward. Taken together, these are surely to be counted among the most consequential actions that this Assembly has ever taken."

The 10th IGAD Health Ministerial Committee Meeting held in Addis Ababa

The 10th IGAD Health Ministerial Committee Meeting on refugees and other cross-border programs opened this week on Monday (March 19) in Addis Ababa, to validate the IGAD HIV, TB and Malaria Strategic Plan for 2018-2025. Following the two-day meeting, the health ministers of the IGAD member countries validated the IGAD supporting guidelines for TB-HIV services in the refugee settings as well as endorsed the priorities for the Regional Global Fund Grant.

Opening the 10th IGAD Health Ministerial Committee Meeting, Ethiopia's Health Minister Prof. Yifru Birhan said, the "IGAD Regional Strategic Plan for 2018–2025 was prepared with the support of the Global Fund in order to scale up and strengthen the cross-border health programs to all vulnerable groups including pastoralists and cross-border mobile population, refugees, Internally Displaced population (IDPs), returnees and the host communities in our region". The Minister called on Member States to support the regional Health Programs, particularly the intervention towards addressing the health needs of refugees, returnees, IDPs, pastoralists and cross-border mobile population.

IGAD Executive Secretary, Ambassador Mahboub Maalim highlighted the priorities of the 10th IGAD Health Ministerial Committee Meeting, which he said, aimed at consolidating efforts to address the health concerns of refugees as part of a cross border programme. He called on Health Ministers to provide support to IGAD Application to the Global Fund and integrate refugee health issues and others mobile population in their national health system. The Executive Secretary further stressed on the importance of establishing a “Cancer Center of Excellence” for the region. The Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of Italy to Ethiopia and IGAD, Giuseppe Sean Coppola noted that the strategy was very “useful for development partners for guidance in the implementation of the joint initiatives in the region in this field”. Coppola who is also Chair of the IGAD partners Forum further pledged to disseminate the outcomes of the meeting to make sure that development partners consider these initiatives for their future plans and engagements in the sector.

The 10th IGAD Health Ministerial Committee Meeting also witnessed the signing of the Declaration of the 10th IGAD Health Ministerial Committee Meeting on Refugee and Other Cross Border Health Programmes by the Federal State Minister of Health of Sudan, Dr Firdous Abdourahman Yousif, and the senior Advisor of the Minister of Health of South Sudan, Dr. Luka Tombekana .

The declaration recalled the recommendations of the First and Second Conferences on Public Health in the Horn of Africa held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 1996 and 1998, for the improvement of HIV and AIDS control among vulnerable populations in the IGAD Region, recommendations from Ministerial meeting on health held in Djibouti in November 2006. It also noted the recommendations of the First, Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Ministerial Committee meetings on Health and HIV&AIDS held in Nairobi, Kampala, Addis Ababa, Nairobi and Addis Ababa in March 2007, January 2008, February 2009, March 2010 and December 2010. It further took note of the recommendations of the First IGAD Conference on Health held in Addis Ababa in December 2014; the recommendation of 9th IGAD Ministerial Meeting on Surveillance and Outbreak held in Nairobi, Kenya in July 2016; and other Regional and Sub-regional conferences on major communicable diseases and other key public health priorities.

It acknowledged the strong commitment to improving health and promoting the well being of people in the IGAD region including refugees by governments, communities and development partners, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, Agenda 2063 and universal Health Coverage and other Global Health Commitments. This, it said, would enhance the recognition of communicable diseases, including HIV, TB and Malaria place a high-level burden on IGAD member states Health system and pronounced changes in the incidence of epidemic diseases had been observed in the region coupled with climate change and extreme weather conditions.

While noting the importance of the IGAD Health programs in complementing the efforts of the national health systems particularly at the cross border areas addressing the cross border and mobile population, the declaration expressed the deep concern over the persistent burden of high maternal, infant, child mortality and morbidities across the IGAD member states and the increasing burden of non-communicable diseases particularly cancer, diabetes

and cardiovascular diseases; and their impact on the lives of the people of the region, and the urgent need to address them.

The meeting noted the frequent conflicts and series of droughts, which it said, frequently caused displacement of the populations in the region resulting in increasing number of refugees hosted by governments of the member states with serious impact on the national health systems that required additional resources to strengthen the health systems and improve capacity especially at cross border areas. Equally, it recognized the increasing number of refugees hosted in the region and its continued burden on IGAD Member States' health system and communities in the cross border and other hosting areas. It further underscored the need to provide access to quality health services to refugees and other cross border and mobile populations.

In all these, the declaration commended the current support provided by the Global Fund for improving availability and utilization of TB/HIV services in the refugee camps in the IGAD region, and the USAID to strengthen the IGAD cross border programs particularly in a bid to address the cross border health threats; as well as the various supports from a range of partners, including the World Bank, WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Canadian Government and University of Alberta. It acknowledged the efforts provided by Member States in the provision of TB/HIV services in the Refugee and cross border populations through the various implementation mechanisms both at regional and country level.

The meeting welcomed the establishment of the IGAD Medicine Regulation and Harmonization (MRH) Program, and the IGAD Regional Action Through Data (IGAD-RAD) Program/initiative, while stressing the need to mobilize additional financial and technical support from other conventional and non-conventional health partners for IGAD Health Programs and special support to strengthen the health systems of South Sudan and Somalia.

The Health ministers of the IGAD member countries further declared their commitment to implement IGAD HIV, TB and Malaria Strategic plan for the period of 2018-2025; establish IGAD Regional Cancer Center of Excellence; set up IGAD Medicine regulation and Harmonization (MRH) initiative; create IGAD Regional Action Through Data (RAD) initiative; launch Reproductive Maternal Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health initiative, as well as establish a Regional Trust Fund to support the IGAD health programs.

The 24th Ethio-Djibouti Joint Border Administrators' Commission meeting

The 24th Ethio–Djibouti Joint Border Administrators' Meeting was held last week (March 12-14) in Semera, the capital of Afar National Regional State that brought together higher officials and delegates from the concerned institutions of both countries. The joint meeting of border administrators aimed at evaluating the implementation of previously agreed issues dealt at the

23rdEthio-Djibouti Joint Border Administrators meeting held in Dikhil, Djibouti, covering the political, security, social and economic spectrum.

Opening the session, Awol Arba, the Deputy President of the Afar National Regional State extended a warm welcome to the Djiboutian Delegation for coming to their second home, the City of Samara, and expressed his satisfaction on the prevailing mutual understanding and level of cooperation between the two brotherly nations residing along the common border areas. Head of the Ethiopian Delegation and Director of Main Department of Immigration and Nationality Affairs, Gebreyohannes Teklu emphasized on the importance of reviewing the achievements so far; and identifying the challenges to chart out future actions for the implementation of previously signed bilateral agreements.

Ambassador Mohammed Drir, Director General for the Neighbouring countries and IGAD affairs at the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed the challenges regarding illegal trade, human trafficking and smuggling of fire arms, which he said, had yet to be addressed. Ambassador Mohammed further underlined that the current Joint Border Administrators' Commission meeting should be able to come up with solutions which in turn should be implemented by the respective sub-committees. Ethiopia, he said, would continue to demonstrate its commitment to enhance the fraternal relationship between the two countries.

Head of the Djiboutian delegation and Secretary General of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Djibouti, Sirag Omar Abdoukader expressed his gratitude for the warm welcome extended to his side by the Afar National Regional State and underlined the close relationship between Ethiopia and Djibouti, further stressing that the meeting would consider deliberations on issues of mutual concern, including cross border trade, illegal migration, movement of peoples and goods.

The 24th Ethiopia–Djibouti Joint Border Administrators' Meeting reviewed the activities of the sub-committees on three clusters- political, security and economic & social cooperation. These included a range of issues, including the movement of people and goods, security issues, culture and tourism, trade, health, transport, illegal migration and human trafficking.

The meeting welcomed the smooth movement of pastoralists from both countries along the common border, while also emphasizing on the importance of maintaining the traditional link as it contributes to the peace and stability of both countries and beyond. Border administrators from both sides further expressed their satisfaction on the movement of tourists along areas of their common border and agreed to work more closely in a bid to ensure further coordination. The meeting also considered the proposed initiative to establish an Ad-Hoc Committee with the view to dealing with problems associated with the construction and maintenance of the Dikhil-Galafi road.

On aspects of security along the common border, the two sides noted the growing security threats in the region, and the widespread contraband trade of illicit arms and illegal migration, which they said, posed serious threats to their national security. They agreed to strengthen the bilateral cooperation through information exchange, joint surveillances and patrolling.

The 24th Ethiopia–Djibouti Joint Border Administrators’ Meeting has been dubbed as yet another testimony to the exemplary bilateral relations between Ethiopia and Djibouti, and a mechanism of ensuring economic integration and boosting the people to people ties between the two countries. The two sides further agreed to hold the 25th Ethio-Djibouti Joint Border Administrators’ Commission Meeting in Djibouti.

UN Security Council extends the mandate of UNMISS

The UN Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) until 15 March 2019. Members of the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2406 (2018) under the United Nations Charter’s Chapter VII; and the Council demanded that parties end the fighting and signaled its intention to consider all measures, including an arms embargo against those obstructing peace in South Sudan. The Council demanded South Sudan’s leaders to implement the permanent ceasefire declared in the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) welcomed the decision by the United Nations Security Council to renew its peacekeeping mandate, adding that since the outbreak of civil war in 2013, UNMISS has remained committed to working with the people of South Sudan to end the conflict and build durable peace.

The UN Security Council in a statement said the decision to extend UNMISS’s mandate has come much due to urgent need to support the peace process, stressing that UNMISS “would use its good offices and participate in the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism, with its Regional Protection Force authorized to use robust action to facilitate safe and free movement around Juba”. The statement underscored UNMISS would work to protect civilians, create conditions conducive to aid delivery and monitor and investigate human rights abuses.

Resolution 2406 required UNMISS to continue its work to protect civilians, and internally displaced populations, who have sought sanctuary within protection sites across the country next to UN bases and civilians, and more broadly through the proactive deployment of its peacekeeping troops across South Sudan.

The Security Council also decided to maintain the overall force levels of UNMISS with a troop ceiling of 17,000 troops, which also includes a regional protection force not exceeding 4,000, and maintaining the ceiling of 2,101 police personnel, including individual police officers, armed police units and 78 corrections officers.

South Sudan’s Ambassador to the United Nations, Moum Majak Ngor Malok, welcomed the mandate renewal, but expressed his concern that the Council had chosen to politicize a peacekeeping resolution. He said, “There is a need to bridge the discrepancy between the primary responsibility of the State and the complementary support of the international community.” He said South Sudan was violently divided, but the leadership had been popularly elected, and while it was practical to be connected to both parties, and foster national consensus,

he added, the United Nations should work in collaboration with the Government of the Republic of South Sudan. He further stressed, “It is one thing to condemn the leadership of the country and another to threaten the imposition of an arms embargo and sanctions.” This, he said, would only generate an adversarial relationship. Ambassador Malok further said the only solution to the conflict was through a political process and that the President had already made numerous compromises. In such light, he added that UNMISS and the country team should discuss with the Government on ways to use their strategic understanding as a basis for reaching out to the armed opposition.

OCHA: Severe drought conditions continue in parts of Somalia

The UN OCHA has issued Somalia’s Humanitarian dashboard for the year 2018 at the end of last week and the report said severe drought conditions have continued to compound the humanitarian situation especially in parts of northern Somalia where water shortages have led to stress induced migration of pastoralist communities in search of water and pasture in several areas. Much due to acute food insecurity, measles resurgence and urgent needs in humanitarian access, Somaliland and Puntland authorities have now called for urgent humanitarian assistance. Overall, the report showed the overall humanitarian situation in Somalia in education, nutrition and food security, health, shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene and the needs and responses required to fund the appeal.

It said, 5.4 million people are in need of food aid, and 2.7 million people are under crisis and emergency as well as 1,236,500 are internally displaced. The Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM), a field operation that provides equitable service and protection for internally displaced persons living in communal settings, has so far reached nearly 487,860 people who lack basic services and face overcrowding, poor sanitation, health and protection risks.

The report stressed that US\$717 million is required between January and June 2018 to sustain famine prevention efforts. This, it said, is part of the \$1.5 billion required for the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan. On the way forward, the report noted that timely provision of resources is critical to prevent deterioration in the second quarter of the year, along with plans for an ongoing nationwide measles campaign aimed to reach more than 4.7 million children between the age of six months and 10 years.

The Commemoration of the 40th anniversary of Cuban fallen soldiers

The commemoration of the 40th anniversary of Cuban fallen soldiers during the Ogaden War, also known as Ethio-Somalia war was observed at the end of last week in Addis Ababa and Havana.

When the Somalia National Army invaded Jijiga, Eastern Ethiopia in 1977, Cuba had been among the few countries that stood alongside Ethiopia and deployed about 17,000 troops who bravely fought together with Ethiopian troops. During this invasion, 163 heroic men and women of Cuba paid the ultimate sacrifice to fulfill the mission entrusted to them to preserve Ethiopia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The commemoration of Cuban fallen soldiers was held at the Ethio-Cuba Friendship Park in Addis Ababa on Friday (March 16), and, State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene laid a wreath of flowers along with Mrs. Vilma Thomas Ramirez, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Cuba to Ethiopia. The commemoration was also witnessed by Latin American Diplomatic corps, Ethio-Cuba Friendship Association members, other dignitaries, invited guests as well as residents of the city.

Speaking at the Commemoration event, State Minister Mrs. Hirut expressed the profoundest gratitude of the people of Ethiopia "for the determination of the hero and heroine Cuban soldiers, who gave their precious life to defend our country's sovereignty." Mrs. Hirut echoed, "They were great comrades who taught us the pursuit of humanity and sacrifice for the betterment of others." She underlined that the fallen Cuban heroes and heroines and their Ethiopian counterparts pioneered the foundation of common grounds which made the alliance between the two countries to last for more than four decades.

The State Minister noted the four decades of close friendship and cooperation between Ethiopia and Cuba, both through their peoples and governments, adding: "For the last 40 years, the relation of the two countries has continued in the context of mutual benefit and trust." Among other things, Mrs. Hirut stated, "Cuba has provided technical support to Ethiopia in the areas of education, health, science and technology." The critical role Cuba has played in the overall improvement of the healthcare system in Ethiopia remains well noted, Mrs. Hirut added, attesting to the fact that "some of [Ethiopia's] outstanding doctors were trained in Cuba."

Referring to the sci-tech cooperation Ethiopia and Cuba cherish, State Minister Hirut, underlined, "Our cooperation [in this regard], especially in biotechnology has been progressing very well." As a beacon for this sort of flagship project, the Ethiopian Government had established the Ethiopian Biotechnology Institute in 2016 following a proclamation by Council of Ministers. With regards to multilateral cooperation, State Minister Hirut said, "Ethiopia and Cuba work together in multilateral fora, particularly in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the G77 framework." She stressed, "It is [a ripe moment] to move forward in solidifying for further collaboration and renew our joint efforts to create a better future for our people."

Cuban Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ambassador Vilma Ramirez recalled the sacrifices made by Cuban soldiers under the leadership of the late Cuban President, Fiedel Castro, which she said, had created an unbroken bond between the Peoples of Cuba and Ethiopia. She reaffirmed that the partnership between the two countries would continue to flourish and the Government of Cuba remains committed to share its technical expertise to Ethiopia.

The commemoration of the 40th anniversary of Cuban fallen soldiers was also observed in Cuba, Havana, and the event was organized by the Ethiopian Embassy in Havana, and Ministry of

Defense of Cuba, Senior vice Minister of Defense of Cuba, State Minister of Communications, and the event was attended by Cuban's Communist Party Higher Officials and over 1000 members of the Cuban Military

It is to be recalled that as part of the overall efforts on both sides to elevate the current level of bilateral relations, President Dr. Mulatu Teshome visited Cuba in January this year and deliberated with his Cuban counterpart, Mr. Raul Castro, and agreed to strengthen the historic cooperation and identify other potential areas of partnership.