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The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat received the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates, Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, on Thursday (March 8). The two parties discussed on how to reinforce the partnership between the African Union and the United Arab Emirates, and exchanged views on steps to be taken to increase Emirati investment in Africa in support of Agenda 2063; support to specific African Union projects; and the rejuvenation of the Afro-Arab cooperation.

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission also received US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson this week on Thursday (March 8) and discussed reform of African Union and the AU’s efforts to fund itself through member states’ levies as well as ways to fund the AU’s G5 Sahel force. Mr. Tillerson underlined U.S. appreciation of the AU’s leading role to ensure peace in the continent, to establish intra- Africa trade, and to fight against terrorism and corruption as well as its efforts to ensure good governance and transparency. He also praised the African Union for its strong statements over South Sudan and its major role in the fight against terrorists in Somalia. **(See article)**

Russia’s Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, who met with AUC Chairperson, Moussa Faki Mahamat on Friday (March 9) said his country would provide support for Africa to have a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), adding that the reform at the UNSC should include Africa, and Russia backs Africa to get a permanent seat at the Council. **(See article)**

**Ethiopia**

President Dr. Mulatu Teshome received Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the UAE, Sheik Abdullah bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan at the Jubilee Palace on Wednesday (March 07). The two sides discussed on the outcome of the Joint Ministerial Commission Meeting and the need to finalize and conclude further agreements and MoUs to strengthen the mutual cooperation and engagement. The UAE Foreign Minister expressed his country’s strong desire and commitment to expand existing areas of cooperation and further explore new venues of mutual engagement. **(See article)**

Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn met Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the UAE, Sheik Abdullah bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan on Wednesday (March 07); discussions covered ways of strengthening cooperation on bilateral and regional issues. Both sides stressed on the importance of scaling up the cooperation on investment, trade, and tourism. **(See article)**

Prime Minister Hailemariam held talks with U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Wednesday (March 7) and both sides discussed bilateral and regional issues, as well as agreed to strengthen their cooperation in development, security, peace and counter terrorism. **(See article)**

Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu met Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the UAE, Sheik Abdullah bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan on Wednesday (March 07), and the two ministers jointly opened the 2nd Ethio-UAE Joint Ministerial Commission on the same day. Minister Workneh noted that a new dynamism in strengthening cooperation had been witnessed since the two countries established a formal diplomatic relationship in 1973. The establishment of the Joint Ministerial Commission in 2015 and the subsequent meeting that was held in Abu Dhabi, he said, had culminated in the signing of six bilateral agreements and Memoranda of Understandings. **(See article)**

US Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, landed at Addis Ababa's Bole International Airport this week at the start of a five-nation tour that taking him to Chad, Djibouti, Kenya and Nigeria as well as Ethiopia. He was welcomed by Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu and other high ranking Ethiopian government officials. And during his visit to Addis Ababa he held meetings with Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn, and Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh, discussing issues of trade, investment, regional and global peace as well as counter terrorism. **(See article)**

Russia's Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, who is on a working visit to Ethiopia, met with Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu on Friday (March 9). Dr. Workneh noted that the official working visit of Mr. Lavrov to Ethiopia is a special occasion "as this year marks the 120th anniversary of the establishment of official diplomatic relations between Ethiopia and Russia and the 122nd anniversary of the Victory of Adwa, which was a bitter struggle for African independence." **(See article)**

Dr. Workneh conferred with General Martin Luther Agwai, Team Leader of Experts tasked by the United Nations Secretary General to review the mandates of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) on Monday (March 5). Praising Ethiopia's immense contribution to the UNISFA in its efforts to protect civilians, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid and free movement of relief workers in and around Abyei, Gen. Martin noted that his team deemed it significant to consult the Government of Ethiopia with regards to the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), giving particular emphasis on the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JVBMM).

Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh received the director of World Chambers Federation (WCF) at the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), Anthony Parkes on Thursday (March 8). Discussions focused on the World Chambers Congress due to be held in 2021, a bid in which Ethiopia through the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce & Sectoral Associations (ECCSA) is one of the four finalists.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Mrs. Hirut Zemene received a Portuguese delegation led by Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Portugal, Mrs. Teresa Ribeiro on Monday (March 5), and discussions focused on ways of furthering cooperation in areas of agriculture, energy, tourism, trade and investment, the commemoration of the 5th centenary of Ethiopia-Portugal relations, as well as cooperation on the IGAD-led South Sudan peace process.

State Minister Hirut met Mr. Christian Leffler, European External Action Service - EEAS Deputy Secretary General for Economic and Global Issues, on Monday (March 5), during which, the later underscored that Ethiopia is a key strategic EU partner in bilateral, regional & and multilateral venues of cooperation.

The staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs colourfully celebrated this year's International Women's Day, this week, under the theme:" Press for Progress." The occasion was marked by proffering recognition to women who have been role models for their achievements; a theatrical play was also in display, showcasing women's key role in society.

## **Djibouti**

Djibouti's Ports and Zones Authority said on Tuesday (March 6) that Doraleh Container Terminal Management Company has signed a deal with Singapore-based Pacific International Lines (PIL). The agreement is expected to raise performance at the Doraleh Container Terminal, allowing it to handle an extra 300,000 20-foot equivalent unit containers (TEU) annually.

## **Kenya**

Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta and opposition leader Raila Odinga met on Friday (March 9), and promised to resolve their differences and create a "new beginning" for the country. After a two-hour meeting at Mr Kenyatta's office, the president said the leaders had come "to a common understanding. . . to begin a process of bringing our people together," adding that this would be to "build together a harmonious stable nation where no individual feels left out or left behind."

## **Somalia**

A meeting of the Troop-Contributing Countries (TCCs) in Kampala last week reaffirmed their commitment to continue to assist the federal government of Somalia in its stabilization effort but warned that the planned timetable for the drawdown of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) would endanger hard-fought gains made since the force deployed to Somalia in 2007. **(See article)**

The United Kingdom and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) convened a meeting in London on Tuesday this week (March 6) to draw urgent attention to the humanitarian crisis in Somalia and the need for a swift and substantial response. Participants highlighted the importance of early and sustained funding for humanitarian assistance, and the need for commitment to widen the resource base and ensure greater predictability, coherence and effectiveness of aid, translating the commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit into necessary action. **(See article)**

The Deputy Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Simon Mulongo on Sunday (March 4) visited soldiers who were injured in the recent terrorist attack in Middle Shabelle region. The injured soldiers, who are recuperating at AMISOM Level II Hospital, were part of a convoy escorting civilian trucks transporting humanitarian supplies from Mogadishu to Jowhar.

## **South Sudan**

German ambassador to South Sudan, Jan Hendrik van Thiel told reporters in Juba on Wednesday (March 7) that the European Union (EU) is it ready to impose an arms embargo on South Sudan if the country's warring parties do not cease hostilities and ignore ongoing peace talks. He added, "If there is no peace and accountability, we cannot just implement development programmes in South Sudan,... EU will renew its longstanding arms embargo on South Sudan."

In a statement issued on Thursday (March 8), nine South Sudanese opposition groups said they had formed an alliance to expedite efforts to end the civil war ahead of the next round of the revitalization of the peace accord. The group said they were driven by the desire to improve the situation and prevent it from disintegrating, adding: "At no time in the history of our country has the need to rescue South Sudan from complete disintegration."

## **Sudan**

Sudan's Foreign Ministry announced at the end of last week that the Sudanese-Turkish political consultations committee would meet on 21 March in Khartoum to discuss all issues pertaining to bilateral relations, noting the two countries agreed to continue mutual support at the various regional and international forums.

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## ***UAE Foreign Minister in Addis for 2nd Ethio-UAE Joint Ministerial Commission meeting***

Sheik Abdullah bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates arrived in Addis Ababa on Wednesday (March7) to attend the 2nd Ethio-UAE Joint Ministerial Commission meeting which commenced this week (March5-7). He also met with President Dr. Mulatu Teshome and Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn as well as Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu.

Sheik Abdullah bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan met with President Dr. Mulatu Teshome on Wednesday (March 7) at the Jubilee Palace and the two discussed on the outcome of the Joint Ministerial Commission Meeting and the need to finalize and conclude further agreements and MoUs to strengthen the mutual cooperation and engagement between the two countries. Taking note of the JMC and high level meetings to be a reflection of the high bondage between the two sides, both underlined the need to scale up the trade and investment ties, emphasizing that the current trade volume is far less as compared to the existing huge potentials within the two countries. Sheik Abdullah bin Zayed expressed UAE's strong desire and commitment to expand areas of cooperation and explore the relations further. He said

the UAE Embassy in Addis Ababa is the first UAE mission in Africa, and expressed his country's will to double its mission and increase its presence in Africa.

Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn met Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the UAE, Sheik Abdullah bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan on Wednesday (March 07); discussions covered ways of strengthening cooperation on bilateral and regional issues. Both sides stressed on the importance of scaling up the cooperation on investment, trade, and tourism sector.

The UAE Foreign Minister also met with Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu and the two ministers jointly opened the 2nd Ethio-UAE Joint Ministerial Commission on Wednesday (March 7), during which, Minister Workneh noted that a new dynamism in strengthening cooperation had been witnessed since the two countries established a formal diplomatic relationship in 1973. The establishment of the Joint Ministerial Commission in 2015 and the subsequent meeting that was held in Abu Dhabi, he said, had culminated in the signing of six bilateral agreements and Memoranda of Understandings.

Dr. Workneh further mentioned Ethiopia's mix of opportunities, which he said, could attract more UAE investors, while also underlining the need to redouble efforts to further enhance engagements in trade, investment, tourism and people-to-people interactions with a view to deepening and solidifying the bilateral cooperation. Though UAE's total investment in Ethiopia reached 10.9 billion Birr with 135 active projects running, he added, "much remains to be done," and called for Emirati investors to expedite more on the sectors of real estate investment in Ethiopia. On aspects of regional peace and security, Dr. Workneh highlighted that Ethiopia and the UAE should create mechanisms that enable them to work closely to deal with emerging security threats of terrorism and extremism in the region.

Sheik Abdullah bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan stressed the importance of the Joint Ministerial Commission in laying down the basis for further expansion of cooperation and underlined the will to further enhance Ethio-UAE cooperation in the fields of aviation, regional security, labour agreement and consular relations, adding: "Time has come to reflect more on the trust we have built and expand our engagement on other sectors as well." He further underscored that the regular consultations between Ethiopia and UAE served as an effective platform to strengthen the bilateral relations and overcome the challenges that limit the prospects between the two friendly countries.

Earlier on Tuesday (March 6), the 2nd Ethio-UAE Joint Technical Committee Meeting was held where senior officials and experts drawn from both countries worked out areas of cooperation, including aviation, agriculture, energy and renewable energy, port and logistics, tourism, customs, economy, trade and investment, livestock and fishery, science and technology, justice, labor agreement and consular issues. Ambassador Suleiman Dedefo, Director General of the Middle East Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs recalled the long standing commercial, cultural and people to people ties between Ethiopia and the Arabian Peninsula that dates back to the Aksumite Kingdom and praised the plenty of potential areas of cooperation as well as mentioned the number of achievements witnessed in the last few years, which he said, demonstrated the commitment of the two sisterly countries. He reiterated the several common objectives Ethiopia and UAE shared on regional and international issues related to peace, security and development, and their collaboration in a range of multilateral fora, including at the United Nations. He further stressed the importance of the growing trade relations and investment ties between the two sides, while also noting

that there has been an increase in the number of Emirati investors now reaching more than 98 with a combined capital of over 10 billion Birr.

Mohammed Sharaf, Assistant Minister for Economic and Trade Affairs of the UAE noted the robust relationship between the UAE and Ethiopia to be of interest to the leadership of both nations. He praised the vital role Ethiopia is playing in combating extremism as well as maintaining security in the Horn of Africa. He mentioned the UAE's direct investment in Ethiopia for the years 2003-2017 amounted to around \$523 million and described this as very encouraging, while UAE investment outflows are expected to increase with further investment agreements. The UAE is the second largest destination for Ethiopian exports in the Middle East and North Africa region.

The 2nd Ethio-UAE Joint Ministerial Commission was concluded with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on Political consultations.

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### ***Rex Tillerson: The U.S. will continue its “all weather relationship” with Ethiopia***

US Secretary of State, Rex Tillerson, landed at Addis Ababa's Bole International Airport this week at the start of a five-nation tour taking him to Chad, Djibouti, Kenya and Nigeria as well as Ethiopia. He was welcomed by Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu and other high ranking Ethiopian government officials. And during his visit to Addis Ababa he held meetings with Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn, and Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh, discussing issues of trade, investment, regional and global peace as well as counter terrorism. He also held talks with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), Moussa Faki Mahamat, at AU headquarters.

At a joint press briefing with Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh on Thursday (March 8), U.S. Secretary of State Tillerson said the U.S supported the considerable reforms being carried out by the Government, “all of which we know you will succeed in achieving.” He added that his Government recognized, and shared the concerns, expressed by the Government of Ethiopia on the ongoing situation in the country. It would, he said, continue to commit itself to the “all-weather relationship even when clouds and storm gather.”

At the briefing, Mr. Tillerson, noting Ethiopia as an important country to start his visits to Africa, said the century-old relationship would be supported more than ever in the mapping out of new areas of cooperation as well as invigorating old ones. He described Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn's resignation as “a first ever voluntary transfer of power” and as a “symbol of the strength of this young democracy.” Mr. Tillerson added: “We have also seen Ethiopia's Journey towards democracy. It is a young democracy. And as I've indicated democracy is challenging. It is not easy. It is not easy to take a country forward as democratic. And we are here to support Ethiopia's journey towards democratic society and institutions.” Referring to recent events in Ethiopia, Mr. Tillerson called on the government and other stakeholders to refrain from violence. He said, “We encourage the Ethiopian people as well to maintain patience, to maintain support for your Government through this change.” “Violence”, he added, “is simply not a solution”.

Recalling his discussions with Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh, he said the two sides had discussed in depth ways of further bolstering issues of mutual interest in the areas of health

and peace and security as well as given particular emphasis to the economy. During the discussion, the U.S. noted that it would support Ethiopia's economic reforms to open up more business in the country and provide for other institutions that would help further accelerate the growth in the country. Mr. Tillerson said that his Government would continue to assist the nearly one million refugees residing in Ethiopia and praised the Government for its efforts in this direction. He also commended Ethiopia's efforts as the largest contributor to Global peace keeping as well as its unflinching support for regional peace and stability.

Thanking the U.S. Government for its efforts to understand the situation on the ground at this critical time, Dr. Workneh called his talks with the US Secretary of State, "cordial, candid and very fruitful." He reiterated the Ethiopian Government's continued commitment to work with the U.S. in areas of economic development and in the promotion of peace and security. Mentioning the significant steps forward the two countries have been making in the area of peace and security, Dr. Workneh urged the need to reinforce ties in economic and development. The Minister called on U.S. investors to take advantage of the attractive business and investment schemes the Government has put in place.

Following a meeting with the AU Commission Chairperson, Mr. Tillerson described their talks as "fruitful". Mr. Tillerson and Commission Chairperson, Moussa Faki Mahamat, discussed reform of African Union and the AU's efforts to fund itself through member states' levies as well as ways to fund the AU's G5 Sahel force. Mr. Tillerson underlined U.S. appreciation of the AU's leading role to ensure peace in the continent, to establish intra-Africa trade, and to fight against terrorism and corruption as well as its efforts to ensure good governance and transparency. He also praised the African Union for its strong statements over South Sudan and its major role in the fight against terrorists in Somalia.

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***....and outlines the US administration of future relations with Africa***

Before leaving for Ethiopia, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson gave a presentation on US policy at the George Mason University in Washington. He said planning for this trip had originated back in November following a ministerial of 37 African nations and the African Union hosted at the State Department. The discussions then had focused on counterterrorism, democracy and governance issues, and strengthening trade and investment ties with the continent. These were all themes that remained highly relevant. He was firmly convinced that there was ample opportunity on the continent for economic growth, for greater prosperity, and for responding to global challenges through mutually respectful partnerships. He said he was looking forward to returning to Africa and building on a strong foundation of U.S.-Africa relations.

Mr. Tillerson said: "Our country's security and economic prosperity are linked with Africa's like never before. That will only intensify in the coming decades". This was because by 2030, Africa would represent about one quarter of the world's workforce, and by 2050, the population of the continent was expected to double to more than 2.5 billion people, with 70% of them under the age of 30. Secondly, its significant economic growth with six of the ten fastest growing economies in the world this year being African. In other words

Africa will be a significant part of the future and African countries will factor more and more into numerous global security and development challenges, as well as expansive opportunities for economic growth and influence. He said Africa's vitality was reflected in its youth, but this also mean requirement for more jobs. He warned that a growing population of young people, if left without jobs and a hope for the future, would create new ways for terrorists to exploit.

Mr. Tillerson said the US administration sought to deepen its partnership with Africa, with an aim of making African countries more resilient and more self-sufficient. That, he said, served our partners, and the United States as well by creating a stable future for all. Equally, he stressed the future of stability was dependent on security, a necessity for economic prosperity and strong institutions. He said the United States was committed to working with African partners to rid the continent and the world of terrorism by addressing the drivers of conflict that lead to radicalization and recruitment in the first place and building the institutional law enforcement capacity of African nations. He added: "We want to help African states provide security for their citizens in a lawful manner." He underlined the importance of the way African nations were stepping up to take action, including the sacrifices that go with such commitment and emphasized that regional cooperation was crucial to disrupting attacks and denying terrorists the capability to plan and carry them out in the future.

He stressed that last October, he had announced that the United States would contribute more to these regional efforts, including the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership and the Partnership for Regional East Africa Counterterrorism, or PRACT. Since 2016, the United States had contributed more than \$140 million to help partners prevent terrorists safe havens and the recruitment through these partnerships and mentioned in particular the role of AMISOM in Somalia.

Mr. Tillerson noted the US trains, deploys, and sustains forces that provide counterterrorism support, removes landmines, and facilitates peaceful transitions of power. This, he said, created security and allowed health, food, and other services to reach areas of need. Last year, he said, the United States also supported more than 27,000 African peacekeepers from over 20 African countries. Here too, he noted, more African countries were taking ownership of their future. A decade ago, Africans made up only about 20% of peacekeeping forces on the continent. Today that number exceeded 50%.

Mr. Tillerson also spoke of the US provision of humanitarian assistance, and added that he was announcing \$533 million in additional humanitarian assistance to fight famine and food insecurity and address other needs resulting from conflicts in Somalia, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and the Lake Chad Basin. These additional funds were to provide emergency food, nutrition assistance, and other aid, including safe drinking water, thousands of tons of food, and deliver health programs to prevent the spread of deadly diseases like cholera to millions of people. The US, he said, was there to partner with African countries to ensure their most vulnerable populations receive life-saving assistance. And he called on others to contribute aid to increase burden sharing and meet the growing humanitarian needs in Africa.

Mr. Tillerson referred to the benefits of AGOA, the cornerstone of U.S. trade policy in Africa for almost two decades now. He noted that Africa still had vast, undeveloped natural resources and said private sector expertise in the United States could facilitate responsible development of those resources, also adding that significant transcontinental infrastructure



was necessary to support the development, spur economic growth, and boost intraregional trade on the continent. He said there was a lack of intra-African trade and as African nations achieved greater regional integration through lowering tariff barriers and improving transport, energy, and infrastructure links, that would create more opportunities for U.S. businesses, investment, and transatlantic trade. Importing American business practices and expertise provided the best combination for Africa's future, he said, contributing to economic prosperity, equipping African nations with new capabilities, and doing so in an open, transparent framework. He cited Power Africa, a USAID-led program, is one of the largest public-private partnerships in the continent's development history; the Young Africans Leaders Initiative; and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, better known as PEPFAR.

Mr. Tillerson also underlined that for security, trade and investment and economic development to sustain itself effective and accountable government institutions were required. Peace and prosperity were only possible in a democratic society, he said, allowing media freedom, open communications, religious freedom, and a vibrant civil society to foster creativity, ideas, and the human energy for economic growth. He said: "Africa has much to gain by creating stronger, more transparent, democratic institutions that reflect their citizens' voices that reject corruption, and protect and promote human rights", adding that the US strongly supported the African Union's Summit's highlighting and encouraging efforts on "Winning the Fight Against Corruption." He said "We hope this year's theme is only the beginning of a more sustained, long-term focus on anti-corruption. In support of this theme, the United States will continue its work with African countries to strengthen their democratic institutions. Last month, the State Department requested \$137 million from Congress to support democracy, human rights, and government programs to create more transparent, less corrupt institutions that value consensus building over conflict."

He also noted that democracy required transitions of power through free and fair elections, a vibrant civil society and independent media to help inform citizens and keep them connected to their government. He said the US kept good governance initiatives in mind when it came to development, and through its Millennium Challenge Corporation the US was able to incentivize good governance, including greater transparency, by tying it to development assistance. Overall, he underlined the US pursued and developed sustainable growth that bolstered institutions, strengthened the rule of law, and built the capacity of African countries to stand on their own two feet. In sum, "we partner with African countries by incentivizing good governance to meet long term security and development goals." He concluded: "The United States sees a bright future in Africa. We have an opportunity to be part of Africa's journey to a stable, prosperous future for its people. Each of these priorities, trade and investment, good governance, respect for human rights, combatting terrorism and instability, have the same guiding principle in mind: to help African countries build the capacity to take care of their own people."

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***Russia's Foreign Minister on a working visit to Ethiopia***

Russia's Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, who is on a working visit to Ethiopia, met with Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu on Friday (March 9). Dr. Workneh noted that the official working visit of Mr. Lavrov to Ethiopia is a special occasion "as this year marks the

120th anniversary of the establishment of official diplomatic relations between Ethiopia and Russia and the 122nd anniversary of the Victory of Adwa, which was a bitter struggle for African independence.”

Underscoring the longstanding and multifarious relations between Ethiopia and Russia that spans 120 years, Dr. Workneh said, “Ethiopia will attach very strong feeling to cherish this historic relation with the people of Russia. We remember that despite the huge physical distance that separates Ethiopia and Russia, Russia has supported our epic African struggle for sovereignty and independence. That is why we say our ties are irreplaceable.” Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, reaffirming Dr. Workneh’s statement, expressed his gratitude for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to him and reiterated the fact that “the relations between our two countries, indeed, are rooted in decades and decades of friendship and solidarity.”

The two ministers deliberated in depth on ways of further bolstering Ethio-Russian diplomatic relations in the areas of trade and investment, education, nuclear energy, humanitarian affairs, people to people relations and aviation diplomacy through Ethiopian Airlines, as well as coordination of their common efforts in international organizations. Touching upon the economic relations between Ethiopia and the Russian Federation – trade and investment, in particular, Dr. Workneh, told Mr. Lavrov that “Ethiopia appreciates the economic support of the Russian Federation, which includes the cancellation of huge of debt in the past.” He added that the two countries should work closely to increase the trade and investment volume in a way that it ensures that there are more Russian companies investing in Ethiopia.

With regards to the enrichment of nuclear energy in Ethiopia, Dr. Workneh, recapitulated the fact that the two countries have recently agreed to cooperate on the utilization of nuclear energy for development. He stressed that this endeavor is geared towards ensuring the energy security of the nation. This, Dr. Workneh underscored, is an epitome of the intergovernmental commission created recently to accelerate the pace and range of cooperation between the two countries. Attesting to this very fact, Dr. Workneh reasserted that “Ethiopia and the Russian Federation have advanced a commanding relationship, and Ethiopia appreciates Russia’s steadfast support in science and technology.”

At the center of the people to people ties, took note of the Pushkin Center – the Russian Center for Science and Culture in Addis Ababa. “The Pushkin Center,” Dr. Workneh emphasized “remains relevant to bridging the people to people relations between our two countries.”

As Ethiopia is a non-permanent member of the UNSC and the Russian Federation one of the permanent members of, Dr. Workneh said the two countries could work closely in humanitarian issues, peace and security as well the fight against the scourge of terrorism. Paying due attention to Ethiopia’s time-proven capacity in effectively combatting the looming threat of terrorism as well as peace keeping and building initiatives in its neighborhood, Dr. Workneh drew attention to Ethiopia’s significant roles in the promotion of regional peace and stability.

It is to be recalled that Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh had also visited Moscow in June last year.

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### *Call to slow down AMISOM timetable for withdrawal*

A meeting of the Troop-Contributing Countries (TCCs) in Kampala last week reaffirmed their commitment to continue to assist the federal government of Somalia in its stabilization effort but warned that the planned timetable for the drawdown of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) would endanger hard-fought gains made since the force deployed to Somalia in 2007. U.S. Security Council Resolution 2372 (August 30, 2017) provides for “a phased reduction and drawdown of AMISOM troops by 2020.” However, last week’s meeting, attended by senior officials and ministers from Uganda, Kenya, Burundi, Ethiopia and Djibouti as well as Somalia and regional officials, while reaffirming the commitment of the TCCs to continue to assist the federal government of Somalia in its stabilization efforts, stressed that while more than 80% of the country’s territory had been recovered by the Somalia National Army and AMISOM, Somalia’s political and security situation remained fragile and Al-Shabaab continues to carry out frequent attacks with its deadliest terror attack in October of last year killing more than 500 people. It said the timeframe and troop levels under the UN resolution were “not realistic and would lead to a reversal of the gains made by AMISOM.” AMISOM’s 22,000-strong force comprises soldiers from Uganda, Burundi, Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti and the police component is made up of officers from Uganda, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

The meeting focused on security plans for Somalia and the discussions also covered Somali government plans for launching massive operations against Al-Shabaab fighters during the next year. The President is determined to prioritize operations against Al-Shabaab this year and he tabled plans including offensives against Al-Shabaab across the country. He has underlined his determination to win the fight against Al-Shabaab before the planned exit of AMISOM in 2020. President Mohamed also urged the Troop-Contributing Countries to accelerate training for the Somali soldiers in the next few months, to conclude the preparation of Somali soldiers before June. He has pledged to rebuild the national army. This has undergone training and rebuilding since 2012, and now has a strength of 12,000 active personnel. The Somali President said: “I believe we have a long way to go; we need to put together a sound strategy in order to effectively fight against al-Shabaab and defeat them. If we continue to collaborate with the help of the [European Union] and international community to continue funding this operation, we will be able to defeat al-Shabaab in a very short order.”

Regional leaders also stressed that threats in Somalia also stem from other armed groups and from communal infighting. “There is no doubt that we need to continue sustained military operations,” said Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chair of the African Union Commission. “Most importantly, we must also address in a comprehensive manner the causes of radicalization, continued recruitment and localized grievances and conflicts.” The AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smail Chergui, appealed for increased and coordinated international aid for activities that support the transition plan to enable the Somali national security forces take over security responsibilities of their country. He said: “The primary focus of the African Union in the coming period should then be to support accelerated progress on this roadmap, continue constructive Federal Government of Somalia-federal member states engagement, and full implementation of the Somalia Transition Plan.”

Uganda's Foreign Minister, Mr. Kutesa, emphasised that the AMISOM drawdown should be synchronised with a corresponding strengthening of the Somali national security forces to ensure no gap is left once AU troops exit and the regional leaders backed proposals made by their military chiefs and ministers. Mr. Kutesa also underlined that AMISOM remained in need of force enablers and multipliers, crucial in carrying out effective operations. He said: "Going forward, it is essential therefore that the international community looks at the bigger picture in Somalia, so that the gains made in recent years through enormous efforts and great sacrifice of AMISOM and the Somali National Army are not in vain." He emphasised: "It is crucial that the drawdown of AMISOM is synchronized with a corresponding strengthening of Somali security forces... The failure to carefully manage this process could imperil the political and security gains already made." There should be no security gap once AU troops exit.

Prior to the Kampala meeting, Ambassador Chergui paid tribute to soldiers who have lost their lives in the line of duty in Somalia and thanked the contributing countries' Heads of State for championing the spirit of pan-Africanism operating in Somalia. He noted that Somalia was on a positive trajectory and that political gains made last year were important for AMISOM's exit strategy and transfer of security responsibilities to the Somali National Security Forces. He cited some of the positives being made in Somalia, among them, the adoption of the National Security Architecture, which provides the framework for rebuilding the Somali National Security Forces, the roadmap for inclusive politics and the constitutional review process and a new electoral model for one-person-one-vote in the 2020 elections. Increased political stability in Somalia, Mr Chergui said, allowed for the commencement of the development of a Somalia Transition Plan, with a core group established to develop a draft transition document before the end of March this year. This plan would serve as a critical component of AMISOM's own transitional planning, including the revision of its Concept of Operations and enhancement of AMISOM operational effectiveness. Ambassador Chergui said: "The primary focus of the AU in the coming period should be to support accelerated progress on this roadmap, continue constructive Federal Government of Somalia-federal member states engagement, and full implementation of the Somalia Transition Plan." He said that the primacy of politics in achieving peace and security in Somalia necessitated a new narrative by the AU, adding that events in the past year have demonstrated that further success on the security front cannot be achieved without sufficient progress on the political front.

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### ***Donors agree measures to prevent famine in Somalia in 2018***

The United Kingdom and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) convened a meeting in London on Tuesday this week (March 6) to draw urgent attention to the humanitarian crisis in Somalia and the need for a swift and substantial response. The event, co-chaired by the UN'S Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Mark Lowcock, and the UK's Permanent Secretary for International Development (DFID), Mr. Matthew Rycroft, and attended by 31 Member States, UN Agencies, international organizations and NGOs, was opened by the UK Secretary of State for International Development, Ms. Penny Mordaunt MP and Somalia's the Minister of Planning, Investment and Economic Development, Gamal Hassan. They highlighted the importance of early and sustained funding for humanitarian assistance, and the need for commitment to widen the resource base and ensure greater predictability,

coherence and effectiveness of aid, translating the commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit into necessary action.

The conference estimated 5.4 million people, including 2.8 million children were in need of humanitarian assistance and almost 500,000 people were projected to face food insecurity emergency phase levels (IPC 4). In addition, famine remained a risk in many areas with 1.8 million children projected to be malnourished over the coming year. It noted the additional 1 million people plus who have been newly displaced internally, in addition to the 1.1 million already in a state of protracted displacement. Recent forced evictions had further exacerbated the situation of the IDPs in some of the main cities. Famine was averted in Somalia in 2017 due to early and sustained large-scale action by government, civil society, private sector, diaspora and humanitarian actors and donors. The situation can be further exacerbated by ongoing insecurity and conflict. Humanitarian access remained a major issue with constraints in particular in Al-Shabaab held areas and targeted attacks restricting humanitarian operations. High levels of sexual and gender-based violence, forced recruitment of children by armed groups and violations of International Humanitarian Law continued to occur.

There is real concern the food security situation may deteriorate again with forecasted average to below average *Gu* (April-June) rains and continued armed conflict in significant parts of the country. The drought, spanning over four consecutive rainy seasons, has destroyed livelihoods, induced mass displacement and exhausted resilience and coping mechanisms of people across the country. The impacts of the drought, compounded by underlying vulnerabilities due to years of conflict and marginalization, mean that seasonal improvements are fragile and rapid deterioration of the situation continues to be a real threat, unless significant humanitarian assistance is sustained. (IPC Phase 4) and a further 2.2 million are categorized as being in Crisis (IPC Phase 3). Due to the drought, the Shabelle river has run dry in the Jilaal for the third consecutive season south of Jowhar, reducing irrigation potential in the major crop producing areas of the Shabelle basin.

The meeting noted the Somali government's commitments to protecting its civilians and described the adoption of the National Disaster Management Policy by the Council of Ministers as a significant step forward. Equally, there was an urgent need to make progress on security, and for all security actors to play their part in facilitating the humanitarian response.

Participants welcomed the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), launched in January 2018, requesting US\$ 1.5 billion and discussed how to fund the 2018 response, and address priority gaps, based on a review of lessons from the successful famine prevention response in 2017. Jointly with the HRP, the Drought Impact Needs Assessment and Recovery and Resilience Framework were launched by the Government, with the support of the United Nations, World Bank and European Union, to support Somalia's recovery from drought and build medium- to long-term resilience and disaster preparedness. Humanitarian and development actors have agreed on collective outcomes to be achieved by 2020, to reduce needs, risks and vulnerabilities and increase resilience, to ensure that future droughts, which are becoming more frequent and intense due to global climate change, do not turn into crises. Tuesday's meeting agreed that deeper collaboration and coordination, in conjunction with the Somali authorities, in delivering assistance was key to continuing an effective response and that this should be matched with early and sustained funding.

With additional commitments made at Tuesday's meeting, Somalia's partners have now committed some \$350 million USD to the Humanitarian Response for 2018. A number of key donors made clear their intention to confirm substantial new pledges in the next few weeks. The UK's International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt told the meeting that the UK had committed an additional \$34.2M package of humanitarian support to Somalia. This emergency package, to be distributed before the end of the month, will cover needed medical, nutritional, health and livelihood support. Ms. Mordaunt, who called for continued global support for the 5.4 million people in need in Somalia, said: "We cannot let the world forget Somalia. It's not just the right thing to do – we are all less safe when hunger and poverty are free to feed extremism and mass irregular migration." Among other funding announced this week was €50 million from the German government for resilience building projects in Gedo and Banaadir regions over the next three years. Somalia will also be among a number of African countries to benefit from new US aid announced Tuesday by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.

The meeting called for the pledges made to be disbursed quickly and urged those who have not yet been able to make a pledge to do so as soon as possible. Member States were encouraged where possible to support the Somalia Humanitarian Fund, which supports the highest priority components of the HRP through the best-placed responders, including local NGOs. The meeting emphasized that support for the Central Emergency Response Fund will remain critical so that it can continue to kick-start, scale up and sustain the Somalia HRP while also addressing urgent needs in neighbouring countries.

The meeting agreed that creating stronger partnerships between international organizations and national NGOs was crucial to developing better aid delivery. This required inclusive and constructive dialogue between the government, donors, UN agencies, INGOs, and local NGOs to build mutual trust and respect. It underlined the importance of efficiency and effective delivery, reinforced by the collective commitment of aid agencies and donors to share information, data and analysis and stressed continued coordination and improved transparency was essential.

Participants welcomed the introduction of the Drought Operation Coordination Centre(s) in early 2017 and suggested they continued to play a role in better data management and information sharing in 2018, working with the National Humanitarian Coordination Centre at the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, launched in April 2017. They also noted that cash-based interventions were essential to stimulate markets, boost dignity and speed up responses: "We must collectively increase the use of coordinated, unconditional, unrestricted cash transfers in Somalia and work with the full range of partners on the ground, including the private sector, to deliver this as efficiently as possible. We must be committed to framing discussions based on an honest assessment of where the populations in the highest need are, and which organisation is best placed to respond based on assessments of sectoral comparative advantage and ability to access affected populations."

The meeting noted that substantial progress had been achieved in recent years in Somalia, but it also said these gains remained fragile and they should be protected and enhanced. A famine could derail the real political and security progress Somalia had made. It therefore endorsed "the approach of building long term recovery and resilience solutions that address the root causes of drought and famine and the structural causes of vulnerability and build resilience." Equally, those present insisted this should not come at the expense of continued humanitarian programming which needs to be fully resourced to meet its objectives. In

conclusion the meeting welcomed the role that the Federal Government of Somalia played in preparing the Drought Impact Needs Assessment and Recovery and Resilience Framework. This would be a useful tool, aligned to the National Development Plan, for guiding investments over the medium term. It urged the Federal Government of Somalia, the wider international community and all partners to make further progressive and incremental investments, in support of this.

The day before the conference, more than 30 aid agencies working in Somalia also called on multilateral lenders to cancel Somalia's debts so that Mogadishu could access funds to create a conducive environment for investment. The agencies, including World Vision, Action Aid, Save the Children and Relief International, said in a joint statement issued on Monday (March 5) that lending restrictions were hampering Mogadishu's efforts to scale up investments in education, health and security sectors. "Cancelling the debt would give Somalia access to long-term development finance and create the conditions for private investment," the organizations said. International Monetary Fund Managing Director Christine Lagarde in January pledged to prioritize Somalia's debt relief, saying every effort is being made to speed up the process. According to the IMF, Somalia's external debt is about 5 billion U.S. dollars, but Mogadishu has not made a service or amortization payment since the onset of the civil war two decades ago, making it impossible to access loans from the IMF. Countries that are in arrears to the IMF and the World Bank are not eligible for debt relief, nor can they receive funding through the World Bank's International Development Association. The agencies said that "These arcane rules on arrears are excluding Somalia from one of the largest development financing pots. As many policy influencers gather in London, they have an opportunity to change this picture."