

*Prime Minister Abiy's working trips outside Addis Ababa, to Jijiga...
Tripartite Ministerial Meeting of Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan
Somalia's Parliamentary Speaker resigns
Resolution HR 128 by the US House of Representatives: Untimely and inappropriate
The first Ethio-Indonesian Bilateral Consultative Forum
7th Tana Forum to focus on financing Africa's Peace and Security
150th anniversary of the battle of Maqdala commemorated in London*

News in Brief

Africa and the African Union

The 2nd African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration is being held at the African Union Commission Headquarters in Addis Ababa, this week (April 12-17). In recognition of the negative impact of corruption and illicit financial flows on the development of African countries, the African Union has dedicated the year 2018 to the fight against corruption.

Olusegun Obasanjo, Former Nigerian President and Chairperson of the Board of the Tana Forum officially announced a couple of weeks ago that the 7th Tana Forum would take place on April 21-22 at Bahir Dar. During a press conference, he also stressed that the official theme of the Forum would be "Ownership of Africa's Peace and Security Provision: Financing and Reforming the African Union." The Forum will bring together more than 250 participants including incumbent and former African leaders, representatives of stakeholder groups, and peace and security experts from around the continent. **(See article)**

Ethiopia

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed received Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Kenya, Monica Juma on Tuesday (April 10). During the meeting, the two sides discussed on bilateral and regional issues of mutual interests. The Cabinet Secretary also delivered a congratulatory message from President Uhuru Kenyatta and his invitation for Dr. Abiy to make state visit to Kenya.

A few days after being sworn in as Premier, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed made his first working trip outside the capital, Addis Ababa, travelling to Jijiga in the Somali Regional State in the east and then to Ambo in the Oromia Regional State in the west. **(See article)**

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene addressed the 18th Mid-Term Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Azerbaijan, Baku at the end of last week. Speaking on behalf of the Africa Group, Mrs. Hirut reaffirmed Africa's commitment to the values and

principles of the NAM, including the promotion and preservation of the principles of multilateralism, peaceful settlement of conflicts, and dialogue among civilizations, among others. The Minister underlined the need to strengthening of the cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations in conflict prevention, management, resolution and post conflict reconstruction and development as well as peace-building initiatives through the UN-AU Joint Framework for Enhancing Partnership on Peace and Security. She also affirmed African Group's call for the implementation of Agenda 2030, AU 2063 Agenda and Africa's commitment to end violent conflict on the continent by 2020 through the Silencing the Guns Roadmap.

State Minister Hirut conferred with her Brazilian counterpart, Ambassador Fernando Jose Marroni de Abreu on the first Ethio-Brazil bilateral consultation held this week on Wednesday (April 11). Mrs. Hirut noted the historic relationship between Ethiopia and Brazil and mentioned that it has been almost six decades since these two countries started their diplomatic relationship. She further expressed her country's readiness to strengthen its bilateral relations with Brazil. Ethiopia and Brazil had 10 bilateral agreements and MoUs in various areas: the bilateral consultation agreement which was signed in 2012 was one of them. The two countries further agreed to work in the areas of agriculture and industrial technology transfer, education, renewable energy, cultural exchange, bilateral air service agreements and multilateral relations.

The Government of Ethiopia, represented by State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene and the United Nations by the under-secretary for UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), Dr. Vera Songwe, signed an agreement "For the Implementation of the Renovation and Expansion of Africa Hall at the Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa," on Friday (April 13). During a joint press statement, State Minister Hirut expressed her gratitude for the attention and focus given by the UN to be a partner in making this site a heritage for humanity bearing witness to the plethora of achievements Africa has amassed since the establishment of the Organization of the African Unity (OAU) in this very building in 1963.

The first meeting of the Bilateral Consultative Forum between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia at the level of Senior Officials was held in Bali on Monday (April 9). The meeting was following up and implementing the Memorandum of Understanding between the two Foreign Ministries signed in Addis Ababa, in January three years ago. The Indonesian delegation was led by Mr. Desra Percaya, Director General for Asia-Pacific and African Affairs in Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ethiopian delegation by Tsegab Kebebew, Director General for Asia and Oceania Affairs for Ethiopia. **(See article)**

London's Victoria and Albert Museum on Thursday last week opened a "Maqdala 1868" exhibition, a year-long display of 20 Maqdala artefacts, seized by British troops 150 years ago. The occasion marked the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Maqdala, when the British Abyssinian Expedition, led by General, later Lord, Napier invaded Ethiopia and attacked the mountain fortress of the Emperor Tewodros at Maqdala. When the British forces broke into Maqdala, the Emperor committed suicide rather than surrender. The British troops ransacked the Emperor's treasury, carrying off crowns and gold chalices, over 350 manuscripts, at least 11 *tabots* (representations of the Ark of the Covenant), many crosses, necklaces, drums, amulets,

and even the Emperor's clothes and his hair as well the Emperor's 7-year-old son Alemayehu who died aged 18 in England from pleurisy, and was buried at Windsor Castle. **(See article)**

Ethiopian Airlines on Monday (April 9) installed state-of-the-art equipment that will enhance the safety of millions of travelers. The new screening devices provided by the U.S. government, employ a new technology called computer tomography that represents the latest in imaging for baggage scanning. According to the airlines' CEO, Tewolde Gebremariam, the machines would help to provide efficient services for clients; and US Ambassador to Ethiopia, Michael Raynor, said the equipment would enhance Ethiopia's ability to detect not only potentially hazardous items, but contraband items such as drugs and illicit wildlife products, adding: "The deployment of this new technology is a significant step forward in keeping passengers safe, protecting the world's wildlife resources, and fighting transnational crime."

Djibouti

DP World has issued a statement claiming its concession agreement with the Government of Djibouti to operate the Doraleh Container Terminal (DCT) in Djibouti "remains in full force and effect." The Djibouti Ports & Free Zones Authority said in February that the contract was cancelled because of a dispute over terms and poor performance. In a press release this week the Government said the concession agreement with DCT was terminated at the term of a transparent legal process, and contrary to DP World's allegations, DCT can no longer claim to be entitled to any concession rights under the contract in question.

Kenya

Vice-President William Ruto has reaffirmed importance of concerted efforts by regional countries to push peace processes in Somalia and South Sudan. At a joint press conference on Wednesday (April 11) with Sudan's First Vice-President Lt, General Bakri Hassan Salih at the end of his three day visit to Sudan, Mr. Ruto said Sudan and Kenya would work together within IGAD for finding solutions to humanitarian situation in South Sudan. The two sides also discussed international and regional issues of common interest and underscored their common understanding. They agreed to cooperate in confronting the organized and transnational crimes, encountering terrorism, illegal migration, human trafficking and smuggling.

Somalia

The Speaker of the House of the People, Mohamed Osman Jawari, announced his resignation at a press conference on Tuesday this week (April 10). President Mohamed said the decision was "an historic one" and taken without any conditions. **(See article)**

On Sunday (April 8), the Government impounded a suitcase it said contained \$9.6 million in cash from a plane that had arrived from the United Arab Emirates. The Emirati ambassador said the money was

intended to pay its soldiers, who are training Somali national forces. The UAE described the action as illegal and a breach to diplomacy. On Wednesday, Defense Minister Mohamed Mursal Abdirahman, announced that the UAE programme to train troops was being ended, and those forces would be immediately integrated in various battalions of the Somalia National Army.

Indonesia and Somalia have agreed to intensify trade ties following a bilateral meeting between Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi and Deputy Foreign Minister Mukhtar Mahat Da`ud on Wednesday (April 11) on the side-lines of the Indonesia/Africa Forum in Bali. They also discussed possibilities for cooperation in infrastructure development. Minister Da`ud also expressed hope that Indonesian investors would invest in the fisheries and agriculture sectors in Somalia.

The Government has established a host country relations committee to work on national development programs in coordination with other international and government agencies. The committee, whose members are drawn from the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Planning, Commerce, Internal Security, Labour and Humanitarian Affairs, held its first meeting on Monday at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It will work with another soon-to-be announced UN committee. The committees will collaborate to develop strategies that could pave the way for following up the implementation of development plans to enhance the status of Somalia and the gains of its people.

The UK Minister of State for the Armed Forces, Mark Lancaster, visiting Mogadishu at the beginning of the week paid tribute to the AU troops in Somalia for securing the country and reducing the threat of terrorism. The minister met with the AU Special Representative to Somalia, Ambassador Madeira and the AMISOM Force Commander Lt. General J Owoyesigire, and discussed the transitioning of security responsibilities from AMISOM to Somali security forces, and the nature and volume of UK support to the AU Mission.

South Sudan

Former military chief, General Paul Malong, who was dismissed last year, announced the formation of a new opposition party, the South Sudan United Front (SS-UF), on Tuesday (April 10). He said it was founded to challenge President Salva Kiir and "arrest the carnage" of the ongoing civil war. General Malong said he wanted the new party to participate in the next round of the IGAD High-Level Revitalization Forum talks, taking place later this month in Addis Ababa.

Sudan

President Omar al-Bashir ordered the release of all political prisoners held in the country, according to the State News Agency SUNA on Tuesday (April 10). This was in response to calls from political parties and groups that participated in the National Dialogue to grant detainees the opportunity to engage in the political process. The announcement said: "The release of political prisoners comes to strengthen the spirit of reconciliation, national harmony and peace created by the national dialogue" and as part of "steps to prepare a permanent constitution for the country." The Chairman of the opposition Umma Party, Dr. Al-Sadig Al-Hadi A-Mahdi said the decision will pave the way for smooth transition from war to

realization of peace and rejection of war and called on armed movements to return to the homeland and present their views via political means.

The Chairman of Darfur Peace Office, Majdi Khalafalla, praised the role of Qatar in implementing development projects in Darfur in accordance with the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur. On Wednesday (April, 11) he said the stability achieved in Darfur had created an environment supporting the rehabilitation process and implementing the programs for voluntary repatriation of refugees and displaced persons.

Prime Minister Abiy's working trips outside Addis Ababa, to Jijiga...

A few days after being sworn in as Premier, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed made his first working trip outside the capital, Addis Ababa, travelling to Jijiga in the Somali Regional State in the east and then to Ambo in the Oromia Regional State in the west.

On Saturday (April 11) Dr. Abiy travelled to the eastern Somali Regional State where clashes between border communities of the Somali and Oromia Regional States which first erupted in September last year, displaced nearly a million people. Both regions blamed the other for the cause of the clashes and unrest. During the disturbances the then Premier Hailemariam Dessalegn, in a speech to the Parliament, noted that the clash had been instigated by “rent-seeking groups” who wanted to take advantage of unrest. The government then took a number of steps to safeguard the stability and security of the border communities as well as assisting those displaced and has been working aggressively on a rehabilitation program.

Prime Minister Abiy arrived in Jijiga, the capital of the Somali region, to hold public discussions in a bid to invigorate the Government's activities to ensure lasting peace in the area and to solve any problems once and for all. In his opening remarks, the Prime Minister underlined that the conflict “was regrettable, contrary to the Ethiopian culture and a shameful spot in our history.” He added that both sides were losers in any conflict and noted that Ethiopians have longstanding traditional mechanisms of resolving problems. Pointing out the existence of the mediation skills of the elderly to bring peace, the Premier called on elders, Aba Gaadas, Somali tribal Garads, and religious leaders to immediately work together to resolve the conflict. “All of us,” he stressed, “should look forward to the day the displaced are rehabilitated back home by utilizing these harmonizing values.” For this to happen, Dr. Abiy said, everyone should fulfill his responsibilities. He promised that the federal government and he himself were committed to give full attention to the problem.

Speaking on the occasion, the Somali Regional State President Abdi Mohamed said the conflict was shameful and it was regrettable that it was not prevented in time. He also expressed the readiness of the regional government to restore peace and tranquility between the two brotherly peoples. President Abdi also noted that the visit of the Prime Minister to the region just after his appointment showed his readiness to resolve the problem in the region and his commitment to the unity of the country.

...and to Ambo

On the second leg of his first visit as Premier to various parts of the country, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy also made an official working visit to Ambo town, west of capital, Addis Ababa on Wednesday (April 11), and has been the scene on recent unrest for a number of different reasons. One was the announcement in April 2014 by the government of readiness to implement a master plan to develop the capital Addis Ababa as well as areas of the Oromia Special Zone in an integrated manner.

Dr. Abiy was met by thousands of cheering locals, some of whom held his portrait aloft, speeches of welcome, and spear-wielding Oromo horsemen in colorful capes and baboon-skin headdresses when he arrived in Ambo on Wednesday. There was expectation that his visit would be instrumental in finding viable solutions to the public demands and concerns over various areas of socio-economic development of the town and the country at large. After blessings from traditional leaders and a moment of silence in memory of those who died in the recent disturbances, Prime Minister emphasized: "We are now on the path of change and love," adding, "You have expressed your grievances and have made demands. We give you our unwavering commitment to resolving them." He went on: "But for us to succeed, we also need your unwavering support." He said: "I urge you all to promote our unity in diversity by supporting each other, so that we can realize our strategic dream." Dr. Abiy noted "The people of Ambo have always stood up for change; now it is time for the people to direct their attention towards peace and development." He also highlighted the importance of resolving differences through dialogue. The Premier also pledged the utmost efforts by the government to ensure benefits for all Ethiopians, including women, and urged scholars to conduct problem-solving researches.

The Prime Minister was accompanied to Ambo by Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen and other officials who participated in discussions with local dignitaries and others from the area. The Deputy Prime Minister stressed that the active participation of the youth was crucial for the sustainability of the reforms started in the country. He noted that the government was already aware of the limitations in various sectors and striving to address the challenges by drawing lessons from the shortfalls that had now been identified. The Chief Administrator of Oromia Regional State, Lemma Megeressa, said "We are here to announce good news and strengthen our hope for tomorrow." He said the regional state had passed through several ups and downs as well as paid sacrifices in the past, but added, it was now "important to work together to pass on this glorious history to the next generation." Also present were Sheferaw Shegute, Head of the Office of the Secretariat of the EPRDF, and Foreign Minister Workneh Gebeyehu as well as representatives drawn from 22 woredas of West Shoa Zone. After expressing their pleasure and highlighting the importance of the visit for peace, participants of the discussion raised various questions for the Prime Minister covering questions on infrastructure development and unemployment. Local residents also pledged their efforts to help provide solutions for problems.

Prime Minister Abiy is now scheduled to visit Tigray Regional States as well as hold discussions with the youth in Addis Ababa. Since January the Government has released thousands of prisoners, including prominent opposition figures and journalists, as part of its efforts to calm discontent. On Friday last week (April 6), the detention facility in Addis Ababa known as "Makelawi" finally closed down. The Prime Minister's inaugural speech along with the actions

have raised substantial hope among the wider public that he has the answers to deal with the recent wave of discontent and disturbance.

Tripartite Ministerial Meeting of Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs, of Water affairs and the Heads of National Intelligence and Security Services of Egypt, Ethiopia and the Sudan met, along with their respective Technical Experts in Khartoum last week (April 5). Their meeting followed the meeting of the leaders of the three countries on the margins of the 30th African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, in January when they instructed their respective Ministers and Technical Experts to work as one not as three regarding the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD); to establish a Tripartite Infrastructure Fund; and to iron out pending issues by giving priority to the filling and operation of the Dam. The meeting last week was held to operationalize these instructions.

Ethiopia, as it has frequently demonstrated, is committed in enhancing the trilateral and fraternal relations of the three countries. Ethiopia strongly believes the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is a source of cooperation to build trust and confidence in the Nile basin in particular and indeed for the whole region of North Eastern Africa in general. It was Ethiopia which initiated the establishment of the International Panel of Experts (IPoE) and handed over all the design and study documents to the panel, one hundred fifty-three in all. Fully confident that the GERD will be beneficiary to all the basin countries, Ethiopia has welcomed and worked towards the implementation of the two IPoE-recommended studies, namely, Hydropower Water Resource Simulation/Modeling and the Trans-Boundary Environmental and Social Impact Assessment.

Ethiopia has long-standing and firm principles over the utilization of the trans-boundary watercourses. It believes that the equitable and reasonable utilization of watercourses such as the Nile provides means of cooperation and further integration between all the riparian countries. It is with this conviction that Ethiopia has been tirelessly working with the Sudan and Egypt. The meeting last week in Khartoum was another demonstration of Ethiopia's convictions.

Ethiopia fully encouraged the setting up of the Tripartite National Committee (TNC) in August 2014 to follow up and conduct the IPoE recommended studies. To undertake the studies the TNC hired a consultant who submitted a draft inception report in March 2017. As the client for the studies and to make sure the Draft Inception Report was in line with the Consultancy Service Agreement and the Contract Document laying down the Terms of reference for conducting the two studies, the TNC has been reviewing and discussing the Draft Inception Report. The April meeting was one of several such meetings. During these deliberations, the three countries have aired their views and understanding has been reached on some issues as required by the instruction of the leaders of the three countries. However, the meeting in April failed to reach conclusions on some issues with regard to the GERD.

Ethiopia, of course, is constructing the GERD on the Blue Nile to alleviate its people from abject poverty as the country's major water resource, the Nile accounts for more than 70 % of its total water resource. GERD is pivotal in achieving the country's developmental goals. It also,

as always, continues to strongly and fully adhere to the cardinal principles of international law enshrined in the Cooperative Framework Agreement on the Nile (CFA) and to the Declaration of Principles on GERD, signed by all three countries, and which clearly stated that the utilization of the Nile shall be based on the principles of cooperation, equitable and reasonable utilization and no significant harm.

Somalia's Parliamentary Speaker resigns

Addressing reporters in a joint conference with President Mohamed Abdullahi on Tuesday (April, 10), Mr. Mohamed Osman Jawari said he came to his decision to step down after heeding advice from various people. The move was widely welcomed by a number of figures, including President Mohamed who commended the former speaker. He said: "Mohamed Osman Jawari is a Somali elder who has been serving this country more than fifty years, the decision he took today is a historic one, and he did not table any condition for it, I urge him to continue his efforts to support the government." Mr. Jawari said he "would inform them (the public) that the issue has now ended, and I ask for an apology for the problems which arose as a result of the political crisis."

Mr. Jawari's resignation ended an uneasy month-long political stalemate, between the executive and the legislative branches of government, that began when over 100 MPs lodged an effort to impeach Mr. Jawari. The motion sharply divided the House members into two opposing factions led by Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre and Mr. Jawari respectively. Problems had arisen over a vote in Parliament to require legislative approval for future foreign investment deals.

On Wednesday last week (April 4) a no-confidence vote against Mr. Jawari did not take place after both he and his opponents arrived at parliament with armed guards. A face-off between armed members of the security services, those loyal to the speaker inside the Parliament, and those loyal to the president outside, only ended after several hours and mediation by the African Union and AMISOM forces.

Following this, AMISOM voiced concerns over the political deadlock in the Somali parliament and released a press statement. A statement from the African Union Special Representative to Somalia and head of AMISOM, Ambassador Francesco Madeira said "The African Union Mission in Somalia is deeply concerned with the security implications of Wednesday's developments in Parliament. I appeal to the Members of Parliament, legitimate representatives of the people of Somalia, to continue to exercise restraint as they strive to resolve the differences that oppose them". His statement said: "On behalf of the African Union Commission, the entire AMISOM family and on my own behalf, I wish to state that our view is that the current political standoff is between two sides of members of the Lower House of Parliament also known as the House of the People. The AU and AMISOM recognize and respect the right of the Somali Federal Parliament to determine when, where and how they conduct their business. It is therefore not the responsibility of AMISOM to determine where and how they should handle their

parliamentary activities.” In this context, it said, “AMISOM has no mandate to impose on the Somali people and, indeed, on the Parliament, the way they should conduct their business. AMISOM will, therefore, not take control of the House of the People unless the competent Somali authorities request it to do so in full respect and within the parameters of AMISOM mandate”.

Ambassador Madeira’s statement emphasized that the AU, through AMISOM, under the UN Security Council, was implementing a phased and conditions-based transition of security responsibilities to the Somali National Security Forces and “the current political crisis cannot, in any way influence or force AMISOM to withdraw its forces.” It went on: “At no time we will unilaterally abandon the friendly people of Somalia and we will, as we have so far done, stand by them at all times until they tell us they are ready to take over from us. Until then, we will continue to support the Somali National Security Forces as they strive to ensure the safety and security of their country and its institutions, including the Parliament.”

The statement added that AMISOM was “deeply concerned with the security implications of Wednesday’s developments in Parliament. I appeal to the Members of Parliament, legitimate representatives of the people of Somalia, to continue to exercise restraint as they strive to resolve the differences that oppose them.” It congratulated the Somali National Army, the Somali Police Force, AMISOM and other branches of Somalia National Security Forces for the professional manner “they were able to successfully contain the situation, prevent violence and preserve peace during Wednesday’s special sitting of Parliament.” Ambassador Madeira, underlining the fact that the African Union was there for all the people of Somalia, pledged on behalf of African Union to continue to engage with all at all levels and support the people of Somalia as they worked “to restore the glory of this great nation, put an end to violence, bring a lasting peace to the country and build a better future for each of its citizens.” He added that “our mandate does not allow us to take sides with anyone”.

The statement emphasized the concerns of the international community over any escalation of the political standoff and urged the country’s leaders to respect the rule of law and constitution in resolving any ongoing situation that risked derailing the hard-earned economic and security achievements and tarnishing the reputation of Somalia.

Resolution HR 128 by the US House of Representatives: Untimely and inappropriate

Following the passing of House Resolution 128 polemically entitled “Supporting respect for human rights and encouraging inclusive governance in Ethiopia” by the U.S. House of Representatives on Tuesday (April 10), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia issued a statement the following day.

The Government of Ethiopia believes that the passing of the H. Res. 128 by the U.S. House of Representatives was untimely and inappropriate. This simple resolution, the statement said, was counterproductive and against the important partnership between the U.S. and Ethiopia. Those

members of the House who co-sponsored the resolution conspicuously failed to recognize the changing reality on the ground in Ethiopia. Indeed, those members of the House appeared to merely want to please specific constituencies actively hostile to the current changes in Ethiopia.

The statement pointed out that the Ethiopian Government, in a bid to address public demands, has been exerting its utmost efforts to step up the protection and promotion of human rights and advance good governance as these are the pillars for the democratization of the nation. Ethiopia, it said, had consistently demonstrated its commitment to democracy, working closely with partners to advance human rights as provided in the Constitution. The Government of Ethiopia remained fully committed to its citizens in promoting accountability, justice, freedom, and the rule of law.

The House of Representatives had conspicuously failed to take into account the situation on the ground. H. Res. 128 ignores the positive strides the country has made recently. Even if H. Res. 128 had not been pending and was no more than an expression of opinion, it should be noted that the Government of Ethiopia had been working with members of the Congress including its leadership, providing information on the implementation of the substantive reforms being carried out.

During the past several months, the ruling party and the Government of Ethiopia have been operating under new political dynamics, launching bold reforms aimed at increasing transparency and widening the country's democratic space. Some of these initiatives include releasing prisoners and working on stabilizing the situation in the region. The new Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed was sworn in last week and has very clearly expressed the political will of the leadership of the Government and party to urgently undertake the multifaceted reforms to address the grievances and concerns of society in the shortest possible time. This momentum has created real optimism in the country encouraging the leadership to embark on a promising future. This is why the Government of Ethiopia believes H.Res.128 is untimely and inappropriate.

At this crucial juncture, when the government is working to implement bold reforms, this resolution tries to undermine the new political dynamism. It totally fails to recognize the call by the Prime Minister to create an all-inclusive political platform. It entirely ignores both the aims and actions already taken to resolve the problems that have been identified.

Ethiopia values its bilateral relations with the United States and works consistently and steadily to promote regional peace and security in the Horn of Africa. This resolution aims to undermine its sovereignty. In this context, the Government of Ethiopia would like to express its appreciation to those Members of Congress, of the Senate and of the Executive branch who, having evaluated the facts on the ground as well as weighing the importance of the bilateral relationship, worked against this biased resolution.

The Government of Ethiopia has always been open to dialogue with all pertinent U.S. government and other bodies that have been prepared to be involved in constructive engagement. Engagement, constructive or otherwise, is hardly envisaged by House Resolution 128. The Ethiopian Government believes that the U.S. Congress should rather be prepared to focus on the

present developments in Ethiopia and their implications and move forward to work with the Government of Ethiopia in its effort to finding sustainable solutions that properly address the situation on the ground and strengthen the bilateral US/Ethiopia relationship.

The first Ethio-Indonesian Bilateral Consultative Forum

The first meeting of the Bilateral Consultative Forum between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia at the level of Senior Officials was held in Bali on Monday (April 9). The meeting was following up and implementing the Memorandum of Understanding between the two Foreign Ministries signed in Addis Ababa, in January three years ago. The Indonesian delegation was led by Mr. Desra Percaya, Director General for Asia-Pacific and African Affairs in Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ethiopian delegation by Tsegab Kebebew, Director General for Asia and Oceania Affairs for Ethiopia.

The two delegations held a productive meeting in what they described as a warm, friendly and brotherly atmosphere. They discussed ways and means to further promote bilateral ties, explored opportunities to enhance mutually beneficial cooperation and exchanged views on regional and international issues of common interest. The Head of Delegation of Indonesia warmly welcomed the Ethiopian Delegation and emphasized that Indonesia and Ethiopia had enjoyed close relations and strong bonds of friendship over the last four decades, ever since the opening of diplomatic relations in 1961. Ethiopia's Head of Delegation commended the Indonesian side for convening and hosting the first meeting of the Bilateral Consultative Forum.

Both sides said they believed that the meeting would create a momentum to intensify direct consultation and coordination in the joint effort to actualize the potential of both countries. They agreed they should share in the development of their respective countries. They also underlined their support for each other's respective sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The meeting noted the importance of a continued exchange of visits of Ministers and high-level government officials of both countries and encouraged a process of high level visits and interactions to build mutual understanding to further enhance economic cooperation, as well as to explore, identify and execute concrete cooperation. In this regard, both parties agreed to expedite the finalization of the Agreement of Visa Exemption for Diplomatic and Official Passport Holders between Indonesia and Ethiopia.

The meeting agreed to optimize the existing Bilateral Consultative Forum to enhance bilateral cooperation between the two countries before implementation of Joint Commission as stipulated in the Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation signed in 2011. It also reviewed the progress of economic cooperation between the two countries. It noted a decreasing trend of trade in the period of 2013-2017 and agreed to revitalize trade between both countries. Both sides

agreed to encourage implementation of Memorandum of Understandings between Chambers of Commerce and Industry of the two countries, as this would encourage business-to-business relations. The meeting took note of Ethiopian government's desire to increase exports to Indonesia to narrow the gap in the balance of trade between the two countries.

The meeting emphasized the importance of investment cooperation to enhance their respective economies. Both sides agreed to expedite the finalization of Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement and Avoidance of Double Taxation Agreement between Indonesia and Ethiopia. The two sides also agreed to enhance cooperation between strategic industries of both countries, including pharmaceuticals, railways and energy, and on the exchange of information for prospective development projects in Ethiopia for interested Indonesian companies.

The meeting also stressed that they were encouraged by the progress towards opening Ethiopian Airlines flights to Indonesia and believed that this would strengthen connectivity and enhance people-to-people interaction between Indonesia and Ethiopia and indeed with Africa at large. Ethiopian Airlines is expecting to make the inaugural direct flight connecting Jakarta and Addis Ababa next month. Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi also met with Ethiopian Airlines CEO Tewolde Gebremariam on Wednesday to discuss connectivity. The Minister said after the meeting that "the agreement on the direct flight is a breakthrough for Indonesia-Africa economic ties." She also expressed Indonesia's interest to designate Addis Ababa as the hub of Indonesia's visa services for other African countries," as well as suggesting Ethiopian Airlines could cooperate with Indonesia's national flag carrier Garuda Indonesia for maintenance services. Ethiopian Airlines plans to provide a direct flight three times a week via Bangkok.

The Ethio-Indonesian Bilateral Consultative Forum took place prior to the opening of the first Indonesia-Africa Forum, held this week in Bali, April 10-11. This underlined Indonesia's stated ambition "to seriously improve economic relations with Africa" Indonesia is the largest economy in Southeast Asia, the world's fourth most populous nation, the world's 10th largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity, and a member of the G-20. Indonesian President Joko Widodo has repeatedly urged Indonesian business sectors to expand engagement with emerging countries. At the recent G20 Leaders' Retreat in Hamburg, he stated Indonesia's support for the G20 Africa Partnership and the achievement of Agenda 2063 in Africa through Compact with Africa.

Indonesia believes that it is the right time for Indonesia and Africa to strengthen economic cooperation. The 2016 trade exchange between Indonesia and Africa reached USD 7.66 billion, but Indonesia said it believes there is a lot of room for the development of economic potential with Africa. The point was underlined by panel discussions at the Forum including South-south and triangular Cooperation: An Innovative Partnership for Mutual Progress; and Where do we go from here? Way forward for reinvigorated Indonesia – Africa Partnership. Trade between Indonesia and Africa reached US\$8.8 billion in 2017, an increase of 13.6% on the previous year and Indonesia plans to organize an Indonesia-Africa Infrastructure Dialogue in August / September 2019. The over 500 participants for the Forum came from over 50 African countries with panellists from the African Union, the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the World Bank. Discussions concentrated on economic diplomacy, infrastructure, energy, agriculture,

technical cooperation and financing facilities, strategic industries, manufacturing, the digital economy and connectivity.

7th Tana Forum to focus on financing Africa's Peace and Security

Olusegun Obasanjo, Former Nigerian President and Chairperson of the Board of the Tana Forum officially announced a couple of weeks ago that the 7th Tana Forum would take place on April 21-22 at Bahir Dar. During a press conference, he also stressed that the official theme of the Forum would be “Ownership of Africa’s Peace and Security Provision: Financing and Reforming the African Union.” The Forum will bring together more than 250 participants including incumbent and former African leaders, representatives of stakeholder groups, and peace and security experts from around the continent.

Today, the AU faces a rapidly changing security environment, one in which the continent’s many challenges are either moderated or exacerbated by the inter-connectedness of the global policy environment and the plurality of actors within the peace and security landscape. In addition, the ownership of the means to secure stability and security continues to shape how much, and how well, the AU is able to effectively tackle emerging challenges. One aspect of this is operationalization and consolidation of the African Peace and Security Architecture, and the need to reverse the dependence on external partners and actors. For this to happen effectively, the AU needs to put in place measures and systems that support and contribute to a shared understanding of ownership, financing and accountability.

The AU is increasingly being called upon by Member States to undertake political, military, observation and peace missions, as in Burundi (2003), Sudan (2004), Comoros (2004); Somalia (2007); and Mali (2012) as well as in the hybrid AU/UN mission in Darfur (2007). All of these are externally funded. This underlines the political legitimacy and credibility of the AU and the question of African ownership. Equally, the failure of the AU to speak with one voice is another obstacle to full ownership of peace and security activities on the continent.

The Forum will emphasize the ongoing African Union reform process to ensure the organization’s long-term financial independence and sustainability. A robust, proactive and effective AU is required to address security and developmental challenges, and this needs fiscal autonomy from external partners. This was underlined by the decision at Kigali in 2016 where Heads of State and Government considered the far-reaching proposals of the committee chaired by President Paul Kagame. They agreed in principle to a radical reform agenda to streamline the AU’s activities into four key priorities: political affairs, peace and security, Africa’s global representation and voice, and economic integration. The Kaberuka Report also proposed the imposition of a 0.2% duty on the import of eligible items from outside Africa. This would allow the AU to cover the cost of 25% of on-going Peace Support Operations in Africa. Sustainable long-term financing is required for the AU to have an independent agenda for the priorities of its Member States. Implementation of the Kaberuka report is critical.

President Kagame, current African Union (AU) Chairperson, will be one of the keynote speakers for the Forum. Another keynote address will be given by Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat,

Chairperson of the African Union Commission. In 2017, Mr. Mahamat established the Reform Implementation Unit to oversee and coordinate the implementation process. The theme of this year's Forum corresponds with the ongoing AU reform process to ensure the organization's long-term independence and sustainability. One of the major components of the reform plan is the 0.2% levy on eligible imports from outside Africa to increase financing of the Union by Member States. In a speech to the AU Assembly in January, Mr. Mahamat called on leaders to respond to a simple request from citizens across the continent: "Accelerate the reform of the Union, our tool for our struggle; speed up integration, a necessary step to our development; and intensify efforts to promote peace, justice and inclusion as essential conditions for social cohesion."

The theme of this 7th Tana Forum reflects the urgent need to discuss, debate and establish a thorough understanding of the principle of ownership by the AU in delivering its mandate, particularly for peace and security. The Forum will explore innovative proposals on the practical realities of implementing the new reform agenda and will consider possible implementation problems and how to overcome them, as well as how to secure compliance by AU Member States effectively. It will also consider what more needs to be done to ensure that AU Member States own their security agenda and effectively address the continent's peace and security challenges.

The application of the principle of ownership in the field of peace and security faces many difficulties as local stakeholders can lack sufficient will or capacity for peace-building and state-building. Understanding ownership helps to strategically examine the roles and functions of external actors in the goals of peace-building and state-building. In a rapidly changing global and African policy environment, there is an obvious need for more powerful and effective AU institutions with the capacity to assume strong ownership on continental and global peace and security matters. Ethiopia is playing its role in regional integration by facilitating the process of seeking African solutions to African problems by bringing high-level decision makers on peace and security from the government/political sphere, non-AU regional institutions, the private sector, critical segments of continental/regional civil society networks, as well as peace and security experts/resource persons together for this forum. Moreover, to show its commitment, 70% of the funds for this forum are provided by the Ethiopian government and the African private sector.

The Tana Forum is an independent platform, an informal gathering of African decision-makers, peace and security stakeholder groups, and their larger constituencies for an open discussion of security issues and challenges faced by the continent. It promotes African-led solutions by holding discussions on the strategic and pro-active management of African peace and security issues. It combines the worlds of academia and research with real-world, real-time experience, and provides a unique opportunity for decision-makers and institutions to exchange experiences and insights on peace and security issues among themselves and take home inspiration and practical lessons. It gives opportunities to political decision-makers to interact and consult with a broad-based African constituency as well as with key global actors. It allows for the chance to listen to "profound African voices on the ground" on various elements of peace and security and facilitate an inclusive dialogue among governments and other African security stakeholder groups.

The Forum has become an institution that contributes to a continuous dialogue among top African leaders and various stakeholder groups. It enables leaders to explore options for innovative and joint action in peace and security. It allows for trust building among key players who otherwise usually meet under diplomatic protocol. In other words, it enables African leaders to develop and implement adequate and pro-active initiatives in peace and security. The First Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa, held in 2012, was held on the theme “Managing Diversity and State Fragility”. The following year, when the annual Meles Zenawi Lecture Series was established, the theme was “Security and Organized Crime in Africa”. Subsequently the Forum has considered: the “Impact of Illicit Financial Flows on Peace and Security in Africa” (2014); “Secularism and Politicised Faith” (2015); “Africa in the Global Security Agenda” (2016); and last year, “Natural Resource Governance in Africa”, broadening the scope beyond the extractive sector to include governance of other natural resources, land, water, the seas, and forests and biodiversity. This year’s Meles Zenawi lecture will be on the former Egyptian president, Gamal Nasser.

150th anniversary of the battle of Maqdala commemorated in London

London’s Victoria and Albert Museum on Thursday last week opened a “Maqdala 1868” exhibition, a year-long display of 20 Maqdala artefacts, seized by British troops 150 years ago. The occasion marked the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Maqdala, when the British Abyssinian Expedition, led by General, later Lord, Napier invaded Ethiopia and attacked the mountain fortress of the Emperor Tewodros at Maqdala. When the British forces broke into Maqdala, the Emperor committed suicide rather than surrender. The British troops ransacked the Emperor’s treasury, carrying off crowns and gold chalices, over 350 manuscripts, at least 11 *tabots* (representations of the Ark of the Covenant), many crosses, necklaces, drums, amulets, and even the Emperor’s clothes and his hair as well the Emperor’s 7-year-old son Alemayehu who died aged 18 in England from pleurisy, and was buried at Windsor Castle.

Even when the looting occurred, opinions were divided. Prime Minister William Gladstone deplored what had taken place and the manner in which the expeditionary force had behaved. He said the treasures should never have been brought to Britain and should be returned. Lord Napier himself agreed and stated that the treasures were only brought to Britain ‘for safe-keeping’ until they could be safely returned to Ethiopia. In the past, small elements of restitution have been made. The British Government returned a special copy of the *Kebre Negest*, or Book of Kings, after a request from Emperor Yohannes in 1872. In the 20th century, one of the crowns, a silver one, was presented to Ras Teferi in 1924 by King George V, and given to Empress Zewditu. In 1965 Emperor Tewodros' seal and cap were returned by Queen Elizabeth II to Emperor Haile Selassie when the Queen made a state visit to Ethiopia. Since 2000, there have also been several restitutions by individuals in the UK, including two *tabots*, a book of Psalms, a shield, two paintings from manuscripts, and an amulet belonging to Emperor Tewodros.

Over the past two decades, Ethiopian diplomatic missions abroad have been making every effort to identify and secure the return to Ethiopia of looted treasures. The return in 2007 of the Axum obelisk from Rome, seized during the invasion of 1935-76 was a very welcome example. During Ethiopia's Millennial year (2007-2008) the President of Ethiopia wrote to six UK institutions formally asking for looted Maqdala treasures to be returned to Ethiopia. Ethiopia's Minister of Culture and Tourism, Ms. Hirut Woldemariam has made it clear that full restitution is called for. She has urged UK museums and institutions to return artefacts looted from Ethiopia. Minister Hirut said that Ethiopia would further strengthen its demands for the return of treasures from museums, libraries and individuals, as Ethiopia is the rightful owner of the treasures. Among the institutions holding the loot of Maqdala are the British Museum, the Royal Library at Windsor Castle, the Bodleian Library in Oxford, Cambridge University Library, Manchester University, the National Army Museum, which holds the Emperor's hair, a regimental museum in Halifax and at least three northern regiments.

The issue of restoring looted objects was raised at the opening of the exhibition of some of the treasures taken from Maqdala in 1868 at the Victoria and Albert Museum last week. The exhibition was preceded by more than a year of discussions between the Museum and the Ethiopian Embassy to the United Kingdom. Speaking on the occasion the Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Dr. Tristan Hunt commended the Ethiopian Embassy in general and Ambassador Dr. Hailemichael Aberra, Ambassador of Ethiopia to the UK, in particular, for "engaging proactively" with the Museum. He looked forward to a year-long "discussion and debates on our shared history." Dr. Hunt said a compromise had now been offered: "The speediest way, if Ethiopia wanted to have these items on display, is a long-term loan ... that would be the easiest way to manage it."

The Museum's decision to hold the exhibition was warmly welcomed. The Ethiopian Embassy in London said the gesture was a step in the right direction and a springboard for further collaborations around conservation, research and curatorial exchange. Ambassador Dr. Hailemichael took the opportunity to urge the Victoria and Albert Museum to take inspiration from the actions of two British monarchs who handed over to Ethiopia treasures looted from Maqdala. In 1924, King George V returned Emperor Tewodros' Coronation Crown to the visiting Regent of Ethiopia, Ras Teferi, (later crowned Emperor Haile Selassie) and at the end of her memorable state visit to Ethiopia, H.M. Queen Elizabeth II, returned two more items of Emperor Tewodros' regalia to Ethiopia's last Emperor.

Noting the prevailing excellent relations and exemplary development partnership that exists between Ethiopia and the United Kingdom, as well as the need to maintain amicable working relations with custodians of Ethiopian treasures in the United Kingdom, Ambassador Dr. Hailemichael however said the offer falls short of the Government of Ethiopia's request for the unconditional return of these and of all the articles looted from Maqdala a hundred and fifty years ago. He said the Battle of Maqdala and its aftermath constituted "a deeply sad episode in their shared history." The Ambassador acknowledged the lead made by the Museum, in displaying for the first time some of the items from 1868. He encouraged other museums to follow suit. He also reminded invited guests including African diplomats, journalists from the print and electronic media, academics and others that even the Napier family themselves had

recently returned a necklace and a prayer scroll to the Institute of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa. This was, he said, “Yet further proof that times change and so do attitudes!”

The Ethiopian British poet, celebrity and Chancellor of Manchester University, Lemn Sissay, who also attended the opening of the exhibition, spoke passionately about the chequered life in the UK of the son of Emperor Tewodros, Prince Alemayehu, who died at the tender age of 18 and was buried within the precinct of St George’s Chapel at Windsor Castle. Chancellor Sissay has now become a strong voice to the campaign calling for the repatriation of the remains of Prince Alemayehu to Ethiopia.

Professor Andreas Eshete, speaking on behalf of the Association for the Return of Maqdala Ethiopian Treasures (AFROMET) hoped that that once the British saw how warmly the returned treasures are greeted, they would be persuaded to offer full restitution of the items taken. He said there are certain things that are important to Ethiopia that are never on display in the UK, noting “Once they see they are used in a proper way and in a way that is accessible to not only the Ethiopian public but the international public.” He added, “People may well change their mind about the value of holding on to them forever.”

Meanwhile, the 200th anniversary of the birth of Emperor Tewodros II is being commemorated this week (April 10-16) in the Amhara Regional State at Debre Tabor and in Addis Ababa. Minister Hirut emphasized that the Emperor Tewodros had played a significant role in trying to unite and modernizing the country as well as establishing and organizing libraries. The Amhara Regional State, in collaboration with three universities in the region, are restoring Tewodros’ birthplace and its surroundings, and preparations are also underway to convert it into a tourist destination.