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## News in Brief

### Africa and the African Union

Preparations are underway for the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development to be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from May 11 to 15. The conference will address the theme: "African Continental Free Trade Area; creating fiscal space for jobs and economic diversification." Other key topics will include agriculture and Africa's transformation, financing infrastructure, and an integrated strategy for the Sahel priorities for tackling Illicit Financial Flows in Africa. A meeting of the Committee of Experts (May 11-12) will precede the ministerial segment of the Conference.

### Ethiopia

President Dr. Mulatu Teshome made a state visit to the Republic of Poland last week (April 23-25), at the invitation of the President of the Republic of Poland, President Andrzej Duda. Dr. *Eyasu Abreha*, former Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources and Dr. Samuel Kifle, State Minister of Education, as well as representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation, the Ethiopian Investment Commission and Metals and Engineering Corporation (*METEC*) accompanied President Dr. Mulatu on a highly successful visit, moving existing bilateral relations forward. **(See article)**

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed visited neighboring Djibouti on Saturday (April 28) on his first foreign trip since taking office. During his visit he met with President Ismail Omar Guelleh, addressed the National Assembly and visited the port of Djibouti, the Doraleh Container Terminal and the Djibouti industrial park. **(See article)**

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy met with President Omar Al-Bashir of Sudan on Wednesday (May 2). During the bilateral talks, the Premier stressed his country's eagerness to strengthen the strategic partnership with the Sudan in all areas of engagement. He highlighted the importance of economic integration between the two countries and the need to use border areas for shared benefits. The Prime Minister reaffirmed Ethiopia's commitment to working together with Sudan for peace and security in the region and the continent. **(See article)**

Israeli president, Reuven Rivlin, on Tuesday (May 1) arrived in Ethiopia for a three days historic official visit, the first by an Israeli President to Ethiopia. **(See article)**

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Workneh Gebeyehu during a joint press conference in Khartoum on Thursday (May 3) said Ethiopia and the Republic of Sudan have agreed to immediately implement the agreement on developing and jointly managing Port Sudan.

A Delegation of IGAD Council of Ministers led by State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene, visited South Sudan's capital, Juba, on Sunday and Monday (April 29 – 30) for two days of consultation and discussions with high-level government officials. These included over a dozen ministers and other senior officials as well as President Salve Kiir. **(See article)**

State Minister Hirut met with the Foreign Minister of Germany Heiko Maas and his delegation on Thursday (May 03) and discussed on aspects of bilateral relation and regional issues of common interest. Mrs. Hirut expressed her gratefulness for the Minister's visit and noted the frequent visits and meetings made so far at different levels, which she said, showcased the importance both sides attached to their bilateral cooperation. Mrs. Hirut further expressed her gratitude for the Government of Germany for its support and continued engagement in the region.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia Dr. Aklilu Hailemichael on Friday (May 4) held discussions with Jens Frølich Holte, State Secretary of the Kingdom of Norway on various bilateral and multilateral issues. Dr. Aklilu appreciated the long standing and wide ranging relationship between Norway and Ethiopia, noting that the visit of Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Norway to Ethiopia in 2017 and Norwegian ministers of Foreign Affairs and Migration and Integration in January 2018 showcased the importance that the two countries attached to their bilateral ties. The State Minister called for Norwegian companies to seize Ethiopia's huge investment opportunities.

Ethiopia assumed the chairmanship of the African Group in New York this month. Permanent Representative of the Republic of Mali, Issa Konfourou handed over the chairmanship to the Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia, Ambassador Tekeda Alemu.

Ethiopian Embassy in France, in collaboration with the Spanish Confederation of Employers' Organizations (CEOE), the Honorary Consulate of Ethiopia in Madrid, and E For E, a leading business consultancy firm, co-organized an Ethio-Spanish Investment and Trade Seminar in Madrid (April 26-27), to promote investment and business opportunities in Ethiopia and provide information to potential Spanish investors. The seminar was attended by representatives from the Ethiopian Investment Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a number of companies from Spain. **(See article)**

The Government of Canada is providing 147 million Birr for a five-year project aiming at strengthening federal governance and pluralism. The project, launched under the auspices of the Forum of Federation to which both Canada and Ethiopia belong, will improve women's participation in all levels of government.

Ethiopian Airlines has been recognized by TripAdvisor, one of the largest and most reputed global travel sites, as "The Best Business Class in Africa and Indian Ocean". TripAdvisor has evaluated the world's top carriers based on reviews and ratings gathered from travelers worldwide over a 12-month period and recognized Ethiopian for its outstanding service, as well as the quality and value in its service delivery. Group CEO Ethiopian Airlines, Tewolde

GebreMariam, said: “We are highly honored to receive this award from TripAdvisor, the most prestigious global travel site.”

A delegation from Addis Ababa’s Kotebe Metropolitan University led by Mr. Yisak Girmay, Head of Addis Ababa Administration Civil Service and Human Resources Development Bureau, visited the South Korea last week (April 25-30). The delegation visited academic and research Universities including Keimyung University, University of Seoul, and Kangwon National University for experience sharing, and discussed graduate programs, recruitment of visiting professors, research collaboration and scholarship programs.

## **Djibouti**

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Ambassador Donald Yukio Yamamoto attended the U.S.-Djibouti bi-national Forum last week. Ambassador Yamamoto and his delegation met for talks with President Ismail Omar Guelleh. **(See article)**

## **Eritrea**

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Ambassador Donald Yukio Yamamoto visited Eritrea last week. Yemane Gebre Meskel, Eritrea’s Minister of Information tweeted that “Ambassador Yamamoto’s delegation met with President Isaias Afwerki and other officials; discussed prospects of bilateral ties and cooperation on regional issues.” **(See article)**

## **Kenya**

In his State of the Nation address on Wednesday (May 2) President Kenyatta called for forgiveness and reconciliation. "If there was anything I said last year that hurt or wounded you, if I damaged the unity of this country in any way, I ask you to forgive me, and to join me in repairing that harm," the President said. He added: "I pray that all of us will spend the days and weeks after this address repairing the bonds that frayed last year. "

President Kenyatta in his State of the Nation address also said bringing regional stability to Somalia and Sudan would be at the top of his agenda in his final term. He said, “we continue to work, to secure foreign funding and support commensurate to Somalia’s challenges; we helped, and will continue to help, the people of Somalia build a strong and stable government.” He called on the leaders of South Sudan to put the interest of their people before their own, adding “as we have in the past year, Kenya stands with the people of South Sudan in their search for lasting peace.”

Parts of north-eastern Kenya have seen their heaviest recorded rain in two decades, with more than 150,000 people forced to flee after the River Tana burst its banks. According to the Red Cross, more than 200,000 people have been left homeless by the floods. Aid workers have expressed concerns over the possibility of outbreaks of disease from the impact of the rains at the Dadaab refugee camp complex, home to well over 200,000 people. **(See article)**

The government is set to submit its papers for the ratification of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA), signed in March in Kigali. The Principal Secretary for International Trade in the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Co-operatives, Chris Kiptoo, said

at the weekend that Kenya would “soon be depositing legal instruments with the African Union, making Kenya the third country in Africa to ratify the convention after Rwanda and Ghana.” AfCFTA aims to establish a single liberalized market that will spur industrialization, infrastructural development, economic diversification and trade across the continent.

## **Somalia**

Nearly half a million people have lost their homes or been forced to flee from flooding of the two main rivers, the Shabelle and Juba. One of the worst hit areas has been Beled Weyne, the capital of the HirShabelle State where close to 150,000 people were affected last weekend. Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre has set up a 22-member team to oversee responses to the situation and President Mohamed Abdullahi, on a visit to Beled Weyne, appealed to the international community for increased medical and aid supplies. **(See article)**

The Federal Government has set aside \$1 million for emergency flood relief and humanitarian support following President Mohamed visit to Beled Weyne on Tuesday (May 1). The UN estimates about one million people have been affected by the floods in the country with over 150,000 forced out of their homes in Beled Weyne alone. **(See article)**

The Lower House of Parliament elected Mohamed Mursal Sheikh Abdirahman, former Defense Minister, as a new speaker to replace Mohamed Osman Jawari who resigned two months ago on Monday (April 30). Mr. Mursal was elected by 147 to 118 votes. President Mohamed Abdullahi and the UN Special Representative in Somalia, have congratulated Mr. Mursal. Mr. Keating said it was now time for the executive and legislature to move together and quickly to fast track the constitutional review process and build requisite structures for good governance as well as work constructively to enact the many pending draft bills in Parliament.

The United Nations Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) condemns a suicide bombing in the city of Galkayo, which killed government security officers and civilians, on Saturday (April 28) The UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, Michael Keating, said the attack occurred because “extremists feel threatened by the progress that is being made with reconciliation efforts in Galkayo.”

## **South Sudan**

President Salva Kiir has appointed General Gabriel Jok Riak, previously deputy chief of defence forces, as the country's new army chief of staff. General Riak was one of the senior military officers on whom the United Nations Security Council imposed travel bans and asset freezes in July 2015.

Bintou Keita, Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, briefing the Security Council on Wednesday (May 2) on her recent visit to South Sudan said holding elections in South Sudan before reaching a peaceful settlement was not a solution to the current crisis. She said the only options remained the High-Level Revitalization Forum.

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) issued a statement last week confirming resumption of offensive activity by the rival forces in the Upper Nile region. This had forced humanitarian organisations to relocate staff following a surge in violent clashes in Unity, Jonglei and parts of Central Equatoria. The Special Representative of the Secretary-

General, David Shearer, said: “Innocent civilians are being caught in the crossfire, including many women, children and elderly people...Our teams on the ground are reporting incidents of killing, sexual violence, homes being burnt to the ground, cattle raiding, and the looting of hospitals and schools.”

The Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission in a statement on Saturday (April 28) condemned the increase of fighting in South Sudan and the kidnapping of aid workers as clear violations of the signed deals between the warring parties. It said it had asked CTSAMM to undertake the necessary investigation as stipulated in the 2017 Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access. The JMEC condemned “this latest violation of the Agreements, which demand unimpeded access for humanitarian aid workers in South Sudan.”

## **Sudan**

President Omer al-Bashir on Thursday (April 26) said the permanent constitution would be approved by the elected parliament following the 2020 elections. This was according to the recommendation of the national dialogue. Equally, the President said, broad discussions on the constitution could be held to prepare a draft to be presented before the next parliament to approve it. It would then be presented to the Sudanese people in a referendum, he said. In January 2014, al-Bashir called for a national dialogue to discuss ending the civil war, allowing political freedoms, fighting against poverty and revitalising national identity. In October 2016, the political forces participating concluded the process by signing the National Document which includes the general features of a future constitution to be finalised by transitional institutions.

First Vice-President and Prime Minister Bakri Hassan Salih met with a visiting delegation from the United States Congress on Tuesday (May 1) to discuss bilateral relations between Sudan and the U.S. as well as issues of human rights and religious freedom. The Congressional delegation arrived on Sunday on a three-day official visit at the invitation of Sudan’s National Legislature.

U.S. Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorist Financing, Marshall Billingslea on a visit to Khartoum said on Monday (April 30) that all restrictions on banking transactions with Sudan have been lifted. After a meeting with Foreign Ministry Under-Secretary Abdel-Ghani al-Nai’im on Sunday, he said the time had come to integrate Sudan into the global economy. He said the US had informed countries of the region that restrictions on Sudanese banks had been lifted.

The Foreign Ministry said around 13,000 personnel have been withdrawn during the first phase of the hybrid peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID) reconfiguration process.

In June 2017, the African Union and the United Nations decided to draw down UNAMID military personnel by 44% and the police component by 30%, the closure of 11 team sites in the first phase and the withdrawal of the military component from another seven team sites in the second phase. UNAMID has been the world's second-largest international peacekeeping force with an annual budget of \$1.35 billion and almost 20,000 troops.

A private airline based in Khartoum, Badr Airlines, has started a new scheduled flight service to Addis Ababa. It will operate a twice weekly flight between Khartoum and Addis Ababa with a B737 aircraft. Badr Airlines serves seven domestic destinations in Sudan as well flights to Dubai, Jeddah, Cairo, Kano, Juba and Wau.

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### ***President Dr. Mulatu Teshome's State Visit to Poland***

President Dr. Mulatu Teshome made a state visit to the Republic of Poland last week (April 23-25), at the invitation of the President of the Republic of Poland, President Andrzej Duda. Dr. *Eyasu Abreha*, former Minister of Agriculture and Natural Resources and Dr. Samuel Kifle, State Minister of Education, as well as representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation, the Ethiopian Investment Commission and Metals and Engineering Corporation (*METEC*) accompanied President Dr. Mulatu on a highly successful visit, moving existing bilateral relations forward.

During this visit, President Mulatu had meetings with President Andrzej Duda, Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and the Speaker of the Upper House, Mr. Stanisław Karczewski. He also met with the Polish business representatives and visited Warsaw old town and Azoty-Puławy, largest Polish fertilizer and chemical factory.

During bilateral discussions with Polish officials, President Dr. Mulatu emphasized that the Ethiopian government attached great importance to its diplomatic relationship with Poland, a relationship dating back to 1947. The President stressed the need for much more effort in investment, trade and tourism, as these were currently not commensurate with the historic and longstanding friendship and mutual goodwill that existed between the two countries.

The Polish company, URSUS, is jointly cooperating with METEC in a tractor assembly plant in Adama town, on the basis of a US\$ 50 million soft loan provided by the government of Poland. The company, during this visit, held extensive discussions with its Ethiopian partner on how to enhance the partnership through providing competitive technology and after sales services with a view to increasing its market share. ASSECO, a Polish company which has signed an agreement of US\$10 million with the Ethiopian Information Network Security Agency to support the modern energy market with information communication technology participated in a business lunch.

In these and other discussions, both sides reached a consensus to boost investment and trade relations to the highest level. The Polish Government has now taken a decision to open a Polish Economic and Trade Office in Addis Ababa this year. The two sides also agreed to work closely in the field of agricultural mechanization, food-processing, manufacturing, aviation, technology transfer and other areas. The Polish government also expressed its

willingness to look into the possibility of providing an additional US\$100 million in soft loans to finance mutually beneficial projects.

The Polish government also pledged to provide fully funded scholarships to assist Ethiopians to acquire specific skills and encourage sustainability of people-to-people ties. During the visit, a letter of intent was signed between the Ethiopian Ministry of Education and Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education. The agreement aims to establish a long-term, mutually beneficial relationship between the two institutions and allow them to work together in the field of capacity building for higher education.

Ethiopia and Poland are both currently non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and an understanding was reached to work closely together for global peace and security. They agreed that their partnership would continue to manifest itself further, augmenting Ethiopia's robust partnership with the European Union.

During his visit, President Dr. Mulatu gave a lecture at the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland. He briefed diplomats and others on the principles and priorities of Ethiopia's Foreign Policy. His presentation was followed by a lively question and answer session.

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### ***Prime Minister Dr. Abiy's first external visits to Djibouti...***

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed visited Djibouti on Saturday (April 28) on his first foreign trip since taking office. During his visit he met with President Ismail Omar Guelleh, addressed the National Assembly and visited the port of Djibouti, the Doraleh Container Terminal and the Djibouti industrial park.

During talks with President Guelleh, Prime Minister Abiy discussed various bilateral issues. Dr. Abiy has already made it clear he planned to give priority to diplomatic relations with neighboring countries. Indeed, prioritizing immediate neighbors is at the heart of Ethiopia's foreign policy and during the two-day visit, the two leaders agreed to cooperate and work on their economic relations in a manner that would speed up their economic integration.

The two leaders also discussed on such issues as security and border development to strengthen the people-to-people ties of the two countries. They underscored the importance of IGAD's Joint Ministerial Commission to help guaranteeing border security and fighting terrorism in the sub region. They agreed to work together in multilateral venues such as the AU and UN to bring about better economic ties between their two countries and their people.

The two sides also discussed ongoing projects providing the possibilities of increased economic integration between the two countries, and ways to improve logistics and port efficiency both in terms of cost and speed.

Prime Minister Abiy underlined the importance of "working towards the realization of complete economic integration of the two economies." Dr. Abiy said that the first visit outside to Djibouti underlined the importance of the links between the two countries. He said: "The beliefs and aspirations of our peoples are to see a prosperous and peaceful region, where free movement of people and goods are realized for the common benefit of the two

countries. Our joint infrastructural projects are a clear testimony of our progress towards these goals. The new electric railway line between Djibouti and Addis Ababa, like its predecessor, the old railway, is a symbolic umbilical cord that ties and binds the peoples of the two countries. Given this common destiny we should both aim high for the betterment of the lives of our people.” President Ismail Omar Guelleh emphasized that "Ethiopia is the main partner of Djibouti," a role that was underlined by the President of the National Assembly, Mohammad Ali Umed, after Prime Minister addressed the Assembly.

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*...and to the Republic of the Sudan...*

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy held talks with President Omar Al-Bashir of Sudan on bilateral and regional issues on Wednesday (May 2). During the bilateral talks, the Premier stressed his country's readiness to strengthen the strategic partnership with the Republic of Sudan in all areas of engagement. He further highlighted the importance of economic integration between the two countries and the need to use border areas for shared benefits. The Prime Minister reaffirmed Ethiopia’s commitment to working together with Sudan for peace and security in the region and the continent.

Prime Minister Abiy reiterated Ethiopia’s keenness to enhance cooperation with Sudan and stressed the importance of expanding strategic ties with Sudan in all fields and of working with Sudan to realize peace and development in the continent. He noted that the strategic partnership between Ethiopia and Sudan could play a pivotal role in maintaining security in the Horn of Africa region. Prime Minister Abiy’s discussions with President Al-Bashir, whom he also met at the Tana Forum meeting in Bahr Dar last month, covered bilateral relations and issues of common concern, including the implementation of the joint agreements signed between the two countries to promote economic relations and strengthen ties between the two countries. Ethiopia and Sudan have been steadily engaging in more and more joint cooperation in security and economic areas.

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Workneh Gebeyehu, at a joint press conference on Thursday (May3) said the two countries have agreed to immediately implement the agreement on developing and jointly managing Port Sudan. The Minister added that two leaders have also agreed for free trade agreement at border areas to strengthen the people-to-people ties. The two leaders further reiterated their commitment to a win-win approach regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). The Sudanese President also accepted Prime Minister Dr Abiy’s request for the release of Ethiopians jailed in Sudan.

The Prime Minister also met First Vice-President and Prime Minister Bakri Hassan Salih and Vice-President Hassabo Abdel-Rahman and addressed an Ethio-Sudan Business Forum as well as holding talks with representatives of the hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians who live in Sudan. He was accompanied on his two-day visit by a high-level delegation, including the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defense, Water Resources and Energy and communications, as well as leading officials from the Benishangul, Amhara and Tigray Regional States which border Sudan.

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### *Historic visit of an Israeli President to Ethiopia*

Israeli president, Reuven Rivlin, on Tuesday (May 1) arrived in Ethiopia for a three days historic official visit, the first by an Israeli President to Ethiopia. He arrived on board an Ethiopian Airlines flight and described his flight with a “very good airline as very pleasant’

Before President Rivlin held bilateral talks with his host, President Dr. Mulatu Teshome at the National Palace, the two sides gave press briefings to domestic and international media. Dr. Mulatu Teshome stressed the ties between Ethiopia and Israel, dating back 3,000 years when the then Ethiopian Queen of Shebna, Makeda, visited King Solomon in Jerusalem, were “legendary, eclectic, sentimental and excellent”. During their bilateral talks President Mulatu noted that President Rivlin’s visit marked a new chapter for the two countries in their long-standing relations. Extending his warmest congratulations to the President and citizens of Israel as the country celebrates the 70th anniversary of its independence, Dr. Mulatu welcomed the President to his "second home" where a diplomatic foundation had been laid three thousand years ago. The President also noted the unique ties of more than 140,000 Israelis of Ethiopian origin, Beth-Israels, now residing in Israel.

Today, Dr. Mulatu stressed the two countries had charted new areas of cooperation in the fields of trade, investment, agriculture, science and technology and other areas. The President noted the trade volume between the two countries had reached to more than US\$160 million and said dozens of Israeli companies were exploiting one of the most attractive investment schemes in the continent. Equally, calling for more Israeli investment in Ethiopia, Dr. Mulatu emphasized the need to fully utilize the untapped potential of cooperation in science and technology, agriculture, education, health and other sectors to further boost the growing ties.

President Reuven Rivlin, extending his gratitude for the warm welcome accorded to him and his delegation, stressed the historical ties between the two countries could reach new heights as the two countries were now in a better position to explore the opportunities, utilize them and invest in a better future. President Reuven noted that the visits by the two countries' Prime Ministers last year and his own visit this year indicated the high importance the two countries attached to their ties. The President pledged his Government's continued commitment to support the remarkable reforms the government of Ethiopia was undertaking to ensure peace and prosperity in the country. The President said that as he was coming on behalf of King Solomon and "witnessing the warmest welcome" he had received in Ethiopia, he had now extended his invitation to Dr. Mulatu to accept the hospitality King Solomon accorded to the Queen of Sheba in Israel.

An Ethio-Israeli Business Seminar took place the same day. State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Aklilu Hailemichael and the Head of the Economic Division of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Yael Ravia-Zadok attended as well as members of Ethiopian and Israel private and public institutions. In his opening remarks, Dr. Aklilu described the Israeli private sector investment in Ethiopia, notably in agriculture, as valuable. He encouraged Israeli companies to work together with their Ethiopian counterparts to fully materialize technology transfer. Ambassador Ravia-Zadok reiterated her country's commitment to further strengthen economic and private sector relations. Priority cooperation areas such as agriculture and water, security, cyber and IT, clean energy and infrastructure, and health and medical devices were discussed at the seminar. The event brought together

representatives of more than 100 Ethiopian government institutions, Israeli businesses and prominent Ethiopian companies.

During his visit, President Rivlin also held meetings with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed as well as with Ethiopia's Patriarch, His Holiness Abune Mathias. His historic visit concluded with the signing of a number of major cooperation agreements covering the areas of health, education, power and energy on Thursday at a high-level event entitled “Impact for good; A cross-sectoral dialogue for strengthening partnership between Africa, Israel and the world Jewry.”

Speaking on the occasion, President Rivlin told participants representing the two countries they were there aspiring to see a joint future to ensuring common concerns as food security, public health, infrastructure and energy would be resolved. He said partnerships engendered reliable changes, adding that the agreements signed would testify to the ever-growing ties between the two countries in addressing challenges in health, education and energy in particular.

The Minister for Social and Labour Affairs, Dr. Hirut W/Mariam noted in her speech that such venues that brought together business people from different renowned companies, intellectuals from the Academia, innovators and high-level government officials could serve as a jumping-off-point to reinforce relations in multifaceted fields. Dr. Hirut said there were various lessons that Ethiopia could take from Israel, particularly in areas of innovation, technology, medical science, water security, or community development. She underlined the need to further cement relations to fully utilize these priority areas of cooperation.

During the event business owners, innovators, academicians also made presentations on issues of “Civil society and infrastructure”, “Private sector and energy”, “Child development programs” and “The future of Ethio-Israeli cooperation.” Roundtable discussions that aimed at bringing sectoral partnerships to life were held giving particular emphasis on primary challenges and needs in such areas as academia and education, energy, infrastructure and water, humanitarian assistance, health and medicinal science. The discussions were outstanding in identifying specific entry points and opportunities for collaboration and putting forward the next steps to establish joint projects in these sectors.

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### ***The IGAD Council of Ministers holds consultations at Juba***

A Delegation of IGAD Council of Ministers led by Ethiopia’s State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene, visited South Sudan’s capital, Juba, on Sunday and Monday (April 29 – 30) for two days of consultation and discussions with high-level government officials. These included over a dozen ministers and other senior officials as well as President Salve Kiir. The IGAD Council members also held consultations with the ambassadors of partner countries as well as ambassadors of other African countries and United Nations representatives prior to meeting government officials State Minister Mrs. Hirut was accompanied by the State Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Kenya, Sudan and Somalia. The aim was to narrow the gap between the two opposing sides, prior to the 3<sup>rd</sup> session of the IGAD High Level Revitalization Forum taking place this week (May 3-7) in Addis Ababa.

The Council delegation heard a report from the Task Force about the contending issues between the government and the opposition as well as a briefing on the state of the security sector. It then met with the ambassadors of development partner countries. State Minister Hirut briefed the ambassadors on IGAD's preparedness to take further punitive measures against any party that disrupted the peace process. The ambassadors expressed concerns for assurance of safe access for humanitarian assistance and the safety of humanitarian workers, and also urged that serious measures should be taken against any spoilers of the peace process. They also stressed the importance of silencing the guns and called for the period of the mandate of Transitional Government of National Unity to be respected. African Ambassadors raised similar concerns. They also stressed the need for targeted sanctions if the need arose but underlined that interaction and discussion with the two opposing sides should be seen as a more important way forward.

The next day (April 30) the IGAD Council delegation held discussions with ministers and representatives of the Government of South Sudan. Representing the South Sudan Government, Cabinet Affairs Minister Martin Lumuru said the Government of South Sudan was conforming with the agreement reached by IGAD Heads of Governments in June last year. He said the opposition groups were all moving away from this position. The discussions between the Council and the representatives of the government covered the views of the government towards the interest and claims of the opposition groups and on how to bridge the gap between the two sides.

Later, the IGAD Council delegation met with President Salva Kiir. State Minister Hirut noted that the Council had conducted fruitful discussions with ministers and briefed President Kiir on the shuttle diplomacy conducted with the opposition. She underlined that the peace process could only be successful when the government and especially the President was accommodating and played a brotherly role. Mrs. Hirut expressed her strong belief that the third round of the High-Level Revitalization with more effort could achieve even more than the success of the second round of the Forum. President Kiir emphasized that IGAD should not rush too quickly to bring the peace process to an end. He said that since the third session of the Revitalization Forum was assumed to be the final meeting, it should be handled carefully, in case it had unexpected consequences. The President said IGAD should properly study the issues raised by the government. He called on the opposition to clearly state their interests. Among other issues, the President also stressed that the opposition's demands that the President should resign, and certain institutions be closed, were unacceptable. The President said the government of South Sudan needed to make peace with the opposition, to allow it to extend its mandate and solve the problems of the country once and for all.

As part of the discussions with all parties to fry and narrow the differences between the sides before the third session of the High-Level Revitalization Forum started, the IGAD Council members and the Task Force earlier (April 13-14) discussed bridging the gap between the two sides. During that meeting they also met with the newly formed coalition of the South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA) and with the SPLM- IO RM (Riek Machar). In addition to this the team led by the Special Envoy has been meeting with members of South Sudan's civil society.

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### ***Ambassador Donald Yamamoto's visit to Ethiopia, Eritrea and Djibouti***

The Office of the Spokesperson of the US State Department announced on April 21 on the USSD's official website, that the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Ambassador Donald Yukio Yamamoto, would be making an official visit to the Horn of Africa. Ambassador Yamamoto is a former US Ambassador to Eritrea *ad interim* (1997-98), Ambassador to Djibouti (2000-2003) and Ethiopia (2006-2009) as well as an Acting Assistant Secretary of Bureau of African Affairs.

On this occasion, he visited Eritrea (April 22-24), Djibouti (April 24-25) and Ethiopia (April 26). His visit to Eritrea was the first visit to be made by a high-ranking US government official in a very long time. There has been no US ambassador appointed to Asmara since 2010, though there have been three Chargé d'Affaires *ad interim* since then.

The US State Department made no comment after the visit and Yemane Gebre Meskel, Eritrea's Minister of Information tweeted that "Ambassador Yamamoto's delegation met with President Isaias Afwerki and other officials; discussed prospects of bilateral ties and cooperation on regional issues." There has been no other comment on the talks or Ambassador Yamamoto's visit.

Following his visit to Eritrea, Ambassador Yamamoto arrived in Djibouti to attend the U.S.-Djibouti bi-national Forum. This is the annual dialogue covering issues of political, economic and security cooperation and assistance, and the US delegation also included Assistant Deputy Secretary of Defense, Alan Patterson, and the USAID Deputy Director for Africa, Julie Koenen, as well as the new ambassador of the United States to Djibouti, Ambassador Larry André. Ambassador Yamamoto and his delegation met for talks with President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh. Also present were Djibouti's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, the Minister of Defense, in charge of Relations with Parliament, Ali Hassan Bahdon, the Minister of Equipment and Transport, Mohamed Abdoukader Moussa, and the ambassador of Djibouti to the United States and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Mohamed-Siad Doualeh Warsama.

The discussions covered ways and means to further promote and develop the already excellent relations of friendship and cooperation between the two countries as well as their strategic partnership in economic and security sectors. The US, of course, has a base in Djibouti, Camp Lemonnier, the primary base of operations for U.S. Africa Command in the Horn of Africa and the lower Red Sea, supports some 4,000 U.S., joint and allied forces military and civilian personnel.

While in Djibouti, Ambassador Yamamoto, together with Minister of Foreign Affairs Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, and IGAD Executive Secretary Ambassador Mahboub Maalim, participated in the inauguration of the IGAD Center of Excellence for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (ICEPCVE). The Center has been established to promote regional sharing of good practices and lessons learnt in preventing and countering violent extremism and bring together actors involved in preventing and countering violent extremism in the region to ensure an inclusive and holistic approach. It is intended to serve as a resource for governments, civil societies, youth, religious leaders, experts, practitioners, business people, and others interested in addressing violent extremism. IGAD also launched its Regional Strategy for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism in the Horn and Eastern Africa Region at the same occasion.

IGAD's regional strategy aims to deepen understanding of the drivers of violent extremism and offers concrete measures to diminish the appeal of radical ideologies. It stresses the role of research and analysis to improve understanding of sites of radicalization and recruitment including refugee camps, prisons, social media, religious and educational institutions. The Centre of Excellence will build on this by providing a dedicated platform for research, capacity building, and strategic communication. It will provide a framework for civil society organization and other non-state actors to support the work of regional governments and enhance the capacity of local communities to offer alternative narratives and counter messages. This will allow the Center to work together with national centers such as the Kenya National Counter-Terrorism Center, currently implementing its National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism adopted in 2016 and with civil society and community-based actors to strengthen community resilience against violent ideologies.

IGAD says the ICEPCVE will have four major roles. The first of these is the provision of capacity building programs to government and non-government stakeholders to design and implement effective programs and policies to counter the scourge of violent extremism. Secondly: serve as a platform for the connectivity and policy and action-oriented debates for the sub-region. Third: to launch massive, strategic counter-messaging campaigns to effectively fend off extremist propaganda messages and supplant them with alternative and benign narratives. And fourthly: to be a center of a concerted, regional hub of research and innovation on perennial and emerging threats such as violent extremism as well as developing novel ways to effectively tackle them.

After Djibouti, Ambassador Yamamoto moved on to Ethiopia where he met Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu. During their talks he noted that Ethiopia is a key US ally and a pillar state in the region. The two sides exchanged views on ways of further consolidating Ethiopia-US relations, particularly in areas of trade and investment, industrialization, aerospace industry, and the maintenance of regional peace and security.

Speaking of the ongoing efforts to bring about regional peace and stability particularly in South Sudan and Somalia, through various fora such as the IGAD and the provision of its good offices to these endeavours, Dr. Workneh underscored that Ethiopia is working around the clock to bring the ongoing peace process in South Sudan to fruition. He also mentioned Ethiopia's continued efforts to bring peace and stability in Somalia. Ambassador Yamamoto noted the US Government's appreciation of Ethiopia's key efforts in the promotion of peace and security in the region, adding that the US would continue to provide support to these efforts. He commended Ethiopia's efforts to bring about peace in South Sudan through its chairmanship of IGAD. He pledged full U.S. support for IGAD's efforts to end South Sudan's civil war.

Touching upon the broad-based economic cooperation between Ethiopia and the US in trade and investment, the energy sector and the aerospace industry, Dr. Workneh and Ambassador Yamamoto discussed ways of going the "extra mile" to further expand the scope and current state of cooperation. Commending the excellent work Ethiopia is doing in the energy and aerospace sectors, Ambassador Yamamoto expressed the US' interest to invest in these areas in ways that would help Ethiopia's industrialization process and help make the country a regional aerospace hub. Ambassador Yamamoto also expressed the US' interest to promote Ethiopian value-added products, Brand Ethiopia, in the American market, through sector-

selective investment. While underlining the substantial economic growth Ethiopia has been experiencing over the last decade, Dr. Workneh emphasized the readiness and continued commitment of the Government of Ethiopia to facilitate the flow of more US investments to Ethiopia.

Speaking to reporters after his talks, Ambassador Yamamoto said the U.S. administration led by President Donald Trump saw Ethiopia as a key partner in economic and political issues. He said: "We discussed a wide range of issues particularly initiatives President Trump is looking at positioning the U.S. in making [Ethiopia] a clear and critical partner not only for Ethiopia but for all of Africa on economic development, trade and investment." He singled out Ethiopia's industrialization drive and said: "The U.S. government has expressed keen interest to engage in Ethiopia's industrialization drive, in addition they want to help Ethiopia add value on agriculture, to help Ethiopian goods be able to be exported to U.S. market."

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### ***Flooding in Somalia and Kenya affects hundreds of thousands of people....***

Exactly how many people have lost their homes or been forced to flee from floods in Kenya and Somalia isn't known. The Norwegian Refugees Council said on Friday that upwards of 400, 00 people had been displaced along the Shabelle and Juba, Somalia's two main rivers. Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre, appealing to the international community for support, said the situation was fast escalating. Aid agencies warned that close to half a million people had been affected overall in south-central regions of the country. The Prime Minister has set up a 22-member team to oversee responses to the situation in coordination with the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs. The committee is headed by the Deputy Prime Minister, Mahdi Mohamed Guled. The Prime Minister said: "We have all agreed to put our efforts together to help those who have been affected the floods," adding, "We urgently call on the various sectors of the community such as clerics, women, parliamentarians and aid agencies to consult on emergency response to our people affected by floods."

One of the worst hit areas appears to be Hiiraan region and Beled Weyne, the capital of the HirShabelle State. According to aid agencies in Somalia close to 150,000 people were affected after the banks of the Shabelle River burst earlier last week. The flooding has made Beled Weyne airport unusable, and planes with emergency supplies have to use Dhusa Mareb, more than 200km away. The Governor of Hiiraan region, Abdullahi Ahmed Maalin, said the flooding in Beled Weyne was the worst the town had ever seen. The Shabelle River in Beled Weyne town was eight metres above normal at the weekend. The Governor called on the government and humanitarian aid agencies to urgently respond before the situation turns tragic. "We urge the Federal Government and humanitarian agencies to help these flood victims in the region. People have no place to sleep, no clothes, no clean water to drink, and no food and medicine," said the governor. He warned of the emergence of water-borne diseases as a result. "Due to lack of clean water, there could be an outbreak of water-borne diseases like diarrhea and cholera as well as malaria," he said.

President Mohamed Abdullahi travelled to Beled Weyne capital of HirShabelle State on Monday (April 30) to see the damage and meet with state officials. The President inspected areas highly affected by the flooding as well as camps for the IDPs displaced following the torrential rains. He appealed to the international community for increased medical and aid

supplies, and also asked the governor of the region, leaders of HirShabelle regional administration, and the regional elite to come up with ways to overcome recurrent flooding. He called for concerted efforts between the newly formed national response committee, aid agencies and regional administrations to ensure humanitarian assistance reaches all flood victims.

The Governor of neighbouring Benadir and Mayor of Mogadishu, Abdirahman Omar Osman (Engineer Yarisow), convened an extraordinary meeting in response to the crisis in Beled Weyne and appointed a committee to organize their efforts. He called on the Somali people and the international community to provide emergency assistance to the affected population and donated 100,000 US dollars to provide assistance to affected families.

AMISOM forces have joined in the efforts to assist flood victims in Beled Weyne. Djibouti and Ethiopian troops, along with the Somali National Army, have been helping to deliver food and relocate thousands of people to safety after the Shabelle river burst its banks at several points. Over 100,000 people are estimated to have moved to higher ground on the outskirts of the Beled Weyne, but many more remained stranded in parts of the town. The President of HirShabelle State, Mohamed Abdi Ware, said; “The river has breached its banks in Beled Weyne town and a sheet of flood water has covered much of the town and the surrounding villages.” There were also problems elsewhere in the state, he said: “In Jowhar, the river flooding has taken place in a number of places, most critically at Mandhere village. The flooding from this spot threaten, despite our best efforts to cut the Jowhar-Mogadishu road.”

Aid workers in Somalia are also seriously concerned about the situation in the camps housing about two million internally displaced people. Victor Moses, Somalia country director for the Norwegian Refugee Council, said: “Our staff on the ground have seen the elderly, women and children struggling to survive while their flimsy shelters are knee-high full of stagnant water.” He added: “With limited access to proper toilets and clean water, it’s a ticking time-bomb for disease outbreaks like cholera and malaria.”

Similar fears have been raised over the impact of the rains at the Dadaab refugee camp complex in Kenya, home to well over 200,000 people, mostly Somalis. Rising water levels in the camp have forced many of its inhabitants to abandon their shelters and seek refuge in schools. Aid workers say they are already seeing an increase in Acute Watery Diarrhoea and fear a cholera outbreak could occur.

Parts of north-eastern Kenya have seen their heaviest recorded rain in two decades. More than 150,000 people have been forced to flee after the River Tana burst its banks. With more rain expected, local police have ordered the evacuation of vulnerable villages. The Kenyan army and Red Cross mounted a major operation last week to rescue 3,000 people marooned by the Galana-Sabaki river, which destroyed a number of tourist camps in Kenya’s Tsavo East National Park. According to the Red Cross, more than 200,000 people have been left homeless by the floods.

The UN Humanitarian Agency, OCHA said on Thursday last week (April 26) that heavy rains were likely to continue over the coming weeks both inside Somalia and within the Ethiopian highlands. In a flash flood update OCHA said: “The projection for heavy rains coupled with the high river levels means that riverine flooding will continue in the Juba and Shabelle river basins in the coming weeks.”

The heavy rains and flash floods have come only months after a devastating drought left over six million people in need of humanitarian assistance last year. The magnitude of rainfall has been much worse than anticipated, said the deputy head at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Somalia. “Initially, all humanitarian actors started responding with the means and assets they had available,” she said, noting that UN relief agencies have been able to raise funding over the past week to scale up critical interventions

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization described the floods as some of the worst the region has ever seen, and the current water level exceeds a 50-year period in most locations. “Internally displaced people remain the most vulnerable to the impact of the flooding with many camps located in low-lying areas,” a spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General said in New York on Monday. He stressed that humanitarian partners on the ground were prioritizing water, sanitation, hygiene, [health,] shelter and food responses in their interventions. . At the same time more funding is urgently needed.

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### ***... and Somalia and International Partners discuss progress on security***

Efforts to advance Somalia’s progress in security have been the topic of a high-level meeting of Somali authorities and international partners in Mogadishu at the end of last week, and of a EU meeting of donors and security officials in Brussels this week.

The conference in Mogadishu, chaired by Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre, highlighted for keeping up the need for continued momentum in the implementation of the Comprehensive Approach to Security (CAS). Attending the meeting of the CAS executive group were representatives of the Federal Government of Somalia, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and international partners.

Prime Minister Khayre told the meeting that much had been achieved since the Somalia Security Conference last December to develop a transition plan that will eventually give the primary responsibility for the country’s security to Somalia’s own security forces. He said: “The transition plan focuses on a number of key elements. First it stresses local delivery as a key component for success. Second, the plan outlines the necessary supporting activities in recognizing that there is no purely military solution to our problems, and, finally, the plan places great emphasis on institutional capacity building.” These, he said, were necessary to rebuild the nation and attain the vision of a stable and prosperous Somalia.” The Prime Minister noted that the military aspect was just one component of the Comprehensive Approach to Security. He reaffirmed Somalia’s commitment to undertake reforms needed to move the country forward, saying: “The reforms that we are undertaking are not just to meet benchmarks on our pathway to debt relief; they are a necessary path we need to take to rebuild our nation and attain our vision of a stable and prosperous Somalia.”

Michael Keating, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, told the meeting that the success of the transition plan depended on its endorsement by three constituencies, the Somalis, AMISOM and international partners. He added: “The most important of those three constituencies is the Somali one.” Mr. Keating, noting that the transition plan was on the UN Security Council’s agenda, called on the international community to throw its support behind the Comprehensive Approach to Security. The



African Union's Special Representative for Somalia and head of AMISOM, Ambassador Francisco Madeira, echoed Mr. Keating's appeal to the international community to provide funding to the transition plan and prepare the Somali National Army to replace AMISOM as the primary guarantors of the country's security. He underlined the importance of knowing when the money that necessary to buy "the enablers, the multipliers, the barracks, the armoured cars" for the Somali National Army, would be available."

At the end of the meeting, participants formally adopted a transition plan for security responsibilities ahead of the high-level conference on Somalia's security taking place in Brussels on Wednesday (May 2) this week. Prime Minister Khayre then headed the delegation of ministers and officials to the EU conference, where the focus was on security and AMISOM's troop withdrawal. It was attended by donors and International partners, as well as AU, UN and Eu representatives and security expert.

Prime Minister Hassan Khayre briefed the conference on the progress of the Transitional Plan, which allows for a phased exit of AMISOM forces while increasingly building and training Somali security forces and integrating militia groups into the mainstream security forces as well as enhancing equipment and logistical support. AMISOM withdrew 1,000 troops last December and a further 1,000 are expected to leave by October in line with UN Security Council resolutions. The government presented pilot projects within the framework of the Somalia Transition Plan.

The conference underlined that Somalia should accelerate reforms of its army, after discussing the slow progress in transforming the Somali Security Forces into a force capable of fighting Al-Shabaab. In a concluding statement it urged Somalia to work faster to address problems identified in a report last year by the government, the United Nations and the African Union (AU) on strengthening the Somali National Army (SNA).

African Union Peace and Security Council said on Tuesday this week (May 1) that the "Council stresses that the full implementation of the Somalia Transition Plan is dependent on fully addressing the challenges raised by the Operational Readiness Assessment of regional forces, completion of discussions on the Somali troop generation, training, integration, accommodation, equipment and logistical support for the tasks related to the transition."

Later this month, the UN Security Council is expected to renew its authorisation of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which expires on 31 May. The Council will also be briefed on the activities of the UN Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), whose mandate was renewed in March. A key factor in the Security Council's re-authorisation of AMISOM is ensuring that the mission is equipped to adequately strengthen the Somali forces, so they can progressively take the lead in providing security. AMISOM itself has consistently suffered from a shortage of force multipliers and logistical problems. A premature handover of security responsibilities would certainly risk undermining Somalia's security and political gains. An operational readiness report on Somali security forces conducted at the end of last year concluded that Somali forces were very limited in their capacity to take over security responsibilities.

Equally important is the need to secure predictable and sustainable funding for AMISOM and Somali security institutions. The AU and UN are expected to complete a review of the AMISOM concept of operations prior to the Security Council's consideration of AMISOM's re-authorisation.

Meanwhile, on Friday (April 27) AMISOM opened two-day training on biometric registration for Somalia government staff to help spearhead the integration of pro-government militias into the national security forces. The course, conducted by AMISOM Police, was to train officials from the Ministry of Internal Security to register members of armed pro-government groups operating in Galmudug state in central Somalia. This follows a government request for AMISOM to help register pro-government armed groups. Paul Kissi Frimpong, AMISOM Police Deputy Coordinator in charge of Reform, Restructuring, and Development, said some of the states had some security forces that had involved in the fight against Al-Shabaab. These forces were outside the Somali National Army it was these that AMISOM was going to register. He said the exercise was part of AMISOM's plans to develop the capacity of the Somali national security forces to enable it to take over security responsibilities once AMISOM leaves. In March, AMISOM and Somali security officers began the registration of the Darwish militia in Jubaland to pave way for their integration into the Somali National Security Forces, and it has also has already trained a team of officers in South West state as well.

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### ***An Ethiopian Business and Investment Seminar held in Spain***

Ethiopian Embassy in France, in collaboration with the Spanish Confederation of Employers' Organizations (CEOE), the Honorary Consulate of Ethiopia in Madrid, and E For E, a leading business consultancy firm, co-organized an Ethio-Spanish Investment and Trade Seminar in Madrid (April 26-27), to promote investment and business opportunities in Ethiopia and provide information to potential Spanish investors. The seminar was attended by representatives from the Ethiopian Investment Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a number of companies from Spain.

The Vice President of the Spanish Confederation of Employers' Organizations (CEOE), Mr. Jose Vicente Gonzalez, addressing the opening session noted that Spain was determined to have strong relations with Ethiopia, a strong and stable country which was attracting significant Foreign Direct Investment. The Vice President noted that Ethiopia and Spain shared longstanding relations, a bond which in his view had seen tremendous developments in the last few years. He said Ethiopia was one of the leading African countries in offering a conducive business environment. He pointed out that the CEOE co-organized this seminar in Madrid for this very reason.

Spain's General Director of International Economic Cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Minister, Dr. Cristina Serrano Leal explained Spain's strategy for Africa and said that Ethiopia was among Spain's two or three major foci in Africa largely due to its demographic advantage, and its political and institutional stability. These, she said, were precious assets for investors. However, she added, the level of business interaction between the two countries did not reflect their century-old relationship. The General Director reiterated the importance of the role of trade and commerce in boosting relations and emphasized the way trade could be an important agent of change in empowering people.

Ethiopia's Ambassador to France and Spain, Ambassador Ali Sulaiman, underlined the historic, political and commercial ties that defined the long-standing bilateral relations between the two countries. He said that Ethiopia offered strong market opportunities to

Spanish investors and businesses and called on Spanish investors to take advantage of Ethiopia's favorable investment climate and policy. Ethiopia was endowed with abundant natural resources, a sufficient labor force and a stable economy. The Ambassador emphasized that Ethiopian Airlines' direct link between Addis Ababa and Madrid made things so much easier for contact and travel. I believe, he said, it will be an important element for the intensification of our relationship. He went on to say that the direct flight from Addis Ababa to Barcelona, which will commence in July, will further boost the growing economic and people-to-people relations between Spain and Africa in general and Ethiopia in particular, enabling a greater flow of trade, investment and tourism.

Ambassador Borja Montesino, Ambassador of Spain to Ethiopia, provided an overview of Ethiopia's investment environment, the regional perspective, and the opportunities and challenges as well as the role of the Embassy in fostering cooperation under the new policy. He emphasized that Spain should work hard to further strengthen its bilateral relations with Ethiopia and expressed its readiness to elevate bilateral trade and investment ties to a new level.

Abebe Ababayehu, Deputy Commissioner of the Ethiopian Investment Commission presented an overview of the reasons for investing in Ethiopia: its robust economic growth and its huge population, the availability of labor, its aim of becoming a manufacturing hub of Africa, and its infrastructure expansion. He dealt at length with the incentives and special advantages for investors in Ethiopia, noting the developing industrial parks, one-stop-services and massive infrastructure expansion. He invited potential Spanish investors to use these opportunities. He said: "Ethiopia has everything that you need to look for in taking a decision about where to invest: a clear vision, and strategy; fast and sustainable economic growth and development; untapped natural resources; availability of an abundant and wage competitive labor force; fast growing infrastructure and cheap green energy; a sizeable and captive market; and attractive investment incentives in a conducive business environment." These incentives, he said, especially the availability of competitive labor and a young productive population as well as the economic development and political stability made Ethiopia a suitable place for Foreign Direct Investment. He invited more Spanish companies to do business in Ethiopia.

The Director-General for Africa in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, while welcoming the Ethiopian delegation, noted that Spain paid special attention to Ethiopia because Spain has followed the country's economic success with particular interest. He said Ethiopia had great importance for the stabilization of the Horn of Africa and added that his government strongly encouraged and supported companies to invest in Ethiopia. Representing Spanish companies already invested in Ethiopia Mr. Pedro Pinai, of E for E, made a presentation on "Why invest in Ethiopia :Success Stories", and promised to provide advice and expertise in support of companies interested to invest in Ethiopia. Members of the Ethiopian delegation also held talks with representatives of different Chamber of Commerce and business associations to discuss issues of business and investment opportunities in Ethiopia.

A few days later on Wednesday (May 2), the Embassy of Ethiopia in France, in collaboration with the Business Diplomacy Directorate General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted another investment seminar, this time in Barcelona,. The Seminar was co-hosted by the National Federation of Industries (Foment del Treball Nacional) and the Barcelona Chamber of Commerce. The aim of this Seminar was to create awareness within the Catalanian

business community about the abundant investment opportunities available in the Ethiopian market. The seminar attracted more than 40 participants from the Spanish Catalanian private sector.

Ambassador Ali Sulaiman opened the Seminar with a strong positive note on Ethiopia-Spain relations. He provided an overview of Ethiopia's investment environment, the regional perspective, and the opportunities and challenges as well as the role of the Embassy in fostering cooperation under new and current policies. Ambassador Ali noted that Ethiopia's economic transformation had been profound and that was "a major reason Ethiopia is seeking friendship and economic mutual benefits with Spain through private sector investments."

At the Seminar, Mr. Joan Canals, International Commission President of the Foment del Treball Nacional, praised the initiative of the Embassy of Paris and pledged the Chamber's support for future initiatives and follow up activities. He was followed by sharply focused presentations by the Director of Business Promotion of the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Araya Gebregziabher, on the attractive investment opportunities in Ethiopia. He explained the various positive incentives on offer, and the availability of competitive labor with the country's young productive population. He underlined that Ethiopia was open for business to well-positioned companies with strategic objectives of tapping into the growing potential of emerging markets in East and Central Africa.

Mrs Nuria Juan Costa from Catalonia Trade & Investment (ACCIO) and Mr. Josep Maria Gomes, from the Barcelona Chamber of Commerce presented their various programs to promote and support Catalanian companies' activities in Africa. Additionally, representatives of Spanish multinationals gave first-hand experiences in the Ethiopian market.

As part of its quest to make economic inroads in investment in Africa, the Barcelona Chamber of Commerce has decided to send a four-day trade mission to Nairobi and Addis Ababa to highlight its strategy for the continent. The trade mission will take place June 20-23 and will include 20 Spanish (Catalonian) businessmen from various sectors. The visit will allow Catalanian companies to meet with key decision makers in local and international business and provide major insight and exposure in one of Africa's fastest growing economies.