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The “Track and trace for access to safe medicines conference” opened in Addis Ababa on Tuesday (May 8). Organized by GS1, the global supply chain standards organization, in partnership with the Ethiopian Food, Medicine and Healthcare Administration and Control Authority (EFMHACA), the conference brought together 150 regulatory bodies and international organizations to discuss fighting the spread of fake drugs and the need to secure the healthcare supply chain in Africa.

A new report from UNCTAD, “East African Community Regional Integration: Trade and Gender Implications” analyses the impact of regional integration on women's employment and quality of life in the five East African Community countries of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda. It emphasized “the need to proactively promote gender equality policies,” and calls on these countries to put better policies in place to address gender inequalities and bring women further into the workforce. Among its recommendations are closing the education gender gap, improving skills training so women can compete more for higher-paying jobs., and creating a regional credit mechanism to support women entrepreneurs.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia and China enjoy longstanding and historic relations and their ties have significantly expanded during the past two decades, and as part of further elevating the strategic ties with the Ethiopia, Mr. Li Zhanhu, Chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee of the People's Republic of China made his first official overseas visit to Ethiopia on Thursday this week (May 10). Chairman Li Zhanhu met with President Dr. Mulatu Teshome and Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed (See article)

A Turkish parliamentary delegation met President Dr. Mulatu Teshome on Tuesday (May 8) and held talks about the level of cooperation and friendship between the two countries. Both countries have agreed to hold further consultations to build on the existing economic, and diplomatic relations. A presidential spokesperson said the delegation agreed to deepen the economic, trade and investment ties.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed arrived in Nairobi on the afternoon of Sunday (May 6) for a two-day official state visit to Kenya. He was welcomed at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport by Kenyan Cabinet Secretary of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ambassador Monica Juma and other high-ranking Kenyan government officials. The Ethiopian Ambassador to Kenya, Ambassador Dina Mufti, and members of the Ethiopian community in Kenya also warmly welcomed the Premier. This official state visit was the

Prime Minister's third such visit, following visits neighbouring Djibouti and Sudan. **(See article)**

Ethiopia and India have agreed to elevate the existing strong bilateral relationship into new horizons. This has been emphasized this week on Wednesday (May 9), during a meeting between Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu and his Indian counterpart, Smt. Sushma Swaraj, in New Delhi. The two ministers also opened the 2nd Ethiopia -Indian Joint Ministerial Commission meeting.

State Minister Mrs. Hirut Zemene held talks with the delegation led by Mr. Kairat Umarov, Ambassador to the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the UN and Chairperson of the UN Security Council Sanctions Committee on Wednesday (May 9). Following the trip to Djibouti, Kenya and Somalia, the Committee made its visit to Ethiopia aiming at consulting and seeking advice with the Government of Ethiopia on the sanctions on Eritrea. The Government of Eritrea, however, has denied the Committee access into Asmara. State Minister Hirut stressed the lifting of the sanction on the Government of Eritrea should seriously assume the practical realities on the ground, while also emphasizing the fact that Eritrea has continued its disruptive role in the region and was not showing any signs of change.

State Minister Mrs. Hirut Zemene met with Mr David Phiri, the newly appointed Food and Agricultural Origination's (FAO) Sub-Regional Director for Eastern Africa and representative to the African Union and the UNECA, on Tuesday (May 8). Alluding to the fact that, the cooperation between Ethiopia and FAO goes as far back as the 1960s, State Minister Hirut noted FAO is a key partner to Ethiopia in the fight against poverty and drought, especially in the lowland regions. She commended the continued support of the FAO in this regard, as part of the plans outlined in the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP).

State Minister Mr.s Hirut received Chairman of the Turkey-Ethiopia Inter-Parliamentary friendship group Dr. Hasen Sert on Tuesday (May 08) during which, the two sides have agreed to strengthen people-to-people ties via parliamentary diplomacy. Mrs. Hirut took note of the well-established bilateral relations between Ethiopia and Turkey, further noting that the parliamentary cooperation would serve as a viable platform to enhance the all-rounded cooperation, particularly the people-to-people ties between the two countries.

State Minister Mrs. Hirut received a delegation of Foreign Affairs Committee of the French National Assembly led by its President Mrs. Marielle De Sernez on Friday (May 11), and the two sides discussed on national, bilateral and global issues of common interest, and agreed to scale up the people-to-people-ties through parliamentary diplomacy.

State MinisterDr. Aklilu held discussions with Saudi business delegation on Tuesday (May 8). The business delegation seeks to explore various options to invest in areas of agriculture and livestock rearing. Dr. Aklilu noted that Ethiopia is keen to export value-added products in general and products of agriculture in particular, saying that Ethiopia puts export-oriented agricultural investment front and center, which guarantees generation of employment opportunities. He said his government will continue to support Saudi investors who would like to invest in Ethiopia.

A prominent Turkish conglomerate called Eczacibasi, known for pharmaceuticals, building materials and fast-moving consumer goods unveiled its strong desire to invest in Ethiopia. The company noted this during a meeting between State Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr. Aklilu Hailemichael and its representatives on Tuesday (May 08). Mentioning the attractive incentives for foreign investors, stability of the country coupled with a growing market and friendly business environment, the Turkish group said Eczacibasi has chosen Ethiopia as a main gateway to Africa. Aiming to use the company's foothold in Ethiopia to serve not only the local market but also surrounding regions with exports from Ethiopia, the company will start its venture in construction materials.

Colonel Michael McCullough, US Defense Attaché in Addis Ababa, has described Ethiopian peacekeeping forces as a perfect example of global cooperation, noting the US was thankful for the role that the Ethiopian national defense force plays in regional stability and it worked closely with them on peace keeping missions. **(See article)**

Denmark has approved Danish co-financing of 600 million DKK for the construction of a wind farm to provide 100 MW of power. The total investment will amount to 1.26 billion DKK, of which Danida Business Finance will contribute 600 million DKK. The project will be tendered among Danish companies. Minister for Development Cooperation, Ulla Tørnæs, said the private sector's involvement was crucial for development projects in Africa to be sustainable in the long term.

Djibouti

President Ismail Omar Guelleh made a state visit to Kenya on Wednesday and Thursday this week (May 9 and 10). He held bilateral talks focusing on trade and security with President Kenyatta as well as discussing tourism sector, geothermal energy and air transport collaboration. **(See article)**

Kenya

President Uhuru Kenyatta hosted visits from Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, and from President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti this week. **(See articles)**

Police issued a security alert on Tuesday (May 8) over possible attacks in Kenya by Al-Shabaab during Ramadan. The director of communications for the Nation Police Service said security agencies had obtained credible intelligence suggesting that Al-Shabaab were planning to carry out attacks in various parts of the country during the holy month set to begin May 15. The police asked people to be extra vigilant especially in populated public places such as hotels, churches, bus stops and schools. A statement added: "We assure the public that security agencies continue to remain on high alert during this period and will closely monitoring activities across Kenya border with Somalia."

Somalia

Prime Minister Hassan Khayre said on Wednesday (May 9) that Somalia would be eligible for pre-arrears clearance by July this year. Speaking during the EU Day celebrations in Mogadishu, he said this would be a major step towards debt relief. He called for sustained international and local support to realise this benchmark. The Prime Minister said his government was committed to a reform agenda aimed at creating a favourable environment

for debt relief. Pre-arrears clearance is a key step towards qualification for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative decision point. EU Special Representative for the Horn of Africa, Alexander Rondos, noted that Somalia was on the path towards economic stability thanks to endorsement from International Financial Institutions.

Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre told a UN Security Council delegation on Tuesday (May 8) that Somalia was seeking to end the UN arms embargo. He urged the officials to review and lift the arms embargo to give the government the opportunity to buy weapons for its army. The delegation was led by Ambassador Kairat Umarow, the UN Special Envoy to Kazakhstan and Chair of the Somalia and Eritrea Sanctions Committee. Ambassador Kairat said, “We came here to carry out an assessment on several areas including security, improvement of infrastructure in the country as well as the imposed arms embargo.”

An international conference to build partnerships to curb the unsustainable charcoal trade as well as its production and use in Somalia took place in Mogadishu this week on Monday and Tuesday (May 7-8). **(See article)**

The numbers of people affected by the flooding in Somalia continues to rise following further rain in southern and central Somalia over the last week. There have also been new incidents of flash flooding. Over 700,000 people have been affected by flooding, including more than 228,000 people displaced since mid-April. **(See article)**

Deputy Prime Minister, Mahdi Mohamed Guled met with delegates from the EU accompanied by the General Commander of the Operation Atalanta anti-piracy task force on a warship this week. They discussed piracy and means of safeguarding Somalia’s waters”

The formal inauguration of the new Speaker of the Lower House, Mohamed Mursal Sheikh Abdirahman, took place in Mogadishu on Thursday this week (May 10). Mr. Mursal was elected as Speaker after the resignation of Mohamed Sheikh Osman Jawari.

South Sudan

UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Pierre Lacroix, told the United Nations Security Council, on Tuesday this week (May 8) that the peace process in South Sudan was at a critical juncture and agreement on permanent ceasefire terms and transitional security arrangements, remained “elusive”. **(See article)**

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) published its latest Humanitarian Bulletin on South Sudan at the end of last month (April 30). According to the report, the humanitarian situation in South Sudan seems to be worsening. **(See article)**

IGAD has invited representatives of each of the South Sudanese parties for consultations on the peace process. In a letter issued on Sunday (May 6) IGAD called for the need to intensify engagement with the South Sudanese parties so as to identify any possible options of ensuring the next peace talks ends successfully. It asked the parties to nominate five representatives to come to Addis Ababa for consultations from May 10 to May 12. It said that in order “to maximize the likelihood of reaching final agreement during the next round, which begins on 17 May, the (IGAD) Council of Ministers and the Special Envoy consider that it is necessary to intensify the engagement with and between the parties”.

The United States will initiate a comprehensive review of its assistance programs to South Sudan to ensure its aid does not contribute to or prolong the country's ongoing conflict, or facilitate predatory or corrupt behaviour, the White House said on Tuesday (May 8). A statement said; "We are deeply frustrated with the lack of progress toward an agreement, and we must ensure our shared efforts reflect the urgency of the situation." It added: "The government of South Sudan has lost credibility, and the United States is losing patience...The United States Government will not continue in a partnership with leaders who are only interested in perpetuating an endless war characterized by ethnically-motivated atrocities."

Sudan

The Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), Sudan Liberation Movement - Minni Minnawi (SLM-MM) and SLM- Transitional Council (SLM-TC) as of May 7 extended a unilateral ceasefire in Darfur region for another three months. JEM and SLM-MM are committed to the truce within the African Union efforts to end the conflict in Darfur. It was declared for the first time in October 2015 and has been renewed regularly since then.

Oil minister, Abdel Rahman Osman, said on Monday (May 7) that Sudan would shortly sign an agreement with Saudi Arabia under which the country would receive 1.8 million tonnes of oil a year for the next five years at preferential prices.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's first visit to Kenya

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed arrived in Nairobi on the afternoon of Sunday (May 6) for a two-day official state visit to Kenya. He was welcomed at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport by Kenyan Cabinet Secretary of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ambassador Monica Juma and other high-ranking Kenyan government officials. The Ethiopian Ambassador to Kenya, Ambassador Dina Mufti, and members of the Ethiopian community in Kenya also warmly welcomed the Premier. This official state visit was the Prime Minister's third such visit, following visits neighbouring Djibouti and Sudan.

During bilateral talks in Nairobi, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and President Uhuru Kenyatta discussed bilateral, regional, and global matters while also emphasizing the importance of strengthening their cooperation for the prosperity of the peoples of the two countries. The two sides restated their commitment to shared infrastructure and trade development, including a major transport corridor and a power supply project. The two leaders stressed "the great historical foundation on which the two nations have continued to build their bilateral relations" and agreed that the vision of the forefathers should point to a future of shared values, culture and tradition.

The two leaders re-committed themselves to the development of Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor, the Northern Corridor including road network between Isiolo, Moyale through to Addis Ababa and the railway from Addis Ababa to Nairobi. Kenya agreed to facilitate the acquisition of lands in Lamu Port for the Ethiopian government to be developed for logistics facilitation. They also agreed to jointly supervise and inspect the Lamu-Garissa-Isiolo-Moyale and Moyale-Hawassa-Addis Ababa road networks. Both sides agreed to finalize the Ethiopia-Kenya interconnection transmission line,

as well as identify other potential areas for engagement pledging to continue improving the business environment and maximizing incentives. These were mentioned as essential elements for successful commerce between the two countries. They also agreed to strongly encourage members of their respective private sectors to identify potential areas for engagement and pledged to continue improving the business environment and create maximum incentives for successful commerce.

Ease of movement of goods on the continent is a major issue and intra-African trade remains often more difficult than the movement of people and goods to Europe or Asia. The announcement in March of a continent-wide free trade zone, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), is a major step in the right direction. Bilateral and regional trade agreements are also discussed and both leaders said they would confirm the arrangements for a one-stop border between them in the next quarter. With improving trade also on the agenda, both countries have backed the Moyale Joint City and Economic Zone project in the border town of Moyale, which straddles the border between Kenya and Ethiopia. They agreed to develop and invest in this project and to seek additional investment.

President Kenyatta and prime Minister Abiy identified cross-border security challenges, exacerbated by vulnerable communities, as obstacles to sustainable peace. They agreed to focus on promoting inclusive economic growth of the border regions. They reiterated the need for strengthened cooperation in shared trans-boundary resources use, based on the principle of equitable and reasonable utilization. They agreed on an exchange of prisoners and directed the urgent formulation of modalities to ensure implementation within the next seven days.

Among other topics, including greater agricultural cooperation, an agreement was also made for greater cooperation between the two countries' national airlines, Kenya Airways and Ethiopian Airlines, to increase frequency of flights between the two countries and allow greater freedom for both airlines.

The two leaders noted that the various agreements and memoranda of understanding signed between the two countries provided a critical foundation for enhanced Kenya-Ethiopia bilateral ties. They agreed on the need to work on the implementation of the Special Status Agreement. The leaders further agreed that the implementation of some of the instruments required better coordination. The leaders therefore introduced an implementation framework and a Mid Term Review Mechanism of the Joint Commission to facilitate robust monitoring and evaluation of the agreed areas.

On the wider regional level, Prime Minister Abiy and President Kenyatta emphasized the important role Ethiopia and Kenya play in regional peace and security. They agreed to intensify their joint efforts to bring greater peace and security to the region, in particular to South Sudan and Somalia. On South Sudan, the communique read: "The two leaders expressed their deep disappointment at the slow pace of progress in ongoing efforts to restore peace in South Sudan. In pledging their full commitment to the IGAD's mediation efforts they urged the leaders of South Sudan to place the interests of their people above their own in order to give peace a chance." On Somalia Dr. Abiy and President Kenyatta noted the continued potency of Al-Shabaab and the lack of support for the African Union Mission (AMISOM). They said Al-Shabaab continued to pose significant threat to Somalia and the region and expressed at the continued lukewarm international support for Somalia, in particular the inadequate and unpredictable funding for AMISOM, which posed a threat to

gains made thus far. The communique said: “In this regard, the two leaders committed to continue lobbying for adequate and sustainable support to AMISOM, including provision of force multipliers for the mission in Somalia, as well as training for the Somalia security forces.

They reiterated their firm commitment to a rules-based international system with balanced multilateralism and urgent reform of the United Nations System at its core. They pledged to champion common African Union positions especially within the Security Council. In this regard, Ethiopia promised to support Kenya’s bid for a non-Permanent Seat in the United Nations Security Council for the years 2021-2022.

During his visit, Dr Abiy Ahmed met with members of President Kenyatta's student mentorship program, beneficiaries of the Pupils Reward Scheme (PURES). He described the mentorship programme as a noble idea that deserved to be emulated by other African leaders. He said it would go a long way to develop leaders who would mature and continue with the good work of building a strong nation. Prime Minister Abiy said, "If existing leaders are giving help to the next generation, an emerging Africa will continue. The problem we have in Africa is all existing leaders do not appreciate those who are exiting, that means history, and they also don't want to invest on emerging generation like you." He said current leaders need to invest in mentorship programmes which would be used to raise competent leaders to carry on with the vision of integrating Africa.

Concluding his visit, Dr. Abiy Ahmed expressed gratitude to President Uhuru Kenyatta, and to the people of Kenya, for the successes achieved during the visit, as well as the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to him and his delegation during their stay. He invited President Kenyatta to make a State Visit to Ethiopia. President Kenyatta accepted, and the timing of the visit will be managed through diplomatic channels.

Chairman of China’s National People’s Congress Standing Committee visits Ethiopia

Ethiopia and China enjoy longstanding and historic relations and their ties have significantly expanded during the past two decades, and as part of further elevating the strategic ties with the Ethiopia, Mr. Li Zhanhu, Chairman of the National People’s Congress Standing Committee of the People’s Republic of China made his first official overseas visit to Ethiopia on Thursday this week (May 10).

The Chairman and his delegation were welcomed at the Presidential Palace by President Mulatu Teshome who noted the relationship and partnership between the two countries was taking on new dimensions, exemplified by frequent high-level visits. During the last year alone, former Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn participated in the Belt and Road Forum held in May 2017 in Beijing; Mr. Yang Jeichi, State Councillor and Mr. Wang Yi, State Councillor and Foreign Minister made official visits to Ethiopia.

The ties are not limited to infrastructure, industrialization and connectivity, according to the President. They encompass party-to-party, parliament-to-parliament, people-to-people relations and other areas of cooperation. Close to 60 bilateral agreements and MoUs have been signed between the two countries , including Agreements on Mutual Visa Exemptions

for Holders of Diplomatic and Service Passports, Avoidance of Double Taxation, and Agreements on Trade, Economic and Technical Cooperation.

Dr. Mulatu said the ever-growing cooperation between the two countries also covered multilateral venues including both the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) as well as One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative. OBOR is a massive strategic infrastructure project, proposed and to be financed mainly by the Government of China. It focuses on connectivity and cooperation with the rest of the world through a land-based Silk Road Economic Belt and an Ocean based Maritime Silk Road. As a flagship project of the One Belt One Road Initiative, Ethiopia has already begun benefiting from the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway Construction. The President also referred to the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) which has enabled Africa in general and Ethiopia in particular to boost industrialization, infrastructure and agricultural development and poverty alleviation as well as other areas.

Chairman of the National People’s Congress (NPC) Standing Committee of the People’s Republic of China, Mr. Li Zhanhu, noting that his first ever official stop-over to Africa in Ethiopia underlined the highest importance the Chinese Government attached to the political capital of the continent. The Chairman, extending President Xi Jinping’s greeting to President Mulatu, said his Government saw the way the ruling party had ensured a peaceful transition of power as demonstrating a high degree of political wisdom. Chairman Zhanhu expressed a renewed commitment from his Government to further expand the strong China-Ethiopian relations to a new level.

Later the same day, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed met Mr. Li Zhanhu for talks. The Premier and the Chinese top legislator held discussions on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual concerns focusing on elevating the existing comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries. Mr. Zhanhu handed over a letter from Chinese President Xi Jinping to Prime Minister Dr Abiy, inviting him to visit China.

President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti in Kenya

President Ismail Omar Guelleh made a state visit to Kenya on Wednesday and Thursday this week (May 9 and 10). He held bilateral talks focusing on trade and security with President Kenyatta. Kenya’s Deputy President William Ruto and Cabinet Secretaries attended the bilateral meeting with President Guelleh and his delegation. A State House spokesman said the focus areas of discussion between the two Presidents covered cooperation in trade, livestock management, vocational training, promotion and protection of investment and exemption of visa for holders of diplomatic and service passports, and additional areas of discussion on partnership in the tourism sector, geothermal energy and expansion of bilateral trade and investment. Collaboration in the Air Transport sector by increasing Kenya Airways passenger flights to Djibouti and the introduction of cargo flights to increase the volume of trade in Kenya’s assorted agricultural products, including coffee and tea, were also featured.

President Kenyatta described the partnership that existed between Kenya and Djibouti as strong and said efforts were being made to make the cooperation more fruitful. Speaking after a one-to-one private meeting with president Guelleh, President Kenyatta said the two nations face the same kind of challenges since they were in a region that had been ravaged by

conflicts and modern forms of organised crime like terrorism for decades. He said: “We talked about how to strengthen our cooperation and to secure our nations. Both our nations are in a very troubled region and we talked on how to secure the safety and prosperity of our people.”

President Guelleh said Djibouti desired to strengthen its partnership with Kenya in developing the region and making it peaceful. He said Djibouti and Kenya were working together to make Somalia peaceful to ensure that the security risk that its continued instability posed to the region would be eliminated. He agreed they were in “a troubled region where we are confronted by extremism and violence. That is why our militaries are in Somalia to help it regain stability because what happens in Somalia has an immediate impact on all of us.” President Guelleh said Djibouti, like Kenya, was sincere in its desire to make Somalia peaceful.

After the talks, President Kenyatta and President Guelleh witnessed the signing of four agreements aimed at boosting trade and deepening bilateral links. These covered a Trade Agreement, an MoU on Bilateral Cooperation in the Livestock Sector, an Agreement on Reciprocal Promotion and Protection of Investments and an Agreement on Visa Exemption for holders of diplomatic passports. In their desire to promote greater economic cooperation, the two leaders also oversaw the signing of an agreement which binds both nations to protect private or public investment in each country originating from the other.

The trade agreement will open the door for more business between Kenya and Djibouti as it will act as a facilitation mechanism. Part of the agreement reads: “The Parties, for enhancing and facilitating trade between the two countries, shall grant each other the Most Favored Nation Treatment in all matters relating to trade.” The MoU on bilateral cooperation in the livestock sector, allows for Kenya to work together with Djibouti in expanding the livestock business sector. Kenya will tap the experience of Djibouti in unlocking the potential in business in the livestock sector especially in exports to the Middle East. The two nations will increase trade in livestock and livestock products.

UN says peace process in South Sudan at a critical point...

Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, told the United Nations Security Council, on Tuesday this week (May 8) that the peace process in South Sudan was at a critical juncture. “Opposing sides were allowing themselves to get bogged down in arguments over ministerial quotas, and while preparations continued for the third round of the IGAD High-Level Revitalization Forum, due to start later this month, the parties remained far apart on the issues of governance and security.” Agreement on permanent ceasefire terms and transitional security arrangements, remained “elusive, he added. While IGAD has worked to narrow the gap ahead of the talks, divergence in the parties’ positions was reinforced by both Government and Opposition officials, he said.

Briefing the Security Council, Mr. Lacroix said the conflict shows no signs of abating and there has been a recent surge in violence across large parts of the country. Of particular concern was the scale of sexual violence perpetrated, he said, underscoring that reports of rape and gang rape were compounding what is already a “desperate situation” for women and girls. Humanitarian agencies are also facing increasing challenges responding to those in

need. In April, two relief workers were killed, bringing to 100 the total number of aid workers killed since December 2013. He said: “We must respond and respond quickly to ensure accountability for these violations and abuses and bring an end to these heinous acts once and for all.” Mr. Lacroix said nearly 4.3 million people had been displaced to date, including 1.7 million internally and nearly 2.5 million across borders.

The Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations said both the Government and opposition remained bent on armed confrontation and he called on the UN Security Council to use its influence. He said: “It is in this context that I reiterate that there must be a tangible cost for the continuation of violence in South Sudan; there must be consequences for blatant violations of the Cessation of Hostilities agreement and broken promises to protect civilians.” He said, “Without consequences, we have no one to blame but ourselves for allowing the crisis to escalate unchecked and perpetuating a lack of confidence in a political solution to the crisis.” Mr. Lacroix said holding elections in the current political, security and humanitarian environment was unrealistic and would be counter-productive. He said: “The cessation of hostilities shows no sign of meaningful implementation and a ceasefire remains a distant prospect.”

Ambassador Ismail Wais, IGAD Special Envoy for South Sudan, spoke via videoconference from Addis Ababa. Noting that revitalization was being carried out in phases, he said there remained outstanding governance and security issues between the parties. Since April, IGAD had been engaging with stakeholders, and a fruitful discussion with the President of South Sudan had also taken place. He said the Council of Ministers of IGAD would step up its engagement to bridge outstanding gaps and invite the parties to further discussions in order to identify areas of compromise. Ambassador Wais said persistent violation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement could undermine the credibility of the peace process, violators and spoilers must be held to account in order to deter impunity, he said, adding that it would be difficult to create trust so long as violations continued. He commended the Security Council’s support for IGAD and the region, and said it was critical that the Security Council continued to support IGAD and the African Union whenever measures were taken against violators of the peace process.

Ambassador Joanna Wronecka of Poland, Council President for May, spoke in her capacity as Chair of the South Sudan Sanctions Committee. The Sanctions Committee met last month with the Panel of Experts to discuss their final report and the Panel’s findings. The Panel renewed its recommendation that the Committee consider designating additional individuals and entities for sanctions and reiterated its 2015 recommendation that the Security Council impose an arms embargo on South Sudan.

Ambassador Wronecka said she would visit South Sudan as well as Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, to gain a first-hand account of the implementation of sanctions. On 31 May, the Committee would hold its first open briefing with regional States and all interested States to hear views concerning the Panel’s final report and the implementation of sanctions concerning South Sudan.

Ambassador Akuei Bona Malwal of South Sudan said the report by the Panel of Experts was biased against his country’s Government, saying it relied on interviews with Opposition members in Nairobi and Kampala. While South Sudan was committed to cooperation with the Panel of Experts, its report was one-sided, he said, calling for a Panel constituted to report credible and balanced findings. The Ambassador added, the Council should focus on other means to end the war and bring about lasting peace in South Sudan.

Jackline Nasiwa, of the Centre for Inclusive Governance, Peace and Justice, urged the Government and all parties to commit to the Revitalization Forum process for a peaceful transition as well as fair, free elections, she applauded efforts by IGAD, the Security Council, UNMISS and faith-based leaders to secure peace. The Revitalization Forum, which must be inclusive, she said, was an opportunity for parties and other estranged groups to make compromises. She recommended the creation of an enforcement mechanism to monitor and verify declared ceasefires, emphasizing that IGAD, the African Union and the Security Council must speed transitional justice institutions. She also underlined the need for a gender-sensitive approach to the monitoring of ceasefire violations. This was also necessary to reform security and justice institutions.

Conference on the illegal Charcoal Trade in Mogadishu

An international conference seeking to build partnerships to curb the unsustainable charcoal trade as well as its production and use in Somalia took place in Mogadishu this week. Supported by the UN Development Program, the UN Environment Agency and the UN Food and Agricultural Organization, the conference was held on Monday and Tuesday (May 7-8), with funding from Sweden, the European Union, and Italy. The conference brought together environmentalists, Federal Government of Somalia officials, diplomats, United Nations officials, and academicians, to discuss ways of stopping the illegal trade, unsustainable production and use of charcoal in the country, and the destruction it inflicts on Somalia's fragile environment. The UN Mission in Somalia said that this Somali government-led event aimed to urgently build alliances amongst consumer countries and international and local experts and donors. It discussed a roadmap for action, including enforceable regional policies, to halt charcoal trade, as well as stop its unsustainable production and use within Somalia. It also rallied support for concrete action, including partnerships with investors, to stop the trade and to strengthen work in developing alternative livelihoods and alternative energy sources.

Export of charcoal from Somalia has been banned under a 2012 United Nations Security Council resolution and by the Somali government due to its destructive effects on the environment and its impact on the country's conflicts and humanitarian crises. According to the UN, 8.2 million trees were cut down for charcoal in Somalia between 2011 and 2017, increasing land degradation and food insecurity. The illegal trade in charcoal also provides a major source of funding for militias and terrorist groups such as Al-Shabaab.

The latest Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, released last year, said the charcoal smuggled to the Middle East through Somali ports enabled Al-Shabaab to finance its operations and undermined counter-terrorism operations carried out by AMISOM forces and by the Somali National Armed Forces. It has emphasized that implementation of the 2012 ban has been poor and ineffective.

In his remarks, the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Resident Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Peter de Clercq, said the production and use of charcoal has a very significant and negative impact on the country's environment, security and economy and aggravated an already delicate humanitarian situation. "Between 2011 and 2017, 8.2 million trees were cut down to make charcoal," said Mr. De Clercq, adding that this

meant, “Every 30 seconds a tree is cut down to make charcoal.” He said: “The illegal charcoal trade continues to fund insecurity and conflict. It exacerbates inter-clan tensions over control of land and trade and acts as a major source of funding for militias and terrorist groups such as Al-Shabaab, who illegally tax exports of charcoal.” Mr. De Clercq estimated that Al-Shabaab obtained \$10 million every year through the levies it imposes on the charcoal trade in areas of the country under its control. He also noted that the illegal trade contributed to frequent drought cycles, flooding, the loss of livelihoods and an increase in food insecurity. Mr. de Clercq told journalists that he frequently saw large piles of charcoal ready for export during his travels through Somalia. This raised concerns that the plunder of natural resources was actually worsening. He underlined that “due to high levels of poverty in Somalia and lack of opportunities, many are forced to turn to unsustainable and illegal livelihoods, such as charcoal production. The people of this country deserve better”.

In his opening remarks, Somalia’s Deputy Prime Minister, Mahdi Mohamed Guled, urged the international community to help the country reduce the illegal charcoal trade. He reaffirmed the Somali government’s commitment to halting completely the illegal trade of charcoal and providing alternative livelihood and energy options. He called for urgent action, urging the international community to help the country reduce the illegal charcoal trade. He said: “We need a holistic response to address the issues of charcoal in Somalia. Both the demand and supply side have to be tackled – to do this we need cooperation to implement the UN Security Council Resolution and ensure the environmental, economic and human losses that happen because of illegal charcoal trade are curbed.” Mr. Guled noted that the Somali government had lobbied the United Nations to impose a ban on the charcoal trade in 2012 to preserve the environment and also to eliminate a vital source of funding for armed groups. He said, “The Federal Government of Somalia is committed to reducing the charcoal consumption by identifying sustainable sources of energy to reverse the impending threat against Somalia’s fragile eco-systems.”

The Deputy Prime Minister also told journalists that there was a need to develop alternative energy systems to strengthen the ban on the charcoal trade in Somalia. “We have natural, God-given solar energy, we also have lots of wind which can generate energy for cooking and other uses, and also gas which is cheaper to utilize,” Mr. Guled added.

The Africa Office Director of the UN Environment agency, Juliette Biao Koudenoukpo, said the charcoal trade dated back to pre-colonial days and traditionally provided livelihoods to many families. She suggested that the continued armed conflict in Somalia had fuelled the illegal and said: “This conference will also help us to come up with a solution to see how curbing the unsustainable production of charcoal can also help to strengthen the nexus (between) health and environment.” She said that regional partnership was key to stopping the use and export of charcoal in Somalia and stressed that, “UN Environment and its partners are supporting the Government of Somalia to develop sound policy frameworks to support the ban and find alternatives to charcoal.”

Saidou Hamani, Coordinator of UN Environment’s work on resilience to disasters and conflicts in Africa says, “Overcoming the challenges charcoal poses to the environment requires strengthening of institutions and the provision of alternative and sustainable livelihood opportunities. Natural resource-sharing and management mechanisms should be implemented in partnership with the Government of Somalia.” He points out that “Somalia has a huge opportunity to diversify its energy sources through reduction of reliance on

charcoal and firewood in favour of alternatives like wind, solar, liquefied petroleum gas, biogas, hydro and high-efficiency thermal generation and distribution systems.”

Michael Keating, the Special Envoy of the U.N. Secretary-General for Somalia, made the same point on the side-lines of a conference on energy access in Lisbon this week. He said, "The issue is: How can energy contribute to moving the country forward?" He pointed out that as the population grows, climate change and environmental degradation were contributing to the "many problems" faced by Somalis, who are competing for natural resources such as land, wood and water. This in turn, was fuelling tensions. Mr. Keating, however, emphasized that despite persistent violence, Somalia was "slowly sorting its problems out", with efforts underway to rebuild the state, raise more tax revenue and improve security. He said: "The image of Somalia dominated by bombs and hunger is really out of date."

In this context, last week’s Brussels High-Level Security Meeting on Somalia welcomed the government’s decision to take the lead in providing security for its people and implement reforms in line with the National Security Architecture agreed in April 2017. The High Representative and Vice President of the EU, Ms. Federica Mogherini, expressed the EU’s full support and commitment to security reform in Somalia. Ms. Mogherini highlighted the link between the implementation of Somalia’s transition plan for security, the implementation of economic reforms and the political roadmap towards elections in 2020.

...and numbers affected by flooding in Somalia continue to rise

A Geneva-based NGO, ACAPS, with assistance from UNOCHA and UNDAC, issued an update on the flooding in Somalia at the beginning of the week. This noted that significant rainfall continued in southern and central Somalia over the last week. The Juba and Shabelle rivers have burst their banks in several locations, leading to rising flood waters in riverine areas. It also noted that new incidents of flash flooding had been reported, notably in Mudug. In total over 700,000 people have been affected by flooding, including over 228,000 people displaced since mid-April.

In a briefing note at the beginning of the week, ACAPS said the number of additional people affected since 3 May was unclear but new figures had been reported in some areas. Beled Weyne district continues to be particularly affected, with the number of people rising from 180,000 on 3 May, to 269,000 on 8 May. ACAPS said; ‘In the coming days heavy rainfall is expected to continue across central and southern Somalia and in the neighbouring Ethiopian highlands. The Juba and Shabelle rivers will rise and trigger further flooding. This will result in additional humanitarian needs.’ It also noted that humanitarian access was likely to remain limited due to extensive road damage. Roads have been inundated with flood water, particularly in and around Beled Weyne. In addition, many areas in Middle Juba areas remained under control of nonstate armed actors further limiting humanitarian access.

Moderate to heavy rainfall is also expected to continue, with the Juba and Shabelle rivers continuing to rise. This could lead to a rise in the current flood waters as well as trigger incidents of riverine flooding and flash flooding in new areas. Low lying areas and built up areas of Bay and Bakool, it said, were particularly likely to experience flash flooding as heavy rainfall and overflowing rivers in the Ethiopian highlands could spill-over into

Somalia's rivers and further exacerbate the situation. Floods, it said, were expected to take several weeks to recede.

The lack of WASH facilities is of particular concern in Jowhar, Mahaday and Balcad districts as well as in parts of Lower Juba region as these are some of the worst affected areas. Mosquito nets, latrines and hygiene facilities are urgently needed. Standing water is likely to quickly have become stagnant in IDP settlements. Uncollected garbage is also of concern. These factors, compounded by a lack of access to hygiene facilities, exacerbate the risk of waterborne diseases. Given the numbers of people displaced, shelter needs are likely to be high. The majority of shelters in IDPs settlements cannot withstand heavy rains. In addition, loss of food and livestock exacerbates food insecurity. With over 90,000 hectares of land inundated with flood water in the Middle and Lower Juba regions, significant crop damage can be expected. In Baidoa, the price of camel milk has reportedly almost doubled since the end of April, due to increased levies imposed by armed groups since the beginning of the flooding.

This report follows its briefing note of May 3 when ACAPS noted that increased rainfall since the beginning of April had resulted in a sharp rise in the Shabelle and Juba rivers, leading to severe flooding in southern and central Somalia. Over 214,200 people had been displaced with Beled Weyne district being particularly affected, with 150,000 people displaced in Beled Weyne town. Parts of Middle and Lower Shabelle, Bay, Jubaland, Galgaduud, and Banaadir have also been affected. In Bay, Benadir, and Galgaduud flash flooding affected IDP settlements, worsening the already vulnerable conditions of IDPs. Urgent needs included WASH, health, shelter, and food and there were concerns that the severe flooding might trigger a cholera outbreak.

Ethiopia's Role in UN Peacekeeping Operations

Since the creation of the UN in 1945, Ethiopia has adhered to the principle and policy of maintaining peace and collective security, and in line with this principle, it has a long history of participation in United Nations peace operations dating back to the 1950s. It has participated in peacekeeping missions in Korea, Congo, Ivory Coast, Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia.

Indeed, Ethiopia has effectively and repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to participate in peacekeeping operations since it first contributed 6000 soldiers of the Imperial Guard to the UN peacekeeping forces in Korea (1951-1954). Ethiopia was one of sixteen nations to participate in Korea and was one of the few non-NATO states to supply a contingent of UN forces in South Korea and the only independent African state to participate. A few years later it sent three brigades, consisting of 10,000 personnel to the Congo in the 1960s, following the official request from the UN to intervene in the crisis to stabilize the country. Ethiopia has also sent its forces to the UN peacekeeping mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) with the troops arriving in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide of 1994. More recently it has provided forces to Darfur and also to Abyei where it has supplied almost the entire military personnel of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei, over 4,400 personnel, as well as the Force Commander and many of the mission's senior leadership. Ethiopia also contributes

significantly to the AU peacekeeping force in Somalia (AMISOM), providing 4395 uniformed personnel to that operation.

With over 8,000 uniformed personnel currently serving in UN missions, Ethiopia is currently the top contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, supplying 8,420 personnel to various missions, 8% of the UN's total peacekeeping force. Of these 624 are women and Ethiopia is also the leading contributor of female peacekeepers to UN missions. Women have always had a role in peacekeeping, but the Secretary-General is now committed to ensuring that women play a far more active role in peace operations. In all fields of peacekeeping, women peacekeepers have proven that they can perform the same roles, to the same standards and under the same difficult conditions, as their male counterparts. Having women involved in peacekeeping missions makes the force more approachable to women in the community, and UN Resolution No. 1325 called for women's involvement in peacekeeping missions to reach 20% percent by 2020. Ethiopia has already reached 16% percent.

Ethiopia's involvement in international peacekeeping has been welcomed. The Defense Attaché of the US Embassy in Addis Ababa, Colonel Michael McCullough, recently told the Ethiopian News Agency that Ethiopian peacekeeping forces were the perfect example of global cooperation. He said: "I know the US is thankful for the role that the Ethiopian national defense force plays in regional stability and that is why we particularly work closely with them on peace keeping missions." Others concurred. The Defense Attaché, Colonel Claudio Pellegrini said, "Ethiopia is among the first in contributing peacekeeping troops around the world." Pointing out that having so many people abroad with the proper support, equipment and logistics, was not easy, Colonel Pellegrini said others needed to learn from this, adding, "It is very important to bring this experience to our country." Austria's Defense Attaché, Joseph Holzi said Ethiopia was number one in peacekeeping activity this year, "Ethiopia plays a major role in peacekeeping. The prime minister mentioned in his first speech that it would be very important to have a regional approach. Of course, Ethiopia is playing in IGAD the leading role and you can put it together and have a very strong regional approach within Africa."

Later this month, on May 29, the UN and contributors to UN peacekeeping will celebrate the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers. The day was established to honor the memory of the UN peacekeepers who have lost their lives in the cause of peace; and to pay tribute to all the men and women who have served and continue to serve in UN peacekeeping operations for their high level of professionalism, dedication and courage. The UN General Assembly designated Peacekeepers Day in 2002 and it is celebrated under a common theme. This year it is "UN Peacekeepers: 70 Years of Service and Sacrifice", following on from "Investing in Peace" last year and "Honoring our Heroes" in 2016. Tragically, over 3,500 peacekeepers have lost their lives in the cause of peace in these 70 years. In 2016 alone 117 peacekeepers died in the course of peacekeeping, including military, police, international civil servants, UN Volunteers and national staff from 43 countries. Their sacrifice on behalf of the international community is one of the most concrete expressions of the UN Charter's determination "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war."

Over the past 70 years, more than 1 million men and women have served under the UN flag in more than 70 UN peacekeeping operations. More than 110,000 military, police and civilian personnel from 125 countries serve in 14 peacekeeping operations today. In the early years, UN Peacekeeping's goals were primarily limited to maintaining ceasefires and stabilizing situations on the ground so that efforts could be made at the political level to resolve the

conflict by peaceful means. Those missions consisted of military observers and lightly armed troops with monitoring, reporting and confidence-building roles in support of ceasefires and limited peace agreements. Troops and police came from a relatively small number of countries.

UN Peacekeeping has adapted to meet the demands of different conflicts and a changing world political landscape. Today's multidimensional peacekeeping operations are called upon not only to maintain peace and security but also to facilitate the political processes, protect civilians, disarm combatants, support elections, protect and promote human rights and restore the rule of law. In fact, the activities of UN Peacekeeping are far from static. The UN is currently carrying out a reform of its peace and security architecture, initiated by the Secretary-General, to ensure that the UN will end up stronger in prevention, more effective in mediation, and more cost-effective in operation. Reviews of specific peacekeeping operations have been initiated to help chart their future. These reforms are part of a broader, holistic UN reform examining management and the developmental pillars of the organization.

In January this year, the UN. Secretary-General said: "I thank our troop- and police-contributing countries for their generosity and pay tribute to all personnel who have given their lives in the line of duty. He said: "We ask peacekeepers and their families to make great sacrifices. They serve at great personal risk and in harsh conditions. Tragically some make the ultimate sacrifice - over 3,500 peacekeepers have lost their lives in the cause of peace. Peacekeeping is a unique force for good, he stressed, with military and police personnel from over 120 countries serving together, alongside civilian colleagues." He added, "Our peacekeepers come from diverse cultures and speak different languages but share a common purpose: the protection of vulnerable communities and the provision of support to countries struggling to move from conflict to peace."