

News in Brief***A High-level Eritrean Delegation visits Ethiopia******Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed addresses the Rally for Forgiveness and Togetherness******South Sudan parties sign Khartoum Declaration of Agreement******The Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Team visits Djibouti this week******Somalia celebrates Independence Day******The 31st African Union Summit opens in Mauritania******A US commercial delegation in Ethiopia*****Africa and the African Union**

The African Union's 31st Assembly of the Heads of State and Government began on June 25 with the opening of the Permanent Representatives' Committee in Nouakchott, Mauritania. The Permanent Representatives' Committee met for two days (June 25 and 26) followed by the AU Executive Council of Foreign Ministers of Member States. The Executive Council met on Thursday and Friday this week (June 28-29). The Summit of the Heads of State and Government will be held on Sunday and Monday (July 1-2), under the theme of the year "Winning the Fight Against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa's Transformation".
(See article)

UN Secretary General António Guterres has appointed Ambassador Sahle-Work Zewde from Ethiopia as his new Special Representative (SRSG) and Head of UN Office to the AU (UNOAU) in Addis Ababa. Under-Secretary-General Ambassador Sahle-Work had been previously serving as Director-General of the United Nations Office in Nairobi since March 2011.

IGAD's Executive Secretary Ambassador Mahboub Maalim in a statement on Wednesday (June 27) welcomed the visit of a high-level delegation from the Eritrean government to Addis Ababa for talks. Ambassador Maalim hailed the bold initiative of the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Dr. Abiy Ahmed, in taking the first step of proposing that the two neighboring countries that have so much in common, should solve their differences peacefully. The IGAD Executive Secretary also commended the President of the State of Eritrea, Isaias Afewerki, for his positive response to the initiative. Ambassador Maalim said he was confident that the talks would bear fruit that would be appreciated by both the Eritrean and Ethiopian peoples and the region as a whole. IGAD, he said, was committed to do its level best to support the success of the talks. It congratulated the peoples of the countries who would be greatest beneficiaries of the new developments.

IGAD's Director of Peace and Security Division, Ambassador Tewolde Gebremeskel inaugurated a consultative workshop aimed at establishing an IGAD Governance Forum on Friday (June 22). The two-day workshop in Addis Ababa brought together Senior Officials and Experts from Member States, institutions that are mandated to promote good governance; they are National Human Rights Commissions, National Anticorruption Offices, National Offices of the Ombudsman, National Election Management Bodies, the Judiciary, National Parliaments, and IGAD Focal Persons from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs.

Ethiopia

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed warmly welcomed a high-level Eritrean delegation headed by Eritrean Foreign Minister Osman Saleh and Presidential Adviser Yemane Gebreab, to Addis Ababa on Tuesday this week (June 26). It was the first such visit for over twenty years, and it followed the Prime Minister determination to put an end to the stalemate between the two countries. **(See article)**

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy addressed hundreds of thousands of people in Meskel Square in Addis Ababa on Saturday last week (June 23) who came to show their support for the rapid changes he had brought to the nation in recent weeks. At the “Rally for Forgiveness and Togetherness”, the Prime Minister praised people for their determination and commitment to be part of the changes sweeping the nation and encouraged them to believe in a bright future for the country. **(See article)**

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy on Wednesday (June 28) announced that Ethiopia officially started crude oil production test in Ogaden region, Ethiopian Somali regional state. He added the production test took into account the current capacity of the country. Similarly, the Prime Minister also said Ethiopia would begin extracting natural gas this week.

Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu met the US trade delegation led by Gilbert B. Kaplan, Under-Secretary of Commerce for International Trade at the US Department of Commerce on Monday (June 25). He underlined Ethiopia’s keen interest in seeking US assistance in the education and training of a skilled labour force geared towards the realization of Ethiopia’s developmental aspirations. Under-Secretary Kaplan expressed the interest and readiness of many US companies to expedite the untapped trade and investment opportunities in Ethiopia. He commended Ethiopia’s incessant efforts to modernize and transform its political-economy. **(See article)**

The Ethiopian delegation led by State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene, attended the 33rd ordinary session of the African Union Executive council which opened in Nouakchott, on Thursday (June 28), under this year's theme, "Winning the fight against corruption: a sustainable path to Africa's transformation". The Executive Council session was held this week on Thursday and Friday, June 28-29. **(See article)**

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Aklilu Hailemichael held talks with a delegation from the Netherlands led by Ms. Maureen Achieng, Business and Diaspora Affairs and Chief of Mission of the IOM - International Organization for Migration SLO Ethiopia and Representative to the African Union, IGAD and UNECA on Wednesday (June 27). The delegation led by Ms. Maureen Achieng came to Ethiopia to monitor the reintegration process of Ethiopian returnees from the Netherlands. Dr Aklilu expressed his appreciation to the IOM for its close partnership with the Ethiopian government and briefed the delegation on current situation of returnees from the Netherlands. The two sides also exchanged views on the incentive package provided by the Netherlands government to reintegrate the Diaspora community.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Professor Afework Kassa met with Ambassador Cherrif Aidara, Special Envoy of the President of Burundi on Wednesday (June 27). The State Minister stressed Ethiopia was keen to strengthen the bilateral relationship. He noted the Joint Ministerial Commission mechanism had not been held for quite some time and called for re-activation of bilateral cooperation. Ambassador Aidara also underlined the need for the

two countries' bilateral relationship to enter a new stage of mutually beneficial cooperative partnerships.

State Minister Professor Afework received Mr. Jeff Langley, Deputy Secretary of Europe, Middle East and Africa at the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade on Wednesday (June 27). Recognizing the fact that Ethiopia and New Zealand have enjoyed longstanding relations both at the bilateral and multilateral level, Professor Afework expressed Ethiopia's keen interest in New Zealand's participation in the development of agro-processing industries in Ethiopia. The State Minister said more needed to be done in promoting Ethiopia's investment opportunities and tourist destinations to New Zealanders.

State Minister Professor Afework conferred with the UK Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ambassador Moorehead, on Thursday (June 28) to discuss ways to further strengthen the many aspects of cooperation between Ethiopia and Great Britain in development, trade and investment, peace and security and more. Professor Afework briefed Ambassador Moorehead on the various development projects Ethiopia is currently undertaking and praised the development assistance the UK offers to Ethiopia. He encouraged more investment from British investors to Ethiopia.

State Minister Professor Afework bade farewell to the outgoing Ambassador of Czech Republic, Karel Hejč on Thursday (June 28). He extended his gratitude to Ambassador Hejč for his significant contributions to enhancing bilateral relations between Ethiopia and the Czech Republic. Ambassador Hejč recalled the fact that Ethio-Czech relations go as far back the post-WWI years, when Czechoslovakia supported Ethiopia's struggle against the Fascist invasion in the 1930s.

State Minister Professor Afework discussed various issues of bilateral importance with Ambassador Elman Abdullayev, Azerbaijani Ambassador to Ethiopia on Wednesday (June 27). He noted that both countries have not exploited their potentials for bilateral cooperation up to the desired level. He invited Azerbaijan companies to exploit the investment opportunities in areas of agro-processing, pharmaceuticals, mining, real estate, oil and gas, railway construction, trade and tourism and other sectors.

Addressing a seminar on the theme "policy suggestions for African countries to participate in the Belt and Road initiative" on Thursday (June 28) State Minister Professor Afework strongly appreciated China's Belt and Road initiative for its conviction to bring about economic growth and regional integration in Africa. He, further, noted Ethiopia's keen involvement in this initiative bearing in mind that it creates conducive climate for investment by working on infrastructural development in Africa.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned in strongest terms the heinous grenade attack that occurred at the rally by residents of Addis Ababa on Saturday (June 23) in support of the ongoing reforms being carried out by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed. In a statement the Ministry noted that such irresponsible acts would not derail Ethiopians from the momentum for the current drive for peace, democracy and development. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly denounced the attack on innocent civilians and extended its deepest condolences to bereaved families.

Ambassador Shiferaw Jarso, Ethiopia's Ambassador to the Republic of Korea, attended the Memorial Service Dedicated to UN Veterans, held on Tuesday (June 26) at UN Memorial

Cemetery in Busan, Korea. The Memorial Service was attended by the Korean Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of National Defense as well as Ambassadors of Korean War Participant countries. Ms. Kang Kyung-hwa, Minister of Foreign Affairs, expressed her gratitude to the Ethiopian soldiers and their sacrifices during the Korean War. She also told Ambassador Shiferaw that she was much impressed by the remarkable political transformation Ethiopia was undergoing. Ambassador Shiferaw also discussed ways to further strengthen the relationship between Ethiopia and Korea.

Djibouti

President Ismail Omar Guelleh led the celebrations for the 41st anniversary of Djibouti's National Day on Wednesday (June 27), with the diplomatic community and high-level government officials at the military parade and marching band performances commemorating the occasion.

Mohammed Ali Houmed, Speaker of the National Assembly of Djibouti met the Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Team on arrival in Djibouti on Sunday (June 24) for a five-day visit. The Team, led by Tesfaye Daba, MP and Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, met President Ismail Omar Guelleh, members of the National Assembly of Djibouti, Ministers, community leaders and representatives of the people of Djibouti. **(See article)**

Kenya

President Kenyatta hosted the 14th Summit of the Northern Corridor Integration Projects (NCIP) in Nairobi on Tuesday this week (June 26). It was attended by the Presidents of Rwanda, and Uganda, and a Special Envoy of South Sudan, as well as representatives from Burundi, Ethiopia and Tanzania which have observer status. It reviewed progress in agreed projects, notably the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) to connect the port of Mombasa to Kigali via Uganda and agreed to develop a 'Lake Victoria intermodal transport system', to allocate more funding for the development of centers of excellence and directed on fast track development of interlined trading platforms and a commodities exchange. The summit also adopted the Accession Treaty to the Mutual Defense Pact and agreed to finalize an agreement on the establishment of a Centralized Aeronautical Database for the Northern Corridor Airspace bloc.

Somalia

Somalis are celebrating their 58th Anniversary of Somali Independence Day this week when the northern and southern regions merged to form the first government in 1960. The former British Somaliland attained its independence on July 26th and on July 1st 1960, it united with the former Trust Territory of Italian Somaliland which became independent on July 1st. 1960 **(See article)**

Prime Minister Hassan Ali Kheyre, on a two-day official visit to Rwanda, held talks with Rwanda's Prime Minister Edouard Ngirente in Kigali. They discussed a wide range of issues including bilateral relations and economy and security matters. During his visit, Prime Minister Kheyre also toured the Kigali Genocide Memorial on Tuesday (June 26).

The Somali Federal government, Member States and international community partners launched a Joint Police Program to strengthen professionalism and accountability for the

Somali Police Force at a ceremony held in Mogadishu on Tuesday (June 26). Acting UK Ambassador to Somalia Mary Shockledge announced a £14 million grant to the JPP and said, "We look forward to continue close working relations with all partners to ensure this program translates into tangible positive impact and change on the ground". The program is expected to expedite the transition of security responsibilities from AMISOM to Somalia's security forces. The Minister of Internal Security, Mohamed Abukar Islow said the JPP was a stride forward in building local ownership and long-lasting peace and development.,

South Sudan

President Salva Kiir, SPLM-IO leader, Dr. Riek Machar and representatives of the other South Sudan opposition political groups signed the Khartoum Declaration of Agreement on Wednesday (June 27). The Agreement committed the signatories to a permanent ceasefire within 72 hours and pledged them to finalize a deal on the still undecided issues of governance from the 2015 peace agreement. They parties agreed that within three days they would resolve the outstanding issues in the security arrangements. South Sudan also accepted joint collaboration over resumption of production from some South Sudan oil fields. **(See article)**

South Sudan's Minister of Petroleum Ezekiel Lol Gatkuoth began talks this week with Oil Minister Azhary Abdallah in Khartoum on the resumption of oil production in South Sudan and how to work together to repair damaged and closed oil fields. Mr. Abdallah said he expected the technical teams would travel to the different oil fields after the signing of the agreement and work out timetables. Minister Gatkuoth said the talks were in line with the directives of the South Sudanese and Sudanese leaders to resume oil production as soon as possible. He stressed the importance of cooperation to achieve increased production of oil from the South Sudan fields and export through Port Sudan. He said that security had been improved and government forces were in full control of the situation.

Sudan

President Omar al-Bashir hosted a second round of face-to-face talks between President Kiir and Dr. Machar on Sunday (June 25) after IGAD Summit mandated President al-Bashir and President Museveni to facilitate the discussions. President al-Bashir said on Monday, "I would like to assure everyone that Sudan will work hard and try all measures based on our experience during the war and peace times to ensure that this initiative is a success. We shall use our experience in the management of national and community dialogues to address all the issues." He presided over the signing of the Khartoum Declaration of Agreement on Wednesday (June 27). **(See article)**

A High-level Eritrean Delegation visits Ethiopia

A high-level Eritrean delegation to Ethiopia, headed by Eritrean Foreign Minister and Envoy to the African Union Osman Saleh, and Presidential Adviser Yemane Gebreab, arrived in Addis Ababa, on Tuesday this week (June 26) for a three-day visit. It was the first such visit for twenty years. It followed Prime Minister Dr. Abiy's "olive branch", extended to the Government of Eritrea with the view to ending the stalemate between the two countries that

sustained for over eighteen years, as well as President Isaias' positive response to Ethiopia's call for peace, reconciliation and dialogue.

It was just over two weeks ago, on June 5, that Ethiopia announced its commitment to implement the Algiers Agreement and the decisions of the Ethio-Eritrea Border Commission unconditionally in order to resolve problems with Eritrea in a peaceful manner. Prime Minister Abiy again underlined this resolve last week (June 18) when he stressed that it was time to put an end to the situation between the two countries and bring jobs and prosperity to the people living along the border. Eritrea's President Isaias, speaking last week on the occasion of the celebration of Martyrs Day in Asmara, and referring to the "positive signals issued in these past days", announced he would send a delegation to Addis Ababa. He said events and developments that had unfolded in the region in general and in Ethiopia in particular warranted appropriate attention. "For this reason, and outside any myopic considerations of public relations stunts and advantages," he said, "we will send a delegation to Addis Ababa to gauge current developments directly and in depth as well as to chart out a plan for continuous future action."

Expressing his gratitude for President Isaias' positive response to his olive branch, the Prime Minister reiterated the fact that Ethiopia and Eritrea shared lots of commonalities, from culture and languages to politics and economy. He also referred to the unwanted inter-generational repercussions of wars: "wars consume time, human lives and above all, minds", adding, "wars should not be the heirlooms we pass on to posterity."

The high-level Eritrean delegation that arrived at Bole International Airport on Tuesday (June 26) was, therefore, aiming to take part in a constructive engagement with Ethiopia in the bid to restore and normalize relations between the two countries. The delegation was warmly welcomed by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed and Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu. Several scholars, artists, religious leaders and cultural troupes were also present at the colorful welcoming ceremony in honor of the delegation whose members were garlanded with flowers. The flags of both countries fluttered from lampposts in Addis Ababa along with a banner reading "Welcome!" In his remarks, the Prime Minister suggested that flights to Asmara might soon start: "For Ethiopians who have longed for heading to Massawa for a stroll, I call on you to be ready as Ethiopian Airlines will start services there soon," adding, "Artists, prepare yourselves since we will celebrate the Ethiopian New Year in both Asmara and Addis Ababa." Eritrea's Foreign Minister, Osman Saleh said, "Today is a day of joy because two identical peoples and two generations have been separated throughout that period. But through struggles, we have opened the door of peace."

Following talks with the delegation, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy hosted a dinner in honor of the Eritrean delegation to Ethiopia at the National Palace in the evening. Religious leaders, athletes and invited guests attended the event. The Prime Minister called attention to the fact that the historic occasion marked a new dawn in Ethio-Eritrean relations, adding that the "black curtain" has now been torn, and this offered a new chapter of relations between the two sisterly countries. He said, "Today is a special day for both Eritreans and Ethiopians; we want to have and build peace with all our neighbors, especially with Eritrea." His message, he said, to the people of both countries was a message of solidarity and collaboration and he stressed the need to further expand "this hard earned and historic journey into a far broader peace." "Our desire is to love rather than hate. What we miss is to hug our brothers in Asmara. If we are in love, then the other things are minor. And if we do that, we might not need a border. Our neighborliness is sharing things and drinking coffee together."

The head of the delegation, Eritrea's Foreign Minister Osman Saleh, noted the warm welcome accorded to his delegation by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy and expressed his satisfaction at the historic event. He said: "This is now time for peace and the joy here in Addis at this historic event reflects the same in Asmara too," adding, "We are brothers and sisters; we are one and same people."

On Wednesday (June 27) Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu accompanied the Eritrean delegation to Hawassa, the seat of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State. The Eritrean Delegation was warmly welcomed by regional officials on arrival at Hawassa Airport. During their tour of the town, the delegation visited various development projects in Hawassa, and experts from the Ethiopian Investment Commission provided a tour of Hawassa Industrial Park, the epitome of the future of Ethiopia's industrial transformation. Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, said on Thursday (June 28) that the Eritrean delegation's visit to Addis Ababa provided a fertile basis to restore peace between the two countries. The Minister said that the two countries would soon hold a leaders-level meeting.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed addresses the Rally for Forgiveness and Togetherness

Hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians from all walks of life and all corners of the country flocked to Meskel Square in Addis Ababa on Saturday last week (June 23) to show their support for the popular reforms Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed had undertaken and for the positive and rapid changes he had brought to the nation since he took office. During this massive and historic rally, dubbed the "Rally for Forgiveness and Togetherness", the Prime Minister extolled the people of Ethiopia for their determination and commitment to be part of the wave of radical changes that are sweeping the nation and encouraged people to believe in the prospect of a bright future for the country.

Dr. Abiy expressed "the extraordinary optimism, honour and great pleasure" he felt for "seeing so many Ethiopians gathered on this special occasion to celebrate love, forgiveness, unity and harmony as defining values of the nation." He said: "We have not yet served six months since we assumed responsibility [as Prime Minister], we have not yet lifted the shadow of overwhelming challenges ahead of us; therefore, we have yet to earn your gratitude." However, he went on: "My fellow Ethiopians, filled with hope, you commenced today with a grand gesture of appreciation, believing that hatred has ruined us and reduced our standing, but love will offer dividend and create a bridge. There is no one who took the first step, armed with love and harmony, and who has failed to realize his aspirations. Today's extraordinary occasion lays the foundation stone for setting out on a journey to the greater heights to which we aspire to reach."

Honouring the sacrifices so many martyrs have paid to achieve the betterment of the nation, Dr. Abiy called attention to the fact that "it is imperative to express gratitude to those martyrs who did not live to witness this day, who died so that we could live, who were dishonoured so that we could walk in dignity, who were incarcerated so that we could walk free, who sacrificed their lives so that we could live ours. They could have lived without us; but we would not be here without them." Alluding to the rampant factionalism that has affected the nation for so many generations, leading people astray and forcing them to succumb to hatred, division and internecine conflicts, the Prime Minister repeated that "nothing shall stop us

from rising to the great heights we aspire to reach, if, with unconditional love, we unshackle ourselves from the hatred and resentment which previously impelled us to undervalue what we possess, in search for what we don't have.”

He went on: “On that day when we avowedly reject theft and corruption.... when we stop saying ‘this region is mine! This boundary is mine! Leave our lands!’...when we stand unified from the eastern tip to the western peripheries, from the northern tip to the southern borders, and when our Palace and Parliament is open to the public...when you teach your children patriotism and national pride as well as the indigenous alphabets and cover them with a sheath of Ethiopianism... when you treat mothers, sisters and all women equally and with respect ...then you can consider your gratitude received and the whole world would stand to witness it.” He reiterated the fact that the key pathway to prosperity and the restoration of the nation’s glory was to be found in embracing forgiveness, love and unity in place of utterly destructive ulterior motives.

Speaking of the need for wider popular support and massive public participation both in bringing about and sustaining transformative changes such as those the country has been experiencing for the last three months, the Prime Minister stressed that “change does not come through the involvement of a few active players with a majority being spectators. It is a process that entails the participation of all. It is not a spectacle where onlookers heap praises when points are scored and complain when losses are encountered. All-out popular participation being indispensable, the only difference among players should merely be one of degree resulting from the level of authority, responsibility, capacity, setting and “the role a player holds.” He emphasized the need to put in place a rich culture of professionalism to undertake tasks at all levels of governance and underlined the irreplaceable role intellectuals and properly cultivated experts could play in bringing fresh and ground-breaking ideas and finding new and innovative ways of doing things. In this spirit, the Prime Minister urged intellectuals to supply the nation with rich ideas generously.

By the same token, the Prime Minister encouraged religious leaders, the Ethiopian diaspora, competing political parties, teachers and the young, to work together, in collaboration towards eradication of perennial scourges such as prejudice and corruption that have left the nation in the shadows for so long. He called on them to gird themselves to stand in defense of the nation and of citizens suffering from mistreatment and march together in a noble quest for progress and prosperity through collective efforts. He said Ethiopia played a critical role on the African Continent, in general and the sub-region in particular, and underlined that if it was “to remain as Africa’s bastion of peace, its relations with neighbouring countries must be founded on love, shared concerns and benefits.”

Shortly after the Prime Minister concluded his inspiring address, a grenade attack occurred at the rally. The Prime Minister was unscathed and in a broadcast on Ethiopian Television shortly afterwards said the attack had been orchestrated by anti-peace forces who wanted to undermine the rally. The explosion claimed the lives of two individuals and left scores injured. A dozen suspects were arrested and are currently under police investigation. Experts from the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation are providing technical assistance in bringing the perpetrators to justice. A number of police officials, including the Deputy Police Commissioner of the Addis Ababa Police Commission have also been detained for security failings.

South Sudan parties sign Khartoum Declaration of Agreement

President Salva Kiir, SPLM-IO leader, Dr. Riek Machar and representatives of the other South Sudan opposition political groups signed the Khartoum Declaration of Agreement on Wednesday (June 27), in front of a large diplomatic presence at the Sudanese presidency in Khartoum. The Agreement commits the signatories yet again to a permanent ceasefire and pledges them to finalize a deal on the pending issues of governance from the 2015 peace agreement. The Agreement also paves the way for some economic integration between Sudan and South Sudan, with South Sudan accepting joint collaboration over resumption of production from some South Sudan oil fields.

On the basis of the Cessation of Hostilities they agreed last December, the signatories agreed definitively to silence their guns throughout the country within 72 hours. They also agreed that within three days they would resolve the outstanding issues in the security arrangements that they failed to settle during the last session of the High-Level Revitalization Forum in Addis Ababa. The Declaration says that by June 30: "the parties shall agree on all the ceasefire arrangements including disengagement, separation of forces in close proximity, withdrawal of allied troops, opening of humanitarian corridors, and release of prisoners of war and political detainees."

The Agreement calls on the African Union and IGAD to deploy protection forces and ceasefire monitors to observe the ceasefire implementation. The transitional government is invited to take the needed measures to form a national army and security forces avoiding tribalism and collect weapons from civilians. It agrees to have three capitals during the transitional period. The parties also commit themselves to finalize talks on the outstanding issues on the security arrangements within three days. Last week, the IGAD Special Envoy for South Sudan Ambassador Wais said there were four key areas of disagreement on the security arrangements where the parties failed to reach a compromise. These were: determination of demilitarized areas; modalities and exemption from cantonment; timeframe for unification of forces, and the number of parties' representatives in the Joint Transitional Security Committee.

Ambassador Wais also said they had further agreed "on unification of forces rather than integration"; to establish a Joint Integrated Police and Security Services; for the duration for activities in the cantonment sites to be 90 days; and agreed on the composition of the Joint Transitional Security Committee as well as the architecture of the transitional security arrangements. There were, however, still "four key areas of disagreement on the security arrangements" including determination of demilitarized areas; modalities and exemption from cantonment; timeframe for unification of forces, and the number of parties' representatives in the Joint Transitional Security Committee.

According to the Khartoum Declaration of Agreement, the parties should strike a deal on IGAD's "Revised Bridging Proposal" as soon as possible and before closing the current Khartoum Round of Talks at the end of next week. This negotiating round will now focus on resolving outstanding issues on issues of governance and security arrangements, and a number of particular outstanding issues including the percentage of each party in the composition of the cabinet; the ratios of every party in the National Legislative Assembly and the state governments.

Another element of the Agreement allows for the parties to start work immediately to resume oil production in identified sites. The “security of the oil fields is the responsibility of South Sudanese citizens” but they will work in coordination with the Sudanese government to begin oil production with Sudanese workers and under the protection of Sudanese troops. A parallel meeting of Sudan and South Sudan oil ministers this week signed an agreement to resume oil production in South Sudan. Under this Khartoum will provide the oil workers and machinery needed to repair and pump the oil from the fields. They agreed to operate all the oil fields in Block 5A in the central part of Unity region, and Khartoum will transfer to Juba all the information related to oil exploration in South Sudan.

Direct talks began with the second face-to-face meeting between President Kiir and Dr. Machar after the IGAD Summit mandated President al-Bashir and President Museveni to facilitate the discussions. President al-Bashir said on Monday, “I would like to assure everyone that Sudan will work hard and try all measures based on our experience during the war and peace times to ensure that this initiative is a success. We shall use our experience in the management of national and community dialogues to address all the issues.” President Museveni also reiterated his commitment to work with leaders in the region to stop the conflict. He said: “This war is meaningless, and it will not bring any benefit to anybody. Not the people of South Sudan, not the neighbours, not the whole world. South Sudan was coming up. Business was booming, until we had this fighting in 2013.”

President Salva Kiir promised to stop the suffering of the South Sudanese people. He said “I have mentioned many times before that I feel the suffering of our people directly because I stay with them. And I know the economy of our country. I know the market, and I see the pain in their faces. So, I have come to really bring this unnecessary war in our country to an immediate end.” He said he had come to Khartoum ready to compromise, adding “This is a very important commitment so that we get ourselves out of the shame this senseless internal conflict has put on us as the leaders of South Sudan and to allow our people to enjoy their hard-won independence in peace, unity and prosperity.” He expressed his hope that "my brother Dr Rick Machar" also came with an open heart to lead the country to safety and security away from internal differences and enable the people of South Sudan to enjoy peace, stability and prosperity.

The South Sudan parties will move to Nairobi for a third round of face-to-face discussions facilitated by President Uhuru Kenyatta to assist the revitalization process and report the outcome and way forward to a forthcoming Ordinary Session of the IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government. Meanwhile the IGAD Council of Ministers will give guidance to the Special Envoy for South Sudan on the remaining tasks to finalize the IGAD bridging proposal on the sidelines of the 33rd African Union Summit being held in Mauritania this week and ending on July 2.

UN Secretary-General has welcomed the Declaration of Agreement signed by the South Sudanese parties. His spokesperson, Stéphane Dujarric, said: “The Secretary-General notes that this Declaration of Agreement is signed at a time when the security situation in parts of South Sudan continues to deteriorate, marked by violations of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement of December 2017 (COHA) with killings of civilians and other atrocities.” He, therefore, welcomes the Parties renewed commitment to redouble their efforts in the interest of peace. The Secretary-General commended the pledges of parties to settle the remaining differences in the implementation of the governance chapter and urged “all parties to demonstrate the political leadership required at this critical juncture of the peace process and

engage to reach agreement on the outstanding issues of governance and security arrangements.” He renewed his readiness to support the implementation of the peace agreement in South Sudan.

The Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Team visits Djibouti this week

The Public Diplomacy Team, headed by Ato Tesfaye Daba, member of the Ethiopian Parliament and Chairman of the Standing Committee for Foreign Affairs, arrived in Djibouti on Sunday (June 24). It was received at Djibouti’s Ambouli International Airport by Mohammed Ali Houmed, Speaker of the National Assembly of Djibouti along with Ambassador Shamebo Fitimo, Ethiopian Ambassador of Ethiopia to Djibouti.

Ethiopia’s Public Diplomacy team was first formed in 2012 as part of a new approach to diplomacy focusing on the relationship of peoples through culture, trade and economy, education, sport, art and entertainment. The Team visiting Djibouti was composed of people drawn from different sections of society, and included religious leaders, members of the Ethiopian Writers Association, the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce, IGAD Women in Business, the Ethiopian Women Writers Association, and the art and entertainment sector as well as competing party members, representatives of Office of Public Participation for the Construction of GERD, the business and marketing community, the Ethiopian Olympic Committee and Pan African Parliament, veteran ambassadors, along with a cultural troupe from the Ethiopian National Theatre and members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Their first engagement was to meet members of the Ethiopian diaspora community in Djibouti who welcomed the visit and raised requests and concerns over various issues regarding residence and work permits, visas and passports, education and schooling as well as problems arising from a lack of legal residence permits and illegal migration through Djibouti. The discussions were chaired by Ato Tesfaye Dabba, Member of Parliament and Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Ambassador Shamebo, Ethiopian Ambassador to Djibouti, Ambassador Mohammed Drir, Director General of the Neighbouring Countries Directorate in the Foreign Ministry and Ambassador Nega Tsegaye, Director General of the Public Diplomacy Directorate at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The team pledged to raise relevant concerns and requests with President Ismail Omar Guelleh and relevant Djibouti authorities.

The following day, the Public Diplomacy Team met with President Guelleh. They emphasized that Ethiopia and Djibouti were not only neighbours, but also countries that shared long standing relations, based on brotherhood, blood and family ties as well as culture, language, and religious links. The Team expressed its deep gratitude for the Government of Djibouti and the President’s personal commitment, for the grant of land in the Arta area for the use of the Harar City Administration as part of city twinning, and for culture and tourism cooperation; for the four hectares of land to construct an Ethiopian Community School in Djibouti city; and a cemetery area exclusively designated for Ethiopian Christians. It thanked the President for the release of 45 Ethiopian prisoners during the recent visit of Prime Minister Abiy to Djibouti, and also expressed Ethiopia’s thanks for the Government of Djibouti’s solidarity buying a US\$500,000 bond for the GERD Project. It conveyed the Ethiopian Community’s appreciation to the President and raised concerns and requests brought to their attention earlier.

President Ismail Omar Guelleh expressed his appreciation of the activity of the Ethiopian Public Diplomacy team. He recognized the concept as a new form of diplomacy in which Djibouti would participate. He also complimented the Team for raising to issues and questions for further observation and decision. The President condemned the grenade attack that occurred at the rally in Addis the previous Saturday.

The Team later held discussions with Djibouti's Foreign Minister, Mahamoud Ali Yousouf, raising various issues and concerns over cultural and educational cooperation, business and trade cooperation, port services and interconnectivity as well as the concerns of the Ethiopian diaspora in Djibouti. The team commended the Government of Djibouti for its determination to further strengthen its ties with Ethiopia. Foreign Minister Yousouf appreciated the new visionary leadership in Ethiopia and emphasized that the recent visit of Prime Minister Abiy was a demonstration of the ever-growing bilateral ties between the two countries. He told the Team that their visit, as an Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Group from all walks of life was "a milestone, a historic event, which we are proud of", adding, "I assure you we will try to replicate and follow your path to send a Public Diplomacy Team to Ethiopia".

On Tuesday, the Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Team visited the Djibouti National Assembly and met and addressed the Assembly. Ato Tesfaye told members and the Speaker of the House Mohammed Ali Houmed: "We are here because we believe paying a visit to this land of our brothers and sisters and having personal interactions and face-to-face discussions with honorable members of the parliament is important in reaffirming one of the oldest and strongest alliances in Africa." He added "As the National Assembly is the highest legislative organ and the ultimate representation of the people, we believe that addressing the House is addressing the people". The Public Diplomacy Team members praised the Members of the National Assembly for the generous hospitality and warm welcome extended to them and stated that it was an honor to be in Djibouti to share another significant moment in the history of the two countries' relationship.

Speaker Mohammed Ali Houmed extended his condolences on behalf of the people of Djibouti to the families of the victims of the attack on Saturday (June 23) in Addis Ababa and "to the entire Ethiopian brotherly people". He underlined that the partnership between Ethiopia and Djibouti was multi-fold and emphasized that inter-parliamentary friendship was a significant element in the relationship. He underlined the need to work more on cross-border agreements dealing with free-movement of people and goods and border trade and transportation.

In their discussions, the Public Diplomacy team expressed the importance of further exploring potentials of cooperation in all areas, including people-to-people relations, to strengthen the foundations of Pan-African Solidarity, which Ethiopia and Djibouti as members of the African Union hope to see in the near future. The two sides discussed how to further strengthen Inter-Parliamentary relations in different areas including IGAD-Inter-Parliamentary Union, the Pan African Parliament and the African Parliamentary Union.

The Public Diplomacy Team also visited the Djibouti Ports and Free Zone Authority Office, the Port of Djibouti, the Doraleh Container Terminal and the Doraleh Multi-Purpose Port. They also had a chance to go around one of Ethiopia's commercial ships, the "Asosa".

The last day of the visit, Wednesday (June 27) coincided with the celebration of Djibouti's National Day 2018, marking the 41st year of the Independence. The Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Team were honored to be able to participate in the occasion along with the local Ethiopian community and the people of Djibouti, as well as the diplomatic community and high-level government dignitaries who gathered at Torabora to watch the military parade and marching band performances to commemorate the National Day. They congratulated the people of Djibouti and expressed their delight at being able to share the celebration with their sisters and brothers of Djibouti, and with President Ismael Omar Guelleh at the National Palace.

Somalia celebrates Independence Day

Somalis are celebrating their 58th Anniversary of Somali Independence Day this week when the northern and southern regions merged to form the first government in 1960. The former British Somaliland attained its independence on July 26th and on July 1st 1960, it united with the former Trust Territory of Italian Somaliland which became independent on July 1st. 1960

The Independence Day is being celebrated in Mogadishu. President Mohamed Abdullahi laid a wreath during an event to mark June 26th at the monument of the Unknown Soldier (Daljirka Dahsoon). The occasion was attended by government officials and foreign diplomats based in Mogadishu. Increased security precautions are being taken in Mogadishu, with the closure of some roads and security forces guarding the city center and surrounding junctions, during the week to celebrate Somalia's independence. Government officials called on the people of Mogadishu to show patience over the security precautions during the celebrations.

President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed congratulated Somalia on the 58th anniversary of its independence. Speaking on Tuesday (June 26) during a function held at the Mogadishu local government building where hundreds of locals and government officials converged, President Mohamed said every citizen was responsible for ensuring the unity and self-determination of the country. He said: "The freedom we exercise today is as a result of our bloodshed and the wealth that we spent. And today we are therefore relishing the independence achieved in 1960 when the southern and northern regions were joined as one". He urged all the Somali people to work together and rebuild the country to achieve a prosperous future.

The 31st African Union Summit opens in Mauritania

The African Union's 31st Assembly of the Heads of State and Government began on June 25 with the opening of the Permanent Representatives' Committee in Nouakchott, Mauritania. The Permanent Representatives' Committee met for two days this week (June 25 and 26) to produce a draft agenda and draft decisions and declarations for the AU Executive Council which is made up of the Foreign Ministers of Member States. The Executive Council met on Thursday and Friday this week (June 28-29). The Summit of the Heads of State and

Government will be held on Sunday and Monday (July 1-2). The summit is being held under the theme of the year “Winning the Fight Against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa’s Transformation”, which is championed by President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria.

The Chairperson of the Permanent Representatives’ Committee, Ambassador Hope Tumukunde Gasura of Rwanda, opening the session, praised key achievements of the African Union over the last six months. These initiatives, important in the drive for increased continental integration and promotion of regional trade and economic growth, include the launch of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) in Addis Ababa in January, the signing of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to the Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and the Right of Establishment in Kigali in March. The Permanent Representatives Committee lauded the efforts made in the adoption of the decision on the African Common Position for Negotiations of a new Agreement of Cooperation with the European Union on the future of AU/EU relations post 2020. Ambassador Gasura noted the progress made in the AIU’s drive towards the implementation of the ongoing Institutional Reforms and self-financing of the Union. This aims to deliver better service to the people of Africa as well as promote ownership of Africa’s development agenda by ensuring African states finance the activities of the African Union.

The PRC heard reports of its various sub-committees on Budgetary and Audit Matters, as well as on Multilateral Cooperation, on Refugees, and Structural Reforms. It heard reports of the AU Commission on Gender Equality, on Palestine and the Middle East, the African Space Agency and the Humanitarian Situation on the continent. In preparation for the Executive Council meeting it also considered the reports of the AU’s Specialized Technical Committees as well as the reports of: the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights (AfCHPR); the African Union Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR); the African Union Advisory Board on Corruption (AUABC); the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC); the Pan African Parliament (PAP); and the African Union Commission on International Law (AUCIL). Also on its agenda was consideration of the African Union budget for 2019, and the draft decisions and declarations of the Executive Council.

In his opening remarks, Ambassador Kwesi Quartey, the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission noted that the PRC plays the important role of acting as the interface between the AU Commission and the member states of the AU to ensure a convergence of views between the two. Ambassador Quartey emphasized that this was important to produce the necessary coherence to ensure that “together we will fight against corruption”. Mr. Mohamed Mahmoud Sweid Ahmed, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mauritania, welcomed delegates to the summit.

The meeting of the 33rd Ordinary session of the African Union Executive Council opened on Thursday (June 28) with key speakers highlighting progress made in several fronts as the continent seeks to achieve peace, development and unity. Chairperson of the AU Commission Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat paid tribute to the Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed and Sudan’s President Omar Al Bashir for their efforts to bring about the recently signed peace agreement between President Salva Kiir and Dr Riek Machar in South Sudan. He also emphasized the need for member states to commit to dialogue to resolve conflicts and underlined the importance of democratic elections. The Commission Chairperson, referring to the ongoing efforts to bring about institutional reforms within the

entire body of the African Union, and the Summit theme of “Wining The Fight Against Corruption”, urged the Commission to “lead by example” when it comes to upholding good governance practices. He reminded delegates that sustainable self-financing of the Union was a core aspect of the ongoing institutional reforms, He reported that 33 member states have either implemented, or are working towards implementing the agreed 0.2% levy on eligible goods.

Speaking on the issue of corruption, the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, Dr Vera Songwe noted that Africa loses 50 billion dollars a year to illicit financial flows and the African Development Bank estimates that corruption adds 25% to the cost of contracts and deals. Dr. Songwe spoke about the impact of corruption on Africa’s women and children, calling for more access for women to finance and extension services. She noted that corruption affected women in relation to land rights. She noted improvements being made in the fight against corruption, commending the AU for its efforts to strengthen its governance systems.

The opening session of the Executive Council was also addressed by its Chairperson, Mrs Louise Mushikiwabo, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Rwanda; and Mauritania’s Foreign Minister Mr Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed. Ms Mushikiwabo emphasized the need for “every African to have the African passport without delay” in order to realize the Agenda 2063 goal of free movement of people. She emphasized that resources lost to corruption could be better utilized for programmes that benefit the people. This was echoed by Mr. Cheikh Ahmed who said that corruption is an impediment to Africa’s development.

During the two-day meeting of the Executive Council, the foreign ministers considered the report of the PRC and the draft 2019 budget of the African Union as well as the status of implementation of the theme of the year, and of other reports. It appointed the AU Board of External Auditors and dealt with elections to African Court of Human and Peoples’ Rights, the AU Commission on International Law, the Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, and the Vice-President of the Pan African University, among other business. The Council also adopted the Decisions of its 33rd Ordinary Session and considered the Draft Agenda for the 31st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union (July 1-2).

Next week, we will look at the activities of the Assembly which will have included consideration of the report of President Kagame on the Status of Implementation of the Assembly’s Decision on Institutional Reform of the AU; President Issoufou on the African Continental Free Trade Area; and the reports of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, on the issues of Western Sahara and on the African Common Position on the ACP POST-2020. President Buhari will be presenting the theme of the Summit, and there will be consideration of the Report on the Activities of the Peace and Security Council and the State of Peace and Security in Africa, and of the Report of the Peace and Security Council on the Implementation of the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns in Africa by the Year 2020. The Heads of State and Government will adopt the budget of the African Union for 2019, following the recommendations of the Executive Council. Their decisions and declarations will guide the work of the AU as it implements its mandate of driving prosperity, peace and unity in Africa over the next few months.

A US commercial delegation in Ethiopia

The Under-Secretary of the US Department of Commerce for International Trade, Gilbert Kaplan, paid a working visit to Ethiopia this week (June 24-27). Her was heading a delegation that included executives and officials from 14 member firms of the President's Advisory Council on Doing Business in Africa (PAC-DBIA) from a wide range of industries and 11 US government agencies, including the US Trade and Development Agency, the Department of the Treasury, the US African Development Foundation, and USAID. The members of the PAC-DBIA who were visiting Ethiopia to gather insight into market opportunities and challenges faced by U.S. businesses included Amethyst Technologies, Computer Frontiers Inc., Citi, Insta-Pro International, Synnove Energy, Varian Medical Systems and Vermeer Corporation. Their recommendations will inform subsequent recommendations to President Trump on how to strengthen bilateral trade and investment. The PAC-DBIA members were also visiting Ghana, Kenya, and Côte d'Ivoire. The delegation as a whole aimed to explore opportunities for increased trade and economic cooperation between the US and Ethiopia, and Under-Secretary Kaplan said, "this visit will help all of us to better understand this dynamic and developing economic market of Ethiopia as well as provide insight on how our great nation can support and participate in the great processes that are happening here."

Mr. Kaplan met with Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu in Addis Ababa on Monday (June 25). Their discussion covered ways to enhance the bilateral commercial and investment relationship and raise it to higher levels. Dr. Workneh noted that the visit of the delegation would enhance the confidence of American companies to invest in Ethiopia. He underlined the necessity of replicating their robust bilateral political and diplomatic relations in the economic realm and pointed out Ethiopia needed development assistance as well as educational and training support from the US.

Mr. Kaplan, who assured the Minister that the US supported Ethiopia's development and its efforts to change, also emphasized that the American companies were interested to take part in various trade and investment areas in Ethiopia. Under-Secretary Kaplan and Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh included members of the President's Advisory Council on Doing Business in Africa (PAC-DBIA) in the discussions on the business climate in Ethiopia.

Under-Secretary Kaplan also met with Dr. Abraham Tekeste, Minister of Finance and Economic Cooperation. Their talks covered a range of economic issues and they also signed an MoU on the development and implementation of strategic and priority projects to enhance Ethiopia's economic capacity. This offers a roadmap to allow the Government to identify priority projects in key sectors to help achieve priorities for growth. The US will share that information with U.S. companies that could compete to supply solutions, materials, and expertise, as well as identify potential U.S. Government resources. The MOU also establishes a forum for the two sides to collaborate to identify and address problems arising for businesses operating in the country and encourage greater participation by U.S. companies seeking to invest or do business in Ethiopia.

Mr. Kaplan and Dr. Abraham also held talks with members of the PAC-DBIA on the opportunities for greater cooperation between American and Ethiopian businesses. They also participated in the launch of the latest handbook in the Power Africa Understanding Series, Understanding Power Project Procurement. This aims to make "Ethiopia's public procurement process for developing energy infrastructure transparent, competitive, fair,

ensure the Ethiopian people receive the best value from each project, and support Ethiopia's plan to accelerate critical infrastructure.”

Mr. Kaplan and the US Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ambassador Michael Raynor hosted a roundtable discussion for the US business delegation with the Minister of Trade, the State Ministers for the Ministries of Agriculture, of Public Enterprises, and of Industry, and the Commissioner of the Ethiopian Investment Commission. The Ethiopian participants were able to provide overviews of business opportunities available to U.S. companies in Ethiopia. The discussion also considered ways to improve Ethiopia's business climate.

The delegation also visited Ethiopian Airlines where Under-Secretary Kaplan and Ethiopian Airlines CEO, Tewolde Gebremariam, discussed potential ways for U.S. companies to partner with Ethiopian Airlines in the construction and operation of new airports. Other members of the group toured Ethiopian Airlines' Aviation Academy and cargo facilities.

During the visit, Ethiopian Airlines announced deals with General Electric (GE) and Honeywell. Ethiopian Airlines signed a procurement deal worth of \$444 million with General Electric as well as a separate \$473.5 million 10-year maintenance contract. Ethiopian also signed two contracts with Honeywell, a \$10.2 million deal for the Bole Airport expansion and a \$7.2 million Auxiliary Power Unit (APU) service contract. In addition, a training grant from the U.S. Trade Development Agency (USTDA) was signed. USTDA is partnering with the Sabre Corporation to provide an Airline Solutions Training Program Technical Assistance grant for Ethiopian Airlines Enterprise, which could leverage up to \$21.2 million in financing to support the procurement of airline information technology solutions, consulting services, and industry best practices.

Under-Secretary Kaplan said, “Ethiopian Airlines is a great partner for the U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. business community. This is evidenced by their close collaboration with several U.S. firms including Boeing”. CEO Tewolde Gebre Mariam emphasized: “Ethiopian Airlines is the most significant source of US–Ethiopia business relations. These relations cover the full spectrum of the commercial aviation sector, ranging from aircraft, engines, navigation to flight tracking systems. These latest deals further solidify the commercial relations between U.S. firms and the Ethiopian Airlines Group and amount to billions of U.S. dollars in business and thousands of jobs. With Ethiopian Vision 2025, fast growth and more business collaborations lie in the years ahead.”

On another day, Under-Secretary Kaplan met with Dr. Yinager Dessie, newly assigned governor of National Bank of Ethiopia. They discussed a range of issues, including ways to help alleviate the foreign currency shortage and options to support Ethiopian growth and expand potential U.S. exports and investments. The Under-Secretary and Dr. Yinager also considered ways to facilitate the growth of local businesses and expand credit available to U.S. companies doing business in Ethiopia.

Prior to the delegation's arrival, the US Embassy in Addis Ababa held a Discussion on Responsible Business Practices at the Hilton Hotel on Thursday last week (June 21), with several major U.S. companies already operating in Ethiopia, General Electric, the Dow Chemical Company and PVH. Ambassador Raynor said, “These investors and businesses bring a focus on quality products as well as responsibility for the social and environmental impacts of their operations. They are leading the way in respect for labor rights and, in the process, are sharing best practices in management and leadership.” He added: “What's good

for U.S. companies is also good for Ethiopia's growth and development, since U.S. firms bring with them a deep sense of corporate social responsibility and strong practices in support of fair employment conditions, training, knowledge transfer, environmental stewardship, and producing high-quality products."

There are already nearly 250 U.S. investment projects active in Ethiopia according to the Ethiopian Investment Commission, with several hundred more under consideration or preparing to start. They are active in a wide range of sectors including aviation, energy, mining, healthcare, agriculture, manufacturing, information and communications technology, and engineering consultancy services.
