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News in Brief

Africa and the African Union

The 31st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of African Heads of State and Government met in Nouakchott, Mauritania at the beginning on the week (July 1 and 2). Twenty-two presidents, four prime ministers, two foreign ministers and other representatives from Member States attended. The Assembly reviewed reports on the status of the implementation of the AU Institutional Reforms, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), on Western Sahara and on the African Common Position Post 2020 as well as considering progress in reducing armed conflicts and the Theme of the Year: "Winning the Fight Against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa's Transformation". (**See article**)

Representatives and army chiefs from 50 African countries and the African Union are attending the first China-Africa Defense and Security Forum, being held in Beijing, June 26 to July 12. (**See article**)

Ethiopia

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed reforms are continuing with key measures to improve conditions in the political and judicial areas to widen political space and improve the operation of the judiciary. A number of exiles have been returning and several organizations have had their terrorist designations lifted. (**See article**)

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed will conduct a two-day official visit to the U.S. at the end of this month. State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Birtukan Ayano said the Prime Minister would be meeting senior U.S. government officials and representatives of the large Ethiopian Diaspora community in the U.S. She said the visit would be conducted under the motto "Break the wall, Build Bridges" to foster dialogue and consensus between the Ethiopian government and the Ethiopian community in the U.S. The Prime Minister would also hold discussions with US officials on their bilateral anti-terrorism partnership.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy attended opening ceremony of the Djibouti International Free Trade Zone on Thursday (July 5). The construction of Africa's largest free trade zone was launched two years ago, and the Prime Minister congratulated President Guelleh and the people of Djibouti on the inauguration. During his visit he held discussions with Ethiopian agencies operating at the port and instructed them to coordinate effectively from procurement to delivery to address problems.

Ethiopia's Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu met with Sudan's President Omer al-Bashir on Wednesday (July 4). He brought a verbal message from Prime Minister Dr. Abiy and discussed recent border clashes. Sudan's Foreign Minister El-Dirdeiry Mohamed Ahmed described the clashes as "normal incidents that occur during the rainy season every year". He said Dr. Abiy had stressed Ethiopia's determination to overcome such incidents, and that President al-Bashir also called for the clashes to be addressed through cooperation and coordination. Dr. Workneh, noting the strategic ties between the two countries, said the Prime Minister's message was about bilateral relations and regional issues. He added that Sudan and Ethiopia would work together to address all border problems.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene chaired an IGAD Council of Minister's meeting on South Sudan on Saturday in Nouakchott. She also represented Ethiopia at the High-Level AU Ad Hoc Committee for South Sudan and at the AU Peace and Security Council meeting at the level of Heads of State and Government. **(See article)**

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Professor Afework Kassu met with an EU delegation led by Mr. Hans Stausboll from the Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development in the European Commission, on Monday and Tuesday this week (July 2-3). This was the first Strategic Engagement between the two parties on two dialogues: Social and Economic Development, Investment and Trade, and Climate Change and Environmental Cooperation. **(See article)**

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Professor Afework Kassu received the Managing Director of the Alliance for Brain Gain and Innovative Development, Dr. Tewabech Beshaw and other members of the Ethiopian Diaspora community on Wednesday (July 04, 2018). Discussions primarily focused on ways of further enhancing the Diaspora engagement in Ethiopia's development endeavors. The talks emphasized employing the wide knowledge base of the Diaspora community in various Ethiopian institutions by using Diaspora mapping.

The House of Representatives unanimously ratified a resolution that would rescind the designation of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), and Patriotic Ginbot 7 as terrorist organizations on Thursday (July 5). The Council of Ministers submitted the resolution to the Parliament for ratification last Saturday in accordance with proclamation No.652/2009.

Officials from Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan began talks to establish a budget fund to finance investment projects in the three countries on Wednesday (July 4). The talks are part of an action plan agreed in May to strengthen cooperation in key development areas and are expected to result in "an exchange of views on the best way to move forward in the implementation of the economic growth guidelines, which in turn strengthen bilateral relations".

A 13-member Advisory Council for Law and Justice Reform was set up on Saturday (June 30). Composed of academics, legal practitioners and government representatives it will support the Attorney-General's office in delivering on the promises of law and justice reform, including making recommendations on repealing civic society, media and anti-terrorist laws.

The French Development Agency (AFD) this week has approved a €8 million (\$9 million) grant towards the development of the Tendaho geothermal project, being funded by the European Union, through the European Union Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund (EU-AITF).

The project has already received a €9 million concessional loan from AFD and a total of €7,5 million from previous EU-AITF grants. The latest grant will allow completion of drilling activities planned as part of the geothermal exploration and development effort in the Afar region. The project, aiming to produce 10MW, is being implemented by Ethiopian Electric Power, in coordination with Geological Survey of Ethiopia.

Djibouti

President Ismail Omar Guelleh inaugurated the Djibouti International Free Trade Zone on Thursday (July 5). The occasion and the China-Africa Economic Forum and Exhibition, held from July 5 to 7 were also attended by President Omer al-Bashir of Sudan, President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, and President Mohamed Abdullahi of Somalia as well as Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed and the Chairman of African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat. Discussions at the Forum focused on implementation of the free economic zone, investment and the strengthening of economic infrastructure and other issues relevant to Africa and China.

Eritrea

President Isaias, who arrived in the UAE for a visit on Sunday (July 1) met with Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, on Tuesday (July 3). Also present was Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs. They reviewed the possibilities and opportunities of cooperation between the two countries in economic, trade, investment and development fields as well as the education and health sectors. They agreed on broad areas of cooperation in overall investment, development of physical infrastructure, and laying foundations for effective implementation of agricultural and manufacturing projects. They also exchanged views on regional and international developments and issues of mutual concern.

Somalia

President Mohamed congratulated the Somali people on the 58th anniversary of independence on July 1st, which he described as “a symbol of our independence and unity.” World leaders including US President Donald Trump, and the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud congratulated Somalia on the anniversary. **(See article)**

President Mohamed Abdullahi led a Somali delegation to the inauguration of the International Free Trade Zone in Djibouti on Thursday. He was accompanied by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Commerce and Industries, the State Minister for Defense, and other senior government officials.

Prime Minister, Hassan Ali Khayre, received a high-level delegation from Qatar in his office in Mogadishu on Tuesday (July 3). The Prime Minister told the delegation that his government was ready for business and investment as Somalia was keen at reviving the economic infrastructure of the country. His office said the two sides discussed a wide range of issues, including bilateral relations and Qatari plans to invest in key seaports in Somalia.

The Constitutional Review and Implementation Committee opened the second phase of constitution review process in Mogadishu on Monday (July 2). Prime Minister Khayre said his government would leave no stone unturned until the constitution had been fully reviewed,

adding that the process would produce a Somali-owned document “that will rebuild the Somalia we lost”. He told participants, who included lawmakers, international partners, religious leaders and members of civil society, that genuine political accommodation, inclusivity and consultative decision-making were essential ingredients for Somalia’s success.

The Minister for Livestock, Sheikh Nur Mohamed Hassan, said on Monday (July 2) that the livestock trade with Saudi Arabia would be resumed now as the Kingdom had lifted the ban imposed on livestock from Somalia. He said Saudi Arabia formerly the biggest buyer of Somali livestock, had lifted the two-year ban to secure meat supplies. Saudi Arabia imports 80% of Somalia’s livestock through the ports of Berbera, Bossaso, Mogadishu and other towns. Animal exports account for 40 % of Somalia’s Gross Domestic Product.

Ambassador Madeira, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (SRCC) for Somalia, held talks with members of Somalia’s Federal Parliament on Monday (July 2). The closed-door discussions focused on security, protocol and ways of strengthening relations between the federal parliament and AMISOM. Ambassador Madeira said: “We are now reading from the same page. We are happy and satisfied with mutual explanations. From now we will work very well with each other.” The meeting was attended by Upper House Speaker, Abdi Hashi Abdullahi, 1st Deputy Speaker, Abshir Mohamed Ahmed Bukhari, 2nd Deputy Speaker, Mowlid Hussein Guhaad, and the Secretary General of the Upper House, Ali Mohamed Jamaa.

A Famine Early Warning Security Network report says food security in Somalia is expected to improve more than previously anticipated in the next few months, but in some northern and central regions, poor pastoralists in the absence of assistance will still face Crisis and Emergency levels of food security. **(see article)**

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) USA has appointed Somali-American supermodel and activist Ms. Halima Aden as its newest UNICEF Ambassador. The announcement follows Ms. Aden's travels with UNICEF and UNHCR to Kakuma, the refugee camp in Kenya where she was born. As a UNICEF Ambassador, she will use her voice to engage young people across the U.S. to support UNICEF's mission to put children first.

South Sudan

South Sudan was a major topic at the AU Summit. IGAD held a Council of Ministers’ meeting on Saturday (June 30). Cyril Ramaphosa, President of South Africa chaired a meeting of the High-Level AU Ad Hoc Committee for South Sudan attended by AU Chairperson, President Kagame of Rwanda, the President of Algeria and other representatives of the C5 Countries. There was also an AU Peace and Security Council meeting at the level of Heads of State and Government with a status update was provided by Moussa Faki Mahamat, AU Commission Chairperson. **(See article)**

Within hours of the ceasefire coming into operation on Saturday, the warring parties were trading accusations of each other’s responsibility for breaking it and calling for CTSAMM, the ceasefire mechanism, to investigate. On Wednesday this week (July 5), it appeared the parties had reached agreement over the remaining security issues. They are now due to go to Nairobi this weekend to resume talks on government and political issues. **(See article)**

A bill to extend President Salva Kiir's term for another three years was presented to Parliament on Monday (July 2). In a speech to the Transitional National Legislative Assembly, the Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Paulino Wanawilla Unango said the bill would extend the term of President Kiir, his deputies and the parliament to July 2021. The Constitutional Amendment Bill 2018 will be discussed by the TNLA committee of legislation before being put to the legislative assembly. A spokesperson for the SPLM-IO described the move as an illegal procedure by the government.

Sudan

President Omer al-Bashir travelled to Djibouti to participate in the China-Africa Economic Forum on Wednesday (July 4) and the inauguration of the Djibouti International Free Trade Zone. He was accompanied by Foreign Minister El-Dirdeiry Mohamed Ahmed, Minister of the Presidency Fadl Abdallah Fadl, Director of the National Intelligence and Security Services Salah Abdallah and Director of the President's Offices Hatim Hassan Bakhit.

Transport Minister Makawi Awad and South Sudan's Presidential Adviser on Security Affairs, Tut Galuwak, agreed on Tuesday (July 3) to open four border crossing points within the next few days. This followed a meeting in Khartoum to discuss implementation of the directives of President al-Bashir to open the border with South Sudan after the signing of the Khartoum Declaration of Agreement last week. He said it would facilitate the movement of citizens and the flow of trade between the two countries. The crossing points are Kosti-Renk road and river, Meriam - Aweil, railway and road, and the Heglig-Bentiu, and Al Sumayyah corridors.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed's reforms continue in Ethiopia

The sweeping reforms being undertaken by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed have continued in political and judicial sectors. Over the past week he has announced several key measures to ameliorate conditions in the political and judicial areas. The political reforms are part of the need to widen the political space; in the judicial field, a plethora of key decisions have been passed to improve its *modus operandi*. The return of exiled Derg officials and of United Oromo Liberation Front members together with the submission of a resolution to rescind the designation of exiled opposition parties, including the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), and Ginbot 7 as terrorist groups, heralded this new chapter of reforms.

The return of exiled former Derg officials and of foreign-based competing political parties to contribute to the ongoing political reforms in the country has been a swift response to the Premier's clarion call for all Ethiopians abroad to return home and contribute their share in peaceful way. On June 30, a former senior official of the Derg regime, Ambassador Dr. Kassa Kebede, returned after 27 years of exile, pledging to contribute to the current holistic reforms in the country. In an interview with the media, Ambassador Dr. Kassa, emphasizing his return was a prompt response to the invitation extended by the Prime Minister to all Ethiopians abroad to return and work for peace and stability in the country, pointed out that "this one is a genuine invitation and I would like to contribute my share in the current hopeful reforms that are being undertaken by the government."

Commenting on the current state of development that Ethiopia is experiencing, Ambassador Kassa noted the elation of many Ethiopian expatriates over the encouraging political milieu in the country as well as the fast-track economic growth it had witnessed. He stressed his readiness to play a significant role if required. Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen praised Ambassador Dr. Kassa for his unconditional acceptance of the Premier's call and his return; and called on other politicians in exile to follow suit.

A day later, on Sunday (July 1), a United Oromo Liberation Front (UOLF) delegation led by Brigadier General Hailu Gonfa and Aba Nega Jarra also arrived in Addis Ababa to join the nation-wide, peaceful political struggle. Brigadier General Hailu, the UOLF Deputy Chairperson, said the return of the UOLF was also a response to the invitation extended by the government to exiled political parties, and its decision was encouraged by the need to keep up the reforms being carried out by the government in the last few months. He noted the Front's keenness to work with the people, other political parties and the government, to realize the political aspirations of the nation.

In line with the Prime Minister's call and in a bid to encourage competing political parties to speed up peaceful political discourse to achieve political goals, the House of Representatives unanimously ratified a resolution that would rescind the designation of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), and Patriotic Ginbot 7 as terrorist organizations on Thursday (July 5). The Council of Ministers submitted the resolution to the Parliament for ratification last Saturday in accordance with proclamation No.652/2009.

In the judicial field, the government established a 13-member Law and Justice Advisory Council last week, giving it the task of transforming aspects of the justice system, including the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation. This opens a new chapter in the country's justice and legal system. Attorney-General Berhanu Tsegaye told journalists that among the major areas to be reformed were legal issues relating to exercise of the freedom of the mass media, timely access to information, the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation and the legislation regarding charities and civil societies. He said to cut the Gordian knot of these issues came from the inherent contradiction with the Constitution and because of the massive public criticisms. The Advisory Council was therefore tasked to present policy and legal recommendations to the Government for changes in the relevant laws. Attorney-General Berhanu noted specifically that the Advisory Council would decide on the outcome of cases under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation. The Advisory Council, whose expert legal members include Dr. Belachew Mekuria, Meaza Ashenafi, Professor Tilahun Teshome, Tamiru Wondimagegn and Ali Mohammed, has been given a three-year mandate with extension if the need arises.

The 31st Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly convened in Mauritania

The 31st Ordinary Session of the Assembly of African Heads of State and Government was convened in Nouakchott, Mauritania on Sunday and Monday (July 1 and 2). The Assembly was preceded by the meetings of the Executive Council and the Permanent Representatives Committee. Attending the two-day summit in Nouakchott were 22 African presidents, four prime ministers, two foreign ministers and other representatives from Member States. State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene led the Ethiopian delegation.

The Assembly considered and took decisions on reports and recommendations from the organs of the Union, to monitor the implementation of policies and decisions of the Union, as well as ensure compliance by all member states. It also gave directives to the Executive Council, of Foreign Ministers, on the management of conflicts, war and other emergency situations.

The Heads of State and Government reviewed several reports including the status of the implementation of the AU Institutional Reforms, presented by President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, the current chair of the African Union and the champion for the AU Institutional Reforms process; and President Mamadou Issoufou of Niger's report on the status of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) which has been signed by 44 countries and ratified by Kenya, Ghana, Rwanda and Nigeria. A number of other countries also signed the agreement and ratified the AfCFTA during the Summit. The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, presented reports on the issue of Western Sahara and on the African Common Position Post 2020. Reports on Peace and Security on the continent were also presented to gauge the progress made in reducing armed conflicts on the continent in line with AU master roadmap of practical steps towards Silencing the Guns, one of the key projects of Africa's Agenda 2063.

In his opening remarks, President Kagame commended the efforts made in the planning of the 2019 budget of the African Union. He hailed the outstanding work of the Committee of 15 Finance Ministers, together with the Executive Council for coming up with the 'most credible and transparent' budget. He said, "The African Union has applied the "golden rule" and adopted the most credible and transparent budget in our history." "Through this process, the 2019 budget presented to the Assembly for consideration has even been reduced by 12 per cent, compared to 2018", he said, adding: "At the same time, contributions to the Peace Fund have never been higher." The President emphasized that "as a direct result of the growing confidence in our finances, the African Union is in a position to work toward a long-term partnership with the United Nations Security Council for stable funding for peacekeeping operations in Africa."

On Continental Free Trade Area, the President told the Summit that "several more Member States are expected to sign the Continental Free Trade Area at this Summit and six countries have already ratified. We congratulate those who have done so." He said that the agreement was well on its way to entering into force and from that point, "Africa will necessarily engage with partners as a bloc", adding, "The renewal of Africa's relationship with the European Union intervenes in this context." Once all AU member states sign up, it will create a bloc with a cumulative GDP of \$2.5 trillion and cover a market of 1.2 billion people. President Kagame reminded the summit that: "The future we have been preparing for is already upon us. The institutional and financial reform of our Union has always been about the capacity to secure Africa's interests and our dignity. The business-as-usual approach cannot continue, and indeed, as we are seeing, significant changes are beginning to take hold."

President Kagame also expressed the AU's satisfaction over the decision of Ethiopia and Eritrea to overcome two decades of stalemate. He said: "We are heartened by the strides made by the leadership of Eritrea and Ethiopia toward the normalization of relations." He underlined the AU's readiness both countries, adding "You have the African Union's unwavering support." President Kagame condemned the recent bomb attacks at rallies held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe: "As a Union, we stand with the peoples of Ethiopia and Zimbabwe in their pursuit of peaceful political change. We condemn the

violent attacks and convey our condolences for the lives that have been lost.” He praised IGAD for its mediation efforts in the South Sudanese peace process and acknowledged “the encouraging steps in the South Sudan peace process, thanks to the mediation of the IGAD-mandated Heads of State.” He also stressed firmly that the African Union expected the parties to fully abide by their agreements.

The Summit was, of course, held under the 2018 theme of the year “Winning the Fight Against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa’s Transformation”. and Mauritanian President, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, strongly underlined the importance of the theme, emphasizing that “Winning the fight against corruption is a prerequisite for our progress and prosperity”. The AU says approximately 70 percent of income from Africa's resources are squandered or diverted, an estimated \$148 billion a year to corruption, about 25% of Africa's average GDP. The Assembly discussed mechanisms to return stolen money, largely placed in tax havens abroad. Transparency International, in its latest Corruption Perceptions Index published in February, said corruption was entrenched in South Sudan and Somalia but also noted that the overall picture in Africa was mixed. A number of countries, Botswana, Seychelles, Cape Verde, Rwanda and Namibia “all scored better on the index compared to some European countries, e.g. Italy, Greece and Hungary.” The report noted that a key ingredient that the top performing African countries had in common was “political leadership that is consistently committed to anti-corruption.” The report said, "While the majority of countries already have anti-corruption laws and institutions in place, these leading countries go an extra step to ensure implementation. Speaking on aspects of peace and security in the continent, the AU Commission Chairperson Mahamat noted that the question of peace, security and stability remained a major pre-occupation, noting that the attack on the headquarters of the G5 a few days earlier had highlighted the need for increased mobilization in support of the region.

The AU Peace and Security Council, which convened on the side-lines of the Summit, met with French President Emmanuel Macron who was visiting West Africa, to discuss the battle against extremism and ways to finance counterterrorism and peacekeeping operations. The need was emphasized by attacks in Mogadishu and in Mali last week. In a statement on security issues on the continent, the African Union’s Peace and Security Council emphasized the humanitarian conditions in South Sudan, worsening day by day, and called on the parties to fulfill their obligations. On Somalia the Council said the African Union supported the activities of the federal government in the transition period and called on the UN to finance AMISOM. It also underlined the need for international actors to resume their efforts to implement a UN plan which aims to secure stability, territorial integrity and security in Libya.

The Assembly was also addressed by the UN Deputy Secretary-General, Dr. Amina Mohammed, who noted that the AU and UN were working together successfully across the continent with Africa firmly in the lead. She emphasized there was still a need to do more to strengthen the partnership. The Assembly was also addressed by Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the Arab League and Dr. Riad Malki, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Palestine who made a statement on behalf of the President of Palestine, Mahmoud Abbas.

State Minister Hirut chairs an IGAD Council meeting on South Sudan...

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene chaired an IGAD Council of Ministers meeting on South Sudan on Saturday (June 30) on the margins of the Assembly of the African Union Heads of State and Government. The IGAD Council met, as mandated by the IGAD Summit of June 21st, in Nouakchott. The meeting was chaired by Mrs. Hirut Zemene, and attended by Mohamoud Ali Yussuf, Djibouti's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sam Kutesa, Uganda's Foreign Minister, Abdulkadir Ahmed-Kheyr Abdi, Somali State Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Mohammed Idris, Sudan's State Minister of Foreign Affairs.

After a briefing from Ambassador Ismail Wais, the IGAD Special Envoy, it agreed that IGAD had made headway in bringing peace to South Sudan and noted that the results achieved in Khartoum last week had underlined the hard-won gains of the year-long IGAD High-Level Revitalization Process. The Council appreciated the efforts and results gained by Sudan's mediation, further noting that the Bridging Proposal of IGAD and the punitive actions need to be deliberated after the outcomes of the efforts of Khartoum.

State Minister Hirut also represented IGAD at the High-Level AU Ad Hoc Committee for South Sudan in its 7th meeting chaired by Cyril Ramaphosa, President of South Africa. AU Chairperson, President Kagame of Rwanda, the President of Algeria and other representatives of the C5 Countries attended. Mrs. Hirut presented IGAD's position and outlined the level of negotiation that the peace process had reached. She noted that the C5 countries had been well represented throughout the IGAD Revitalization process, adding that once the process was complete, the C5 countries could support the implementation of the Agreement. The meeting agreed that Africa should fully "assume its responsibilities and create all requisite conditions for definitively ending the war in South Sudan".

A third phase of the deliberation on South Sudan taking place at the AU Summit was an AU Peace and Security Council meeting at the level of Heads of State and Government. It was attended by high level participants and a status update was provided by Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the AU Commission. Those attending included AU Commissioner for Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ismail Chergui; the former President of Mali, Alpha Omar Konare, President I Ramaphosa of South Africa; Dr. Amina Mohamed, UN Deputy Secretary-General, Dr. Amina Mohammed; and Mrs. Hirut for Ethiopia in its capacity as the current chair of IGAD. The meeting underlined that the situation in South Sudan remained a great concern for both the IGAD Region and the African Union, and the discussion emphasized the problems of both security and humanitarian aspects. The contribution of IGAD in general and of Ethiopia in organizing the High-Level Revitalization Forum was recognized and appreciated. The meeting commended the latest agreement signed by the parties in Khartoum. It agreed the peace process being undertaken under the auspices of IGAD should be fully supported and that the process should focus on full implementation of the 2015 agreement and on application of punitive measures as necessary.

...and immediate violations of the Khartoum Declaration of Agreement

Within hours of the ceasefire coming into operations, the warring parties were trading accusations of attacks in Wau state, and several other areas. The respective military spokespersons called on the ceasefire mechanism to investigate the attacks. The head of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), David Shearer, said he was confident that the

monitoring body, the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism (CTSAMM), could do the job and UNMISS would provide all necessary logistical support for it. He said CTSAMM would ensure any culprits or breakers of the ceasefire would be named and announced.

President al-Bashir in Khartoum on Sunday (July 1) praised compliance by the warring parties to the declaration to implement the permanent ceasefire signed last week in general, but warned that South Sudan's ceasefire violators would be denounced publicly. President al-Bashir, who is guarantor of the South Sudan Permanent Ceasefire urged the warring parties to follow through with their forces in the field to prevent any skirmishes and to avoid all that might breach the ceasefire. He also warned that "the Office of the Guarantor of the Ceasefire will announce any skirmishes or provocations that might occur and shall name and shame the perpetrators to face their ethical and legal responsibilities before the people of the Republic of South Sudan and before the regional and international community ". The mechanism of Guarantor has been set up to put pressure on the parties to remain committed to the agreement even while they continue discussions to determine, among others, demilitarized areas, modalities and exemptions from cantonment.

The parties also committed themselves to reach an agreement over the outstanding issues in the security arrangements, immediately after the start of the permanent ceasefire under the Khartoum Declaration of Agreement, signed on June 27, and its implementation on Saturday (June 30). This involves determination of demilitarized areas, modalities and exemption from cantonment; a timeframe for unification of forces, and the number of parties' representatives in the Joint Transitional Security Committee. According Sudanese Army spokesperson Ahmed Khalifa al-Shami, on Thursday (July 5), the parties reached agreement on the last modification to the security arrangements on Wednesday this week, and a final draft agreement would be signed in an official ceremony in the presence of President al-Bashir, though a date has not yet been given. This agreement over security issues comes just before the UN Security Council will be meeting on Friday (July 6) to review the situation in South Sudan. Its discussions will cover options to put pressure on the warring parties to resolve their conflict, including a possible arms embargo.

The parties still disagree on power-sharing ratios in the executive and the states; the number of states and establishment of an inclusive boundaries commission to determine this; the size and composition of the legislature; and the participation of Dr. Machar in the transitional government. They are due to move to Nairobi at the weekend to resume talks on these issues.

Another issue requiring urgent action is the provision of open humanitarian access to reach civilians in war-affected areas. Without lasting peace, international aid organizations fear little progress can be made to help stem hunger in South Sudan. This month marks the peak of the hunger gap, when harvests are depleted just as new crops are planted. Without food distributed by aid groups, an estimated 7.1 million people, more than half the population, will be desperately short of food. Continued conflict makes humanitarian access to many areas extremely difficult, if not impossible.

EU/ Ethiopia Strategic Engagement Dialogues held in Addis Ababa

The first Strategic Engagement between the European Union and Ethiopia on two dialogues, Social and Economic Development, Investment and Trade, and Climate Change and Environmental Cooperation, was held in Addis Ababa on Monday and Tuesday this week (July 2-3). The discussions were part of the continuing sectoral dialogue under the EU-Ethiopia's strategic engagement. State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Professor Afework Kassu met with an EU delegation led by Mr. Hans Stausboll, Head of Unit, Development Coordination East Africa and Regional Cooperation in Eastern and Southern Africa, Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development in the European Commission.

Opening the dialogue, the State Minister said: "Today's engagement in dialogue marks the continuation of the flourishing economic partnership between Ethiopia and the EU". He emphasized that the dialogue allowed the EU and Ethiopia to exchange views on high priority issues. This was particularly timely, as Ethiopia was embarking on a number of important political and economic reforms under the leadership of the new Prime Minister, Dr Abiy Ahmed.

During the discussion on investment and trade, Ethiopia underlined its intention to further integrate into the global economy as a means to achieve its development objectives for the benefit of all Ethiopians. The EU encouraged Ethiopia to accelerate accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) by submitting an improved offer for 'goods' and an offer for 'services'. Ethiopia indicated its objective was to complete its accession to the WTO by 2020.

The two sides discussed the main bottlenecks preventing Ethiopia from fully benefitting from the Everything But Arms trade regime (EBA). The EU further encouraged Ethiopia to consider joining the Eastern and Southern Africa interim Economic Partnership Agreement. Together with the External Investment Plan, it stressed these provides instruments to help create better conditions to attract investment and expand value chains in Ethiopia. The two sides also agreed on the importance of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) process as a tool to facilitate intra-Africa trade. The EU announced its intention to mobilise funding to support the CFTA process.

Ethiopia laid out details of its industrialisation policy, which envisages the development of industrial and agro-industrial parks to allow for the country to become a regional manufacturing hub. The EU welcomed this and said it was committed to continue assisting in the implementation of this policy, notably through the Job Compact Sector Reform Contract and support to the Integrated Agro-Industrial Parks. Both parties shared the view that the development of the industrial parks should not occur in isolation from the rest of the economy but that they should generate considerable business linkages upstream and downstream with the domestic market.

Ethiopia also informed the delegation about recent plans to open up parts of the economy, notably in key sectors such as telecom, logistics and transport. The EU welcomed the reforms that had been announced and offered its support through technical advice.

During the session on Social and Economic Development, the two sides discussed sustained economic growth and sustainable development, emphasizing issues related to unleashing the green economy potential of Ethiopia. During the dialogue, focus was given to productive

sectors with high job-creating potential such as agriculture, industry and renewable energy. The EU also stressed the importance of education, vocational training, gender equality and women empowerment.

The dialogue between the EU and Ethiopia also covered Climate Change and Environmental Cooperation, and the two sides reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change and to work for determined and motivated action towards the full and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement. The EU confirmed its intention to support Ethiopia in its climate change actions in renewable energy, climate-smart agriculture, land use and, in particular, through a new dedicated budget support programme which will be approved next year.

Professor Afework, in his concluding remarks, thanked the EU delegation for their commitment and dedication to strengthening EU-Ethiopia relations. Mr. Stausboll, who said he was impressed by the level of enthusiasm expressed by the Ethiopian side, stressed that Ethiopia was the one of the most important and biggest partners for the EU in Africa. The two parties agreed to maintain joint organization of the dialogues, on Social and Economic Development, Trade and Investment, and on Climate Change and Environmental Cooperation, as the topics are inextricably linked. They agreed to convene a second dialogue next year.

Ethiopia and the EU have now been involved in bilateral relations in development cooperation, trade and economic development, consolidation of democratic institutions, regional peace and security for forty years; and the Ethio-EU Strategic Engagement Agreement, aiming to structure strengthened cooperation between the two partners, was signed by former Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn and Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, in Brussels in June 2016.

World leaders congratulate Somalia on 58 years of independence

World leaders congratulated Somalia as it marked 58 years of independence on Sunday (July 1). Among them were US President Donald Trump, and the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud as well as regional presidents and leaders. President Trump's message said: "On behalf of the United States of America, I wish you and the people of Somalia a joyous 58th anniversary of independence," adding, "The United States looks forward to continuing its partnership with the people and government of Somalia to work toward a brighter future. Working together to build a stable, peaceful, prosperous Somalia is in the interest of both of our nations. You will continue to have our support on this path." King Salman wished the President constant good health and happiness and his people steady progress and prosperity.

The UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, Michael Keating, also congratulated the people and government of Somalia: "Hambalyo! This is a great day for all Somalis, here and around the world. Despite the many hardships they continue to face, Somalis can take pride in the progress that is being made," adding, "This celebration comes at a moment of political opportunity and hope for a more peaceful and prosperous future." Mr. Keating underlined there had been some impressive achievements in the last 12 months, averting a famine, increasing revenue, passing key legislation, moving forward on the

constitutional review and electoral model, and reforming the security sector. The challenges should not be underestimated, he said, but “the agenda crafted by the government is a good one and deserves both national unity and timely international support.” He stressed that the UN and international partners were working closely with federal and state authorities to help achieve results, in a way that strengthened the rule of law, inclusivity and accountability. The UN, he said was marking this anniversary “by recommitting itself to solidarity with all Somalis in the years ahead”.

President Mohamed Abdullahi presided over the celebrations on Sunday at the stadium in north Mogadishu, with the Somali National Army mounting a guard of honor while the popular music group, the Waberi, provided entertainment. The celebration was attended by Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre; the Speaker of the Federal Parliament, Mohamed Mursal Sheikh; the Second Deputy Chairman of the Upper House, Mowlid Hussein Guhaad; Governor of Banadir and Mayor of Mogadishu, Abdirahman Omar Osman; members of the Government and senior officers, as well as diplomats, artists and a Djiboutian delegation visiting Mogadishu.

President Mohamed congratulated the Somali people and urged all the citizens to uphold their glorious days like July 1. “July 1”, he said, was “a symbol of our independence and unity. It is the day our people removed the ruthless clutches of colonialism and embarked on sovereignty.” He congratulated the Somali people on the 58th Anniversary of the Independence of the Southern Regions and the unity of the northern and southern regions of the country. He said: “In the days of independence, it teaches us to realize the aspirations of the nation, and today we have to hold hands together and be proud of our future.” He said the sense of unity and solidarity was common among the Somali people, despite difficult circumstances that they were going through, adding: “It is remarkable that the Somali people today have a state of a government that is committed to the implementation and enhancement of the security and peace of the Somali people, the international recognition and full confidence, and which is sure to fill the role of Somalia in the world.”

President Mohamed, Prime Minister Hassan, the Speaker of Parliament, the Mayor of Mogadishu and other government officials later met with the Djibouti delegation headed by Djibouti’s Minister of Defence and including diplomats from the Djiboutian embassy in Mogadishu, artists from the Djibouti Armed Forces and military officers. The President thanked the delegation for participating in the 58th anniversary. He said, “Djibouti is a country of our brothers, and is always ready to support us,” adding, “The relationship between our two brotherly nations is one of shared objectives for peace, progress, unity and similar interests based on the long history of our two nations.” He took the opportunity to thank President Ismail Omar Guelleh for his contribution to peace and state-building in Somalia and acknowledged that the Somali people had been well rewarded for their brotherhood with Djibouti.

Somalia’s Food Security outlook update

The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS) recently issued a report on food security in Somalia and the outlook to September. It noted rainfall started in late February/early March across much of Somalia; total rainfall was 200% above average in most areas at the end of April. Due to this and heavy rainfall in the Ethiopian highlands,

water levels increased sharply in both the Shabelle and Juba Rivers. Flooding has occurred in several areas, notably in Belet Weyne town where floods displaced some 70% of the population and inundated crops. In Lower Shabelle and Middle Juba, hundreds of households were displaced, and thousands of hectares of cropped land were flooded in Lower Juba and other riverine areas.

In most regions, pasture and water availability increased with the exception of the Northeast region. Livestock body conditions and reproduction improved to average in most areas. Milk availability increased although it still remains below average due to continued low livestock herd sizes. Local cereal availability alongside stable imports and continued humanitarian assistance brought a decline in staple food prices compared to prices in the first quarter of 2018.

Humanitarian actors reached an average of 1.84 million beneficiaries a month between January and March 2018, and it appeared assistance was reaching around 70% percent of the population estimated to be at crisis levels or worse. In fact, overall, food security improved in many southern areas as poor households were able to have access to income from agricultural labor and cereal prices declined to normal. The exception was flood-impacted people whom were facing difficulty over basic food and non-food needs. In northern and central areas, food security improved somewhat with livestock births and availability of milk, though food and income sources remain insufficient to meet all basic needs. Continued humanitarian assistance is preventing worse outcomes.

The report offered projections of food security from May through September, suggesting that in southern agricultural and agro-pastoral areas, food security was likely to be better than previously projected. Poor households in rainfed areas were expected to be able to harvest more than the recent five-year average. This, combined with normal job opportunities and average or below-average staple food prices, suggests a situation that will support adequate food consumption in most areas through September. Equally, poor households hit by floods are likely to harvest below average production and some might be in food Crisis through June.

Overall, northern and central areas, the favorable rainy season should lead to improvement in food security as livestock body conditions and breeding will be better than previously expected. Most pastoralists will have greater access to milk. However, poor pastoralists will still have few salable animals to purchase food. In the absence of assistance, Addun Pastoral, East Golis Pastoral, Togdheer of Hawd Pastoral, and Coastal Deeh Pastoral livelihood zones can be expected to remain in Crisis (IPC phase 3). The Guban Pastoral livelihood zone where very few animals were conceived last year is expected to be in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) between June and September, in the absence of assistance.

The first China-Africa Defense and Security Forum being held in Beijing

Representatives and army chiefs from 50 African countries and the African Union are discussing China-Africa defense and security cooperation at the China-Africa Defense and Security Forum. This is the first such Forum and is being hosted by China's Ministry of National Defense. The Ministry said was hosting the Forum in Beijing, June 26 and July 12, to discuss regional security and defense cooperation

and upgrading Africa's military capacity. Topics being discussed include the security situation in Africa and Africa's independent capacity-building for security. Participants are also making visits to see the activities and capabilities of various units of China's land, navy and air forces.

The Forum is expected to strengthen military exchanges and cooperation and increase the momentum of the long-term development of Africa-China relations through this multilateral dialogue and cooperation platform. It is also part of the preparations for the launch of strategic security and military cooperation between Beijing and Africa. Delegates have been discussing a military roadmap aimed at protecting Chinese interests in Africa as well as improving African's response to crisis situations. Opening the discussions, the Chief of the Office for International Military Cooperation at the Central Military Commission, Major General Hu Changming, emphasized the need for understanding and cooperation on security matters between Africa and China. A continental military cooperation plan is expected to be approved at the coming China-Africa Summit scheduled for September in Beijing.

China believes its increasing investment in Africa need enhanced security protection. According to the China-Africa Research Initiative in 2016, there were more than 224,400 Chinese workers in Africa, and the US Brookings Institute says China is involved in more than 3,000 infrastructure projects in Africa. The volume of trade totaled \$220 billion in 2017. China currently has 2,400 soldiers under the UN in South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Mali. Naval units are also involved in the anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden, operating out of their base in Djibouti. China has invested in numerous infrastructural projects, roads, railways and port networks across Africa to connect the major global sea routes. The Red Sea and the coast of the Horn of Africa are a part of the maritime silk road, a segment of the Belt and Road Initiative, the development and trade project launched by Chinese President Xi Jinping to connect China with Eurasian markets.

China's commitment to deepen the engagement of its defense trade and technical ties with Africa over the coming decade has been underlined at the Forum. China's State Administration for Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense (SASTIND) has established defense industry, science, and technology ties with 45 African nations. It has made it clear it wants to expand this collaboration further over the coming years to support the military development of African states and build strategic ties. Zhang Kejian, the deputy director of SASTIND, said at the Forum last week, "China-Africa co-operation is increasingly close, the scope of co-operation is expanding, and the level of co-operation continues to improve," adding, "China is willing to continue to support African countries in strengthening national defense forces." He also said that China will look to expand opportunities for collaboration with African countries across military and dual-application technologies and capabilities: "We will deepen co-operation between China and Africa in the field of military-civilian integration."