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Africa and the African Union

The peace deal and rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea have paved the way for improved bilateral relations between the two countries, (embassies are being reopened, phone links been restored and flights resumed). Equally, it has been having wider repercussions in the region, with Somali President Mohamed visiting Eritrea and Ethiopia offering to mediate between Eritrea and Djibouti. **(See article)**

The UK Defense Secretary, Gavin Williamson, has visited Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia to encourage efforts to help tackle sexual violence in conflict areas. He told defense ministers that the UK was a trusted partner, committed to promoting prosperity and helping improve the security of people in vulnerable situations by increasing the participation of women and other non-traditional security actors. **(See article)**

Ethiopia

President Dr. Mulatu and Their Holinesses, Abune Mathias and Abune Merkorios, attended a Thanksgiving ceremony for the reconciliation and unification of the two Holy Synods of the Ethiopian Tewahedo Orthodox Church in Addis Ababa, at the Millennium Hall on Saturday (August 4). **(See article)**.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy held discussions with the Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir on Thursday (August 9) and the two sides have agreed to deepen political and commercial ties.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed met the UK's International Development Secretary, Ms. Penny Mordaunt, on Wednesday (August 8) for talks on economic issues and poverty reduction, Ms. Mordaunt later signed grant agreements with Dr Abraham Tekeste, Minister of Finance and Economic Cooperation for £115 million for the Ethiopia Jobs Compact program and a Tax Systems Transformation Program. **(See article)**

Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed met with Emirati State Minister for International Cooperation, Reem Al Hashimi on Friday (August 10), and discussed on ways of boosting the investment and consolidating the multifaceted bilateral ties between Ethiopia the UAE. It was learned, the UAE has agreed to build an oil pipeline linking Eritrea's port city of Assab with Addis Ababa.

Deputy Prime Minister, Demeke Mekonnen, while he was in Sudan to attend the latest signing ceremony of South Sudan parties, met with Sudanese Vice-President Hassabo Mohamed Abdel-Rahman at the weekend. Vice-President Abdel-Rahman underlined Sudan's commitment to promote bilateral relations with Ethiopia. The meeting also discussed the border dispute over ownership of land in Al Fashaga area as well as focusing on coordination on regional and international issues of common concern. The Deputy Prime Minister also met with Presidential Assistant and Deputy Chairman of the ruling National Congress Party, Faisal Hassan Ibrahim. Mr. Ibrahim said the meeting came within the framework of continued contacts to promote cooperation on party and government levels. He said the ruling parties of Sudan and Ethiopia had developed a cooperation memorandum to cover links between the student, women and youth sectors during his own recent visit to Addis Ababa and this would be signed later.

The President of Oromia Regional State and deputy chairman of the Oromo Peoples' Democratic Organization (OPDO) Lemma Megersa, and Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, met with Dawd Ibsa, Chairman of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in Asmara at the weekend. They reached an agreement for the OLF to terminate hostilities, return to Ethiopia and engage in the country's political activities peacefully. A joint committee will be established for the implementation of the agreement.

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu met with President Isaias Afewerki on Tuesday (August 7) and discussed bilateral cooperation between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Dr. Workneh also visited the premises of the yet to be opened Ethiopian Embassy in Asmara.

Dr. Workneh bade farewell to the outgoing Norwegian Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ambassador Andreas Gaarder on Thursday (August 9). Dr. Workneh thanked Ambassador Andreas Gaarder for his efforts dedicated at strengthening the Ethio-Norwegian relations.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene chaired the 64th Extraordinary Session of the IGAD Council of Ministers which took place in Khartoum on Thursday (August 9). The session deliberated on issues that should be dealt with to prepare a full document of a Comprehensive Revitalized ARCSS based on the yearlong HLRF Peace Process and the Agreement on the outstanding Issues of Governance and Security Arrangement signed by the South Sudanese Parties on the 5th of August 2018 in Khartoum. **(See article)**

State Minister Foreign Affairs, Dr. Aklilu Hailemichael held discussions with Indonesian Business Delegation led by Mr. A.M. Fachir, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, on Wednesday (August 08, 2018). During their meeting the two sides discussed on ways of further strengthening the economic cooperation and expanding the volume of trade and investments.

Millennium Water Alliance (MWA), an Organization which is a coalition of 14 members and working on providing potable water, sanitation and hygiene worldwide is due to open a regional office in Addis Ababa. State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Professor Afework Kassu and Mr. Keith Wright, Executive Director of MWA signed a MoU on Tuesday (August 7) to such effect. Commending MWA's decision to open its regional office in Addis Ababa, Professor Afework Kassu said his government is committed to support the initiative.

The Joint Ethiopia-Sudan Border Security Committee for Sudan's Blue Nile State and Ethiopia's Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State met on Thursday last week (August 2) in Assosa. Discussions covered joint efforts to secure the border and coordination between the two sides for trade, political, agricultural and health cooperation. In January, officials from Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State and Blue Nile State agreed to deploy a joint border force to secure the border area and prevent smuggling.

A delegation from the Eritrean Embassy in London, led by Ambassador Estifanos Habtemariam paid a courtesy visit to the Ethiopian Embassy on Monday this week (August 6), further cementing the historic rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The delegation was welcomed by Ambassador Dr. Hailemichael Abera, diplomats and staff. The visit followed a visit by Ambassador Dr. Hailemichael and other members of the Ethiopian embassy to the London Embassy of Eritrea on Friday last week (August 3).

Eritrea

Foreign Minister Osman Saleh Mohamed met Saudi Foreign Minister Adel bin Ahmed al-Jubair in Jeddah on Sunday (August 5). They reviewed bilateral relations and means of enhancing them, in addition to discussing issues of mutual interest.

Mr. Masahisa Sato, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan visited Asmara early in the week (August 5-6). Talks covered bilateral relations, regional issues, and cooperation in international fora. .

Eritrean Airlines made its first commercial flight to Ethiopia after 20 years on Saturday (August 4). The flight carrying Transport and Tourist ministers was welcomed by senior Ethiopian officials at Bole International Airport. Eritrean Airlines currently flies to Cairo, Khartoum, Jeddah and Dubai. **(See article)**

Kenya

President Uhuru Kenyatta will be visiting the United States and will meet President Trump at the White House on August 27. A White House press statement said Kenya was a vital partner of the United States, and discussions would cover ways to broaden the strategic partnership between the US and Kenya based on shared democratic values and mutual interests. A White House press secretary said: "The meeting would reaffirm the longstanding relationship between the United States and Kenya as a cornerstone of peace and stability in Africa and the broader Indo-Pacific region." The two leaders would also explore ways to bolster trade and investment between the two countries, while strengthening security cooperation.

Somalia

President Mohamed Abdullahi telephoned the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani on Tuesday (August 17), to discuss bilateral relations and ways to enhance them as well as issues of mutual concern.

Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre, who travelled to Sudan for the signing ceremony of the latest power-sharing agreement in South Sudan, met with President Omar Al Bashir in Khartoum, on Tuesday (August 7). The Prime Minister thanked President al-Bashir for providing scholarships to more than seven thousand Somali students across different universities in Sudan. Prime Minister Khayre, who also visited International University of Africa, described his meeting with the President as “very productive”.

Prime Minister, Hassan Ali Khayre has made six new ministerial appointments to his cabinet, with four ministers, one state minister and one deputy minister. Abdullahi Godah Barre is appointed Minister of Education; Sheikh Noor Mohamed Hassan, Minister of Religious Affairs; Hussein Sheikh Mohamud Hussein, Minister of Livestock; and Abdullahi Badhan Warsame, Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources. Abdikadir Sheikh Ali is new State Minister for the President; and Shawaqar Ibrahim Abdalla, Deputy Minister of Labour.

National Security Advisor, Abdisaid Ali, has recently given details of the National Security Architecture which sets out the planned composition, structure, and scope of the security sector and the drafting of a Transitional Plan for Security Reform to replace the security delivered by the African Union Mission in Somalia. **(See article)**

The African Union Commission and AMISOM organized a four-day workshop in Nairobi this week for Somali electoral officials, representatives of newly formed political parties, the Federal Government, the Federal Member States and other stakeholders. It aimed to provide knowledge on election management, and build participants’ understanding of constitutional and electoral legal frameworks in preparation for one-person-one-vote election due in 2020. **(See article)**

The European Council (EC) has extended the mandate of EU NAVFOR Somalia Operation Atalanta to curb piracy until 31 December 2020. EU NAVFOR aims to deter, prevent and suppress acts of piracy and armed robbery off the Somali coast and to safeguard the World Food Program (WFP) vessels, as well as vulnerable shipping, fishing activities, and other EU missions and programmes in the region. Launched in 2008, EU NAVFOR Operation Atalanta helped reduce the number of attacks off the coast of Somalia in the Indian Ocean from 176 in 2011 to 9 in 2017. No incidents have been reported in the second quarter of this year.

South Sudan

President Salva Kiir, Dr. Riek Machar and the leaders of the SSOA and the SPLM-FDs, signed an agreement on the outstanding issues of governance in Khartoum on Sunday (August 5). The occasion was attended by IGAD leaders including four Presidents. Sudan’s Foreign Minister El-Dirdiri Mohamed said, “an agreement on outstanding issues has been signed and this agreement expresses the commitment of all parties to a ceasefire.” President Kiir said earlier he was more

confident that the current deal would work because it had not been "forced on us". He said: "This agreement will not collapse and I am sure that it will not collapse because the people of South Sudan have now agreed that they must make peace among themselves." (See article)

President Salva Kiir formally granted a "general amnesty to the leader of SPLM-IO Dr Riek Machar Teny and other estranged groups who waged war against the Government of the Republic of South Sudan from 2013 to date," in a presidential decree released on Wednesday (August 8). The President reiterated his full commitment to the peace agreement including the ceasefire and its implementation.

Sudan

Harriett Baldwin, British Minister of State for Africa, started a three-day visit to Sudan on Tuesday (August 7) for talks on bilateral relations and ways to support Sudan in its political and economic reforms. She is the first British minister to visit Sudan in more than three years and on the agenda will be ways to provide Sudan with debt relief and achieve economic reform to lay the necessary foundations for sustainable economic growth. Ms. Baldwin met First Vice-President and Prime Minister Baki Hassan Saleh, Vice-President Hassabo Abdel Rahman, and Presidential Assistant Faisal Hassan Ibrahim during her visit and held talks with Foreign Minister El-Dirdeiry Mohamed Ahmed to discuss ways to boost bilateral relations and cooperation. She also visited El Fasher to discuss the security and humanitarian situation in Darfur with local officials.

Ethio-Eritrea rapprochement: a new chapter in peace and stability for the Region

The many failed efforts to effect peace, following the war, nearly two decades ago, that caused the loss of tens of thousands of lives and displacement of hundreds of thousands, emphasized the reality of the saying: "making peace is not as easy as making war." The successful reconciliation between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the jumping-off point to re-establish friendly relations after two decades of armed hostilities, is historic in the Pan-African sense of the term. The two countries managed to break the deadlock between them, without seeking any third party intervention. As a home-grown initiative, and an example for regional and continental unity, it has underlined the importance and value of the phrase: "African solutions for African problems."

Ethiopia's recently elected Prime Minister, together with his cabinet, took the unexpected and important task extending the olive branch to their Eritrean counterparts. It clearly demonstrated Ethiopia's resolve to continue to play a pivotal role in Africa's collective progress to achieve peace, democracy, development and integration across the continent. The olive branch was accepted with open and loving hands; mistrust vanished once and for all with the inking of the landmark agreement signed in Asmara on July 9.

Indeed, the peace deal has already paved the way for improved bilateral relations. The two countries have agreed to stimulate their economies and create jobs for the youth. Dr. Abiy in a recent speech in the U.S said: “It is not about governments, it is all about the people of the two countries. Our investment in the people will ultimately bring about the peace and prosperity we sought to win”. The costly expenditure on military infrastructure in border areas can now be re-directed into new efforts to reduce poverty, improve basic services such as health and education, and build schools, hospitals, power and water supplies.

Already, embassies are being reopened, phone lines between both nations have been restored and flights have resumed. The restoration of flights will boost the economy of both countries. Eritrean Airlines made its first commercial flight to Ethiopia after 20 years on Saturday (August 4), and the new route to Addis Ababa will significantly expand its existing regional flights to Cairo, Khartoum, Jeddah and Dubai, as Eritrea's Information Minister Yemane Gebre Meskel, underlined on Twitter. Equally, prosperity in Eritrea will positively impact on the ongoing economic growth in Ethiopia, opening up new paths of investment and trade destination as well as business opportunities. In a bid to expand these opportunities as part of reinforcing regional integration as well as boosting commercial ties between the two countries, Ethiopian Airlines has begun talks to take a stake in Eritrean Airlines.

Given the momentum of relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea and in light of its positive repercussions to the region, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy has already asked that the U.N. sanctions on Eritrea be dropped. As Ambassador Tekeda Alemu told the United Nations Security Council at the end of last month (July 30) said the rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea is historic, thanks to the leaders of the two countries. Indeed, the silencing of guns in Africa was fostering peace, with “this wind of change” welcomed by the region and beyond. Ambassador Tekeda emphasized: “It is downright impossible to deny that the politics of the Horn of Africa is in the process of rapid change and with salutary implications. All this is the result of the rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea which would have been thought to be inconceivable only a few months ago.” “What was once considered impossible has been made possible thanks to the courageous and bold steps taken by the leadership of the two countries.” AU Commission Chairperson Moussa Faki also noted a month ago these daring moves and the reconciliation efforts of the ongoing normalization process between Eritrea and Ethiopia will be a “a milestone in Africa’s efforts to silence the guns by 2020”.

Awareness of the positive impact of peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea in the politics of the Horn of Africa has spread widely among countries in the region and more widely, encouraging them to rally behind this peace initiative. It has clearly underlined the importance and necessity of investing in a peace-building process that touches on regional development transformation. This will certainly contribute to enhance not only the security of both countries but also the wider Horn of Africa region. It quickly and clearly cleansed the depressing tension that had created a gloomy sense of mistrust, animosity and short-sightedness towards other countries in the region. It has already opened up a new way of approaching common concerns, seeing problems from a new dimension and vantage point.

One diplomatic milestone that quickly followed was Somalia's President Mohamed Abdullahi visiting Asmara. The two countries' readiness to write a new chapter in their relations on regional cooperation will be another key to progress in the Horn of Africa. They have not had diplomatic ties for nearly 15 years. President Mohamed during his visit also stressed he wanted to see sanctions on Eritrea to be lifted and pledged to be part of the process.

The process has also engendered another initiative from Ethiopia which has expressed its readiness to do whatever is necessary to contribute to the normalization of relations between Eritrea and Djibouti. It has formally submitted a request to play the role of mediator between Djibouti and Eritrea to resolve their border dispute and the tension between the two countries concerning the border strip of Ras Doumeira. It is Ethiopia's firm commitment as this will be a critical element for peace and security in the region.

Eritrean Airlines makes a historic inaugural flight to Addis Ababa

An Eritrean Airlines carrier arrived at the Bole International Airport carrying a high-level Eritrean delegation led by Eritrean Minister of Transport and Communications, Tesfasellase Berhane, on Saturday (August 4). It included the Minister of Tourism, Askale Menkerios and the Director General of Eritrean Civil Aviation Authority, Paulos Kahsai together with the passengers on board for the landmark flight. The delegation was welcomed by State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs Hirut Zemene, State Minister for Transport, Eshete Asfaw and Ethiopian Airlines CEO, Tewolde Gebremariam and the Director General of Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority, Colonel Wosenyeleh Hunegnaw.

Speaking at the ceremony celebrating the event, State Minister Hirut expressed her elation and said that "this is a special day." She noted Ethiopia and Eritrea had reached a remarkable milestone in a span of only 6 weeks since their rapprochement started. This, she said, demonstrated the epitome of the new culture of mutual respect and cooperation as well as the common aspiration for development shared by the peoples of Ethiopia and Eritrea. Mrs Hirut underlined the fact that the peoples of the two countries shared commonalities in social, cultural and economic spheres.

Alluding to the current multifaceted strides Ethiopia and Eritrea have made, State Minister Hirut emphasized the four major key events that had laid the foundation for Saturday's historic inaugural flight were the opening of telecommunication links, the creation of a flight connection, the consolidation of diplomatic relations and the high-level official visits made by the leaders of both countries within a period of less than two weeks. Mrs Hirut said the commencement of regular flights between the two countries by both airlines will further boost business, tourism and people-to-people ties. In her concluding remarks, the State Minister also underlined the fact that this inaugural event was "a testimony to the ever-strengthening relations between the two countries."

Eritrean Minister of Transport, Tesfasellasié, said that "Eritrean Airlines is not going to compete with Ethiopian Airlines but we are going to cooperate in assisting each other." He noted, "we will work together in the development of the business community as well as the development of the two countries."

Airlines CEO, Tewolde Gebremariam noted that this historic inaugural flight from Asmara by Eritrean Airlines was indicative of a burgeoning demand for ever-growing aviation cooperation between Ethiopia and Eritrea. He added that there were discussions underway between the two airlines to expand their scope of cooperation.

The IGAD-led South Sudan Peace Process takes another step forward

President Salva Kiir and South Sudanese opposition leaders appended their signature to an agreement on governance on Sunday (August 5). The Agreement was signed by President Salva Kiir, Riek Machar (SPLM-IO), Gabriel Changson Chang (SSOA), Joseph Okello Other Political Parties (OPP), and Deng Alor (SPLM-FDs). The ceremony was attended by Presidents Omar al-Bashir (Sudan), Yoweri Museveni (Uganda), Uhuru Kenyatta (Kenya), and Ismail Omar Guelleh (Djibouti), Prime Minister Hassan Ali Kheyre (Somalia) and Deputy Prime Minister, Demeke Mekonnen (Ethiopia). President Omar al-Bashir and President Yoweri Museveni co-signed the deal as guarantors, and representatives of the United Nations and African Union as witnesses.

Among the signatories were the South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA) and the Former Detainees (FDs) who had announced only two days earlier that they still had outstanding issues on governance. The SSOA said it signed the agreement because there had been changes made at the request of President Omer al-Bashir. Earlier, the SSOA and the SPLM-FDs had called for a review of articles covering the number of state and boundaries and on power-sharing at the state and local government level. On Monday, however, the SSOA said there had been two changes. One was that those who felt they had lost lands following the creation of 32 states could make representations to the Technical Boundaries Committee tasked to delineate and demarcate tribal boundaries as they stood on 1/1/1956. They would also have the right to seek arbitration before the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague. Secondly, IGAD Heads of State and Government made a commitment that the whole Article would be subjected to further discussions when the peace talks resume. These changes opened the way for the SSOA to sign the agreement. The SSOA said it had submitted its concerns to President Omer al-Bashir who had explained the problem to other IGAD leaders, and it thanked President al-Bashir for "his patience with us and persuading his colleagues to see the justice of our demands".

President Kiir reiterated his commitment to the deal and called on opposition groups to put aside any reservations. He said in peace talks there was no winner but "give and take for the sake of peace". He invited the guarantors, UN and regional bodies to monitor the implementation of the agreement. Both he and Riek Machar underlined: "it is not enough to sign the agreement, we have to implement it", and Machar urged the IGAD, the African Union and the international community to support in the implementation of the deal under which Machar will be reinstated as first vice president, one of five vice presidential positions. The agreement also allows for a

Council of Ministers which will have 35 ministers (20 from Kiir's party, 9 from Machar's, and 6 from other parties), and a transitional parliament which will have 550 seats (332 for Kiir's party, 128 for Machar's, and, the remaining 90 for other parties).

The signing of the Agreement has been welcomed. The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, welcomed the signing of the Agreement on Outstanding Issues of Governance. It constituted, he said, an important step towards the end of the conflict in South Sudan. His statement said: "The Chairperson of the Commission urges the South Sudanese parties to sustain the momentum arising from the signed agreement, by continuing to demonstrate the required spirit of compromise and implementing in good faith the commitments they have made." The Commission Chairperson also praised the efforts of President Omer al-Bashir and the IGAD leaders to achieve peace in South Sudan and to bring an end to the conflict. UN Secretary-General Guterres also issued a statement urging all parties to work in good faith and demonstrate their commitment to fully implement and to finalize the revitalized ARCSS as soon as possible.

Following the success of this Khartoum round of talks, IGAD leaders decided that President al-Bashir should continue to facilitate the talks until the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) is finally signed. The talks were expected to move to Nairobi for the final round of talks on the modalities of implementation of the revitalized ARCSS. However, the IGAD leaders attending the signing ceremony in Khartoum on Sunday said that President Kenyatta would support the next stage of the talks by sending a team of experts to participate with the Sudanese mediators in the handling of the last round of talks on the modalities. President Kenyatta, who praised the efforts of President Omar al-Bashir, agreed on keeping the talks in Khartoum to finalize the remaining issues which will mainly concern the implementation matrix of the peace agreement and the timetable for the return of the opposition leaders as well as troop redeployments. The negotiating teams of the South Sudanese parties are now resuming talks on the modalities of implementation of the peace agreement.

The IGAD Council of Ministers held an extraordinary meeting on Thursday (August 9) to discuss the implementation matrix for the revitalized South Sudan peace process, and a detailed timetable for implementation of the revitalized peace agreement. In her statement, Mrs. Hirut Zemene, representing the Chair of the IGAD Council of Ministers, Dr Workneh Gebeyehu, has noted the very crucial role played by the IGAD Council in conducting consecutive High Level Revitalization Forums (HLRF), to accomplish the mandate given to it by the IGAD Summit of 12 June 2017. She also noted the significance of the shuttle diplomacy and proximity talks conducted by the Council Members and the IGAD Special Envoy to South Sudan and his Task Force that greatly contributed to the success of the results gained in the Peace Process that precipitated in a historic agreement signed in Khartoum on the 5th of August 2015. She further noted the important base set by the Council in its "bridging proposal" for showing the road map to peace and reconciliation.

UK Defense Secretary visits the Horn of Africa

UK Defense Secretary, Gavin Williamson, on a visit to Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia has announced UK specialist Army trainers will travel to the region to help tackle sexual violence in conflict areas. In meetings with defense ministers in the region, he said the UK was a trusted partner, committed to promoting prosperity and helping improve the security of people in vulnerable situations by increasing the participation of women and other non-traditional security actors.

During his visit to the region, he opened a Security Sector and Gender training course at the British Peace and Security Training center outside Nairobi, where hundreds of personnel from a dozen partner nations will be trained in techniques aimed at preventing and responding to sexual violence against women, men and children in conflict areas. Confirming that a small training team would deploy to East Africa specifically to help tackle sexual violence, he also agreed an extension to the British Army's infantry training in Kenya.

In Somalia, Mr. Williamson saw a demonstration by British troops of the work being done to train Somali forces against the threat from Al-Shabaab, as well as explaining their contribution to AMISOM. The Defense Secretary also met President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed to discuss the UK's continued training to tackle gender-based violence and its work to help suppress Al-Shabaab threat.

In Ethiopia, he met UK personnel and representatives of agencies working to combat violence against women, as well as Defense Minister Motuma Mekassa to discuss possible areas of co-operation.

Talking to Women, Peace and Security trainers in Addis Ababa, Mr. Williamson thanked troops for their work, which ranging from delivering infantry training for partner militaries tackling terrorism, to teaching soldiers how to prevent and respond to sexual violence against women. He also discussed the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), where the UK has built a field hospital for peacekeepers, and UK support for voter education, women's participation and local conflict resolution.

He said: "A prosperous and secure Africa is firmly in our national interest and our Armed Forces are playing a vital role on the continent. Whether fighting for women's rights through our training teams or suppressing terrorist threats, the UK is a nation with a big heart and we are determined to help our partners when they need us. The incredible work our service personnel are doing from Somalia to South Sudan will help build a more secure and united continent. This will help to set the conditions for trading partnerships across Africa, supporting British and African businesses to create opportunities for everyone."

UK announces support for Jobs Compact and Tax System Transformation programs

The UK's International Development Secretary, Ms. Penny Mordaunt, has been on a visit to Ethiopia this week and was received by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed on Wednesday. They discussed economic issues and poverty reduction, according to Office of the Prime Minister. Ms. Mordaunt commended the ongoing reforms in Ethiopia and pledged the UK Department for International Development (DFID's) strong cooperation with the Ethiopian government. Fitsum Arega, Chief of Staff at the Prime Minister's Office said: "Ethiopia enjoys strong and robust partnership with the UK. DFID's development support to Ethiopia is dynamic, demand-driven and multifaceted, and the government is grateful for the partnership."

Ms. Mordaunt went on to launch DFID's largest bilateral tax programme to help Ethiopia increase revenue generation, signing grant agreements amounting to £115 million with Dr Abraham Tekeste, Minister of Finance and Economic Cooperation. Of this £80 million will be used to finance the Ethiopia Jobs Compact program and £35 million will be used for the Tax Systems Transformation Program.

Under the Jobs Compact program, the grant will be used to support Ethiopia's industrialisation strategy with an intention of increasing economic opportunities for Ethiopians and refugees residing in the country. The program is expected to create up to 100,000 additional jobs, of which up to 30,000 will be for refugees residing in the country, over the next six years. Ethiopia currently hosts nearly a million refugees from across the region and Ms. Mordaunt said by empowering refugees to get jobs, the UK was helping them rebuild their lives so that they did not need to seek dangerous migratory journeys outside the region. This would help them find jobs and rebuild their lives, creating the stability which will allow Ethiopia and the region to prosper. It would also help Ethiopia remain a force for stability in a volatile region.

The grant to the Tax Systems Transformation Program will be used to strengthen domestic resource mobilization capacity, focusing on the transformation of the tax system. The aim is to increase tax revenue, improve the business operating environment, ensure tax does not overburden the poor and improve compliance to the tax system. In a press release, Ms. Mordaunt said the program would transform Ethiopia's tax system, helping harness the potential of its continuing economic boom, and generate revenue to better finance services and development, as well as become less reliant on aid. Extra tax revenues would help Ethiopia tackle poverty, invest in services, and boost economic growth.

During her visit, Ms. Mordaunt launched a £9 million Civil Society Support Programme, aimed to empower citizens to influence government policy and hold the government to account, supporting civil society groups and giving a voice to the most marginalised groups, including women, young people and people with disabilities. She visited the UK garment factory Hela at Hawassa Industrial Park and announced further support to improve the welfare and security of employees at the Industrial Park. Among other areas of support, DFID is working to ensure worker wellbeing and safety through a range of worker initiatives including UNWOMEN's Safe

Cities programme and ILO's Better Work Initiative. In addition, Ms Mordaunt also had the chance to visit a camp for internally displaced people and where the UK currently helping to provide basic lifesaving support for almost a million people.

Somalia's Security Sector Reform Plan

Somalia is in the process of drafting a Transitional Plan for Security Reform to replace the security delivered by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) over the last decade when forces from Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Djibouti, and Burundi have been the primary security providers. Other international partners have also made significant contributions, notably the United States and bilateral partners which have provided equipment and support to enable the re-establishment of federal and state government. Despite some progress, challenges still remained in the process of implementation. An Operational Readiness Assessment of the Somali National Army in 2017 highlighted problems including financial problems, failed reform efforts, and the lack of a common vision for security in Somalia. The Assessment called for significant reform and a more systematic approach to building and sustaining the Somali National Forces.

One of the first acts of President Mohamed Abdullahi after taking office last year was to agree to the creation of a National Security Architecture. This was followed by a Security Pact signed between Somalia and international partners at the London Somalia Conference in May 2001, laying the foundation for building an effective, accountable, affordable, and acceptable security sector. The National Security Architecture sets out the composition, structure, and scope of the security sector in Somalia, the size of the security forces, the role of the institutions for civilian oversight, and the division of command and control between the Federal Government and the Federal Member States (FMS). It was the first time the Somali government had formalized and agreed to a vision for its security institutions.

In December, the Federal Government, working closely with the Federal Member States, AMISOM, the Troop-contributing countries, and international partners, committed itself to develop a plan which would enable Somalia to gradually assume responsibility for security. This involves the gradual transfer of security responsibilities from AMISOM to Somali National forces. It covers areas of the country where AMISOM has never had a presence but where security institutions and capacity need to be built. National Security Advisor Abdisaid Ali, in a recent interview with the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, emphasized that the planning horizon covered the next four years, up to the 2020/2021 elections, though there is also recognition that rebuilding the Somalia security sector must be a long-term process. It involves Somali state-building and peace-building and the emergence of effective Somali institutions.

Mr. Ali stressed that the plan is different to previous strategies on security because it takes a broad view of what contributes security. It recognizes that military operations alone cannot sustain the transition process or build a lasting peace, so the plan emphasizes wider aspects of security including the rule of law, local governance, and youth employment. The other significant change from the past strategies, he says, is that the plan focuses on ensuring civilian-

led approaches including efforts towards stabilization. The emphasis is on local consultation and engagement in the planning and implementation of transition, as well as the need to address the political questions which will underpin the security institutions, as new approach also makes it different. These include the composition of the security forces, the allocation of security resources between the federal government and FMS, and the command relationships within the security institutions.

The Transition Plan provides for the combined political will of Somalia and its international partners to see the plan succeed. It is intended to be an organized, gradual, systematic transfer of security responsibilities to forces aligned as part of the Somali National Security Architecture by 2021, while “concurrently instituting broad political and economic measures to support and sustain the transition at the federal, state, and community level. Legitimate governance and inclusive politics is the basis for all the other reforms and capacity building we are doing across the government and across the country.” Mr. Ali noted that once a “zero draft” was circulated, the core group refined the plan further and gave its approval. It was then endorsed by the National Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council, and subsequently welcomed by the UN Security Council and the Somalia Security High-Level meeting of international donors in Brussels on May 2.

The Transition Plan sets out strategic directions across three areas of activity. At the operational level, it identifies and prioritizes locations to be under full Somali security force responsibility, including the handover of locations from AMISOM, and the deployment of forces agreed to in the National Security Architecture. In terms of institutional capacity building, it lays out implementation of institutional capacity-building programs and plans including implementation of the National Security Architecture, recommendations from the Operational Readiness Assessment, policing, justice, and civil service reform. It includes payroll reform, policy and doctrine development, civil service restructuring, force generation, training, and the passage of key legislation. The third area covers support activity, aligning non-security force efforts to create the conditions for a sustainable peace, including stabilization, strengthening local governance, reconciliation, mediation, the rule of law, socioeconomic activities, and preventing/countering violent extremism activities. These involve extensive consultation with local communities to meet their needs but can also include road rehabilitation, provision of health or education services, district council formation, and job creation.

National Security Adviser Ali underlined the importance of the unity and political will of all stakeholders. This, he says, is essential to the success of the transition plan. The National Security Council, chaired by the President and comprising the leaders of the Federal Member States, is the vehicle for political decisions related to security, before review by Parliament. Certainly, “the Federal Government, the Federal Member States, AMISOM, troop-contributing countries and international partners all have to remain engaged and committed to deliver the plan.” Mr. Ali also acknowledged there would be many challenges as the Plan moves into implementation, including continuing issues of security, resources, institutional capacity and political questions. But, he says, “if all the stakeholders are committed to the vision set out in the transition plan, we can overcome these factors.” “Ultimately, he stressed, “Success is for Somalia to assume responsibility for security. However, security is not an end in itself. By providing security, we hope to see the return of normalcy for the people of Somalia with freedom

to move around without the threat of al-Shabaab, open businesses, play sports, go to school, and engage in politics under the protection of the rule of law and protection for their human rights.”

Somali electoral officials’ workshop for electoral systems and boundary delimitation

Somalia’s electoral officials, representatives of newly formed political parties, the Federal Government, the Federal Member States and other stakeholders, have convened in Nairobi this week for a four day training workshop organized by the African Union Commission and the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The aim is to extend knowledge on election management, to build participants’ understanding of the constitutional and electoral legal frameworks as Somalia begins its preparations for the one-person-one-vote election due in 2020. Another specific aim of the workshop was to raise the 25 participants’ awareness on the impact of electoral systems on women, minorities and underrepresented communities.

The workshop was officially opened by the AU Special Representative for Somalia and Head of AMISOM Ambassador Francisco Madeira. In his opening remarks, Ambassador Madeira said: “Most of the participants in this training have very clear ideas on the complexity of the process and they are effectively discussing what needs to be discussed: How to go over and solve these complicated issues, how to confront the issue of clanism in Somalia, with its traditional cultural influences, where women’s rights are not necessarily what the general western conception is; or what the general democratic practice is.” Mr. Haji Ssebirumbi, AMISOM’s Senior Political Officer said, “This progress made is in line with the AU Peace and Security Council mandate to AMISOM made in 2014 and is part of AU’s strategic objectives to support the Federal Government of Somalia to conduct general elections in Somalia in close collaboration with AUC (African Union Commission) departments.”

Robert Gerenge, the Principal Advisor for Election Management Bodies, in the Department of Political Affairs of the African Union Commission, said at the opening of the workshop on Monday (August 6): “It is important to get the electoral architecture of the country right, through a consultative effort.” Senior Policy and Strategic Advisor in the Office of the Prime Minister Mr. Abdigani Jama stressed the need to get away from the Somalia’s previous model based on clans. He said: “We do not have much time, but we hope to have an outcome that can help us move to a one-person-one-vote in a consultative and peaceful way.”

It is the third workshop in a series organized by the African Union Commission and AMISOM in support of Somalia’s National Independent Electoral Commission (NIEC). Through these, the African Union is trying to inculcate a culture of inclusivity in the political participation and representation in the country. “Everyone is in agreement, including Federal Member States, that a multiparty system, in which political parties contest in elections, is the way forward; and it is the easiest. This workshop is important to help us understand the various models of elections,” said legislator Fausia Mohamed, chairperson of the National Democratic Party. Participants agreed the workshop provided them with a platform where they can exchange ideas; and learn other countries’ experiences. “We have previously requested the AU to support us in order to have a better understanding of all these electoral issues,” said Sayed A. Mohamed, Deputy

Chairperson of Somalia’s electoral body. General Mohamed Warsame Darwish, Jubaland State Minister of Interior, expressed optimism that the workshop would flesh out some of the contentious issues they struggle with as leaders. He said: “I believe our country is more complicated than other countries. It requires more time, more discussion and more understanding”.

Thanksgiving for the Reconciliation and Unification of the Two Holy Synods

A Thanksgiving ceremony for the reconciliation and unification of the two Holy Synods of the Ethiopian Tewahedo Orthodox Church took place in Addis Ababa, at the Millennium Hall on Saturday (August 4). This followed a similar program in Washington DC a week earlier, convened during Prime Minister Dr. Abiy’s visit to the US, witnessing the reunification of the two Holy Synods, , and the return of Abune Merkorios to Addis Ababa, after more than two decades of dispute and animosity. The ceremony at Millennium Hall ceremony formally and officially heralded the reunion of the two Holy Synods of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church into a single Synod once again and to celebrate and thank all those who had been involved in the reconciliation process and made such effort to make this long awaited reunion possible.

The occasion was attended by the two Patriarchs of the Church, His Holiness Abune Mathias and His Holiness Abune Merkorios, by President Dr. Mulatu Teshome and other higher government officials, the diplomatic community and followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church well as representatives from various Religious Institutions.

President Dr. Mulatu told the close to 25,000 invited guests at the Millennium Hall that “the reconciliation between the Two Holy Synods would help us to have a strong Country”, and he called on the religious leaders to discharge their responsibilities in strengthening the unity of Ethiopia. The President noted the role Faith Groups could and should play in nurturing the younger generation’s ethics, love, and sense of patriotism as well as in eradicating narrow nationalism. He said: “It is unthinkable to aspire to build a strong Ethiopia in the absence of united and well-organized faith and cultural institutions”, adding, “by mitigating those challenges our country is seeking to build an advanced, developed and civilized Ethiopia, we need a generation proud of his/her Identity, ethically matured, and working in the spirit of patriotism. To make this happen, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church and other religious organizations need to appear as major actors”.

The two heads of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, His Holiness Abune Merkorios, the fourth Patriarch, and His Holiness Abune Mathias, the sixth patriarch, also delivered their messages of peace and unity. “Let there be peace from today on,” said Abune Mathias, speaking during the ceremony which was transmitted live for millions of the faithful. Abune Mathias said he was happy with the peace the church had now attained, and he thanked the bishops and others who had managed to achieve this so quickly. He also praised Prime Minister Dr. Abiy for his contribution for the success of reconciliation process of the two Synods.

His Holiness Abune Merkorios's message was delivered through his representative, Abune Tewoflos (II), and expressed special gratitude to Prime Minister Dr. Abiy. He said the church would have a special place for Dr. Abiy and remember him in their prayers. Abune Tewoflos also thanked the bishops and others for their efforts to reunite the church.

Religious leaders from other faiths also participated on the occasion, underlining the reconciliation and reunification of the two synods of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church as a crucial element to solidify the country's unity and the current reforms. Sheikh Omar Mufti, a representative from Ethiopian Muslim Affairs Council said, "God has given us unity; Unity is both developmental and religious." He expressed his good wishes to the crowd for ushering in this day of unification of the church. The Cardinal of the Ethiopian Catholic Church, Cardinal Berhane Eyesus, said "Today is a day of joy for heaven and earth". The Representative of Ethiopian Evangelical Church Unity said, "We are all happy that peace is achieved within Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church." Kale Hiwot Church representative described the Ethiopian Church "as the mother of all our churches and we are happy that the church is reunited." Its Secretary-General, Kursie Shefeno said, "The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church is a model for its strong stand on unity. It is great to see the end of the division as we consider it as our model."