

News in brief

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News in Brief

Africa and the African Union

The UN Security Council heard the quarterly briefing by the Chair of the Eritrea-Somalia Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Kairat Umarov, on Monday this week (July 30). The briefing included the Chairman's report on his recent visit to the region, to Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Somalia. **(See article)**

UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2431 (2018) on Monday (July 30) extending the mandate of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) until the end of May 2019, and delayed plans to continue draw-down of troops by four months. **(See article)**

Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for UN Peacekeeping Operations, in an interview last week with UN News, underlined the continuing value of peace-keeping as "a very important tool" in the promotion of peace and stability. He noted the UN's Action for Peacekeeping initiative, launched in March, called on Member States to renew collective engagement to achieve peacekeeping excellence. He emphasized the reform of the UN peace and security architecture aimed to ensure that the UN will end up stronger in prevention, more effective in mediation, and more cost-effective in operation. **(See article)**

Ethiopia

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed arrived at Bole International Airport on Wednesday (August 1), after his highly successful six-day Diaspora outreach visit to the United States, meeting members of the Diaspora in Washington DC, Los Angeles and Minnesota. The Prime Minister headed a high-level delegation including the President of Oromia Regional State, Lemma Megersa and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu. **(See article)**

During his visit to the US, the Prime Minister also met with US Vice-President Mike Pence, the President of the World Bank, Jim Yon Kim, and the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, Ms. Christine Lagarde. **(See article)**

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Workneh Gebeyehu attended the funeral service in honor of the late Artist Fekadu Teklemariam, an influential figure in Ethiopia's modern theatre, held at the National Theatre on Thursday (August 2). Dr Workneh also signed the book of condolences.

Minister of Defense, Motuma Mekassa, met with the UK Defense Secretary Gavin Williamson on Wednesday (August 1). Both sides highlighted the strong partnership between Ethiopia and the United Kingdom. Ethiopia is a key partner for UK Defense engagement in the Horn as the country which contributes the most troops to peace keeping missions in Africa, and in particular, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan.

His Holiness Abune Merkorios, the fourth Ethiopian Orthodox Church Patriarch, also returned to Addis Ababa with the Prime Minister on Wednesday (August 1). His Holiness, who has been leading the Holy Synod in the Diaspora, returned to take up his position as Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in Ethiopia after twenty-six years. **(See article)**

State Minister of Foreign Affairs Mrs. Hirut Zemene held discussions with Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Special Advisor of the Horn of Africa and Eritrea, Mr. Arne Jan Flølo on Wednesday (August 1). The two sides discussed on the current and potential cooperation between Ethiopia and Norway especially in the areas of economy, trade and investment, climate change, agriculture and forestry. Along with bilateral cooperation, they have discussed on the positive changes and prospects undergoing in the relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea in which Mr. Flølo expressed his government's appreciation for all the positive actions taken so far, adding: "It is history being written between Ethiopia and Eritrea".

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Professor Aferwork Kassu met with the Ambassador of China to Ethiopia, Ambassador Tan Jian on Tuesday (July 31). They discussed the ongoing preparations for the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) to be convened in Beijing in September this year.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Professor Aferwork Kassu received copies of the credentials of newly appointed Belgian Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ambassador Francois Dumont on Tuesday (July 31). Professor Afework praised the technical support the Government of Belgium provides to Ethiopia. He noted the Government's current reforms including widening of the political environment and addressing human rights concerns, as well as playing an important role in regional affairs. It had made history in breaking the stalemate and creating peace with Eritrea. Ambassador Dumont said the Kingdom of Belgium appreciated the reforms taking in Ethiopia, describing them as an example to the region. He promised to do everything possible to increase cooperation between Ethiopia and Belgium in both bilateral and multilateral areas.

At a meeting last week to evaluate the Ministry of Public Enterprises' performance last fiscal year, and its plans for this current fiscal year, Minister Teshome Toga said the

Ministry's enterprises had made a gross profit of 2.8 billion *birr*, falling short of its target of 3.7 billion *birr*. Sales by Ministerial enterprises had reached 37 billion *birr* out of a planned 51 billion *birr* target. The Ministry's enterprises include the Building Materials Supplier Enterprise, National Liquors and Alcohol Factory, Agricultural Works Corporation and Tourist Trade Enterprise.

Engineer Semegnew Bekele, Project Manager for the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, who was found shot in Meskel Square in Addis Ababa on Thursday morning (July 26), was buried on Sunday (July 29) at Holy Trinity Cathedral. The funeral ceremony was attended by President Dr. Mulatu and Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen as well as family members, government officials and tens of thousands of people from the city.

The Ethiopian government and the UN World Food Program on Monday (July 30) called for more funding to address the humanitarian needs of refugees relocated in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) said, "Shortfall in funding is seriously compromising the quality of protection provided to asylum seekers and refugees in the country." The WFP stressed the need to join hands in addressing the needs of both refugees and internally displaced people.

Djibouti

Djibouti's representative at the UN told the Security Council on Monday (July 30) that Djibouti remained concerned over its ongoing border dispute with Eritrea. He called for the Council to urge Eritrea to engage in mediation efforts. Ambassador Tekeda Alemu, Ethiopia's Permanent Representative to the UN, told the Security Council that Ethiopia was working to mediate between Djibouti and Eritrea, in the prevailing spirit of embracing reconciliation and all-inclusive progress and development in the Horn of Africa. **(See article)**

Eritrea

President Isaias welcomed Somali's President Mohamed Abdullahi on the first ever visit by a Somali president to Eritrea on Saturday (July 28). **(See article)**

Eritrea's representative at the UN told the Security Council on Monday (July 30) that it would be most appropriate to lift sanctions following recent historic developments in the Horn of Africa, with Eritrea and Ethiopia ending two decades of war and opening a new chapter of peace and friendship, and Eritrea and Somalia agreeing to exchange ambassadors and address peace and security issues. **(See article)**

Kenya

Joseph Njoroge, Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Energy, told an energy forum in Nairobi that the 1045 kilometer Kenya and Ethiopia electricity transmission line is 70% complete on the Kenyan side and 90% complete on the Ethiopian side. Speaking at the Third Meeting of the Program Technical Steering Committee of the Project on the

enhancement of a sustainable energy market in Eastern Africa-Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Region on Monday (July 30), he said: "The project is expected to be completed in 2019 and will help to boost electricity trade in the East African region." The Ethiopia-Kenya interconnector is a 500 kv High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) line, with 612 km on the Kenyan side and 433km on the Ethiopian side being funded by the African Development Bank

The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSRelief) has launched a project to distribute 1,200 tons of food aid among Somali refugees in Kenya's Dadaab camps. The project will benefit over 77,646 people including, nursing mothers, pregnant women and tuberculosis patients.

Somalia

President Mohamed Abdullahi made an historic three-day visit to Eritrea at the invitation of President Isaias, at the weekend (July 28-30). He was accompanied by the Ministers of Information, Culture and Tourism, Transport and Construction and the State Minister for Foreign Affairs. President Mohamed and President Isaias agreed to establish diplomatic relations and exchange ambassadors, as well as promote bilateral trade and investment and educational and cultural exchanges in a four point 'Joint Declaration on Brotherly Relations and Comprehensive Cooperation'. **(See article)**

Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre and a high level federal ministerial delegation arrived in Puntland's capital Garowe on Sunday (July 29) where he held meetings with Puntland President Abdiweli Mohamed Ali Gaas, the Vice President and Puntland cabinet ministers. The Prime Minister also attended the 20th anniversary ceremony of the formation of Puntland state on August 1, 1998.

UK Defense Secretary, Gavin Williamson, visited Mogadishu on Tuesday (July 31). He held talks with Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi at Villa Somalia, discussing issues relating to bilateral relations and the security situation in the country. Mr. Williamson reaffirmed the UK's commitment to support Somalia with regard to security, governance and economy. Mr. Williamson also met with Somalia's Minister of Defense and the head of the National Army, General Abdiweli Jama Gorod. Their talks focused on the building of accountable and capable security forces.

The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-general, Michael Keating, heading a joint UN-IGAD delegation, visited Garowe in Puntland and Hargeisa in Somaliland at the weekend, (July 28-30), urging a peaceful solution to the conflict in the Tukaraq area. He held talks with Puntland's President Abdiweli Mohamed Ali Gaas and Somaliland President Muse Bihi Abdi, as well as other officials and representatives of civil society, including a committee of Somaliland elders, who are working with counterparts from Puntland to de-escalate tension.

The Somali National Women's Organization (SNWO) last week organized two-day nationwide "peace forums" on enhancing women's roles in peace and reconciliation

efforts. The Forums were held simultaneously in the five administrative capitals of South West, Jubaland, Puntland, HirShabelle and Galmudug states. The Forums involved a wide-range of women stakeholders, peace advocates, activists and practitioners, to determine ways and strategies to improve women's role in promoting peace and prevent violent extremism in the country. The UN Secretary-General's Special Representative, Michael Keating, said it was "very obvious that Somalia's problems are not going to be solved unless women are at the front and centre, and that includes everything from health and education, to supporting families, through to business and the economy, and also security and, especially, conflict resolution."

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and UNOCHA issued reports for June regarding internally displacement of persons (IDPs) and refugee conditions in Somalia. **(See article)**

A team of AU and UNSOS engineering support teams and technical experts held an engineering logistics conference in Mogadishu on Tuesday (July 31) to discuss plans to enhance twenty of its Forward Operating Bases, over the next six months, mapping out a strategy for the enhancement program as well as develop a list of bases in need of enhancement and reconstruction.

South Sudan

The signing ceremony for agreement on outstanding issues on governance in the IGAD-led peace process will be held in Khartoum on Sunday (August 5). It is expected to be attended by IGAD leaders. Sudan President Al-Bashir on Sunday encouraged the South Sudanese government to reach a compromise over the outstanding issues on the governance chapter with the South Sudan Opposition Alliance and the Former Detainees which expressed concern over the possible timing of a referendum in connection with the issue of the number of states, and over power ratios at the state level.

President Kiir said on Monday (July 30) said that his government was continuing to talk with the non-signatory groups ahead of the formal signing of agreement on the outstanding issues on governance. The government, the SPLM-IO and Other Opposition Parties (OPP) initialed the deal on power-sharing and governance last week; the South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA) and the Former Detainees (FDs), abstained.

The Former Detainees (FD) has agreed to sign the governance agreement reached in Khartoum though it still had some reservations related to issues in contention which should be settled in the next round of talks. These concern the ratios of power-sharing at the level of the states and the question of a referendum in connection with the number of states. A spokesperson said the FD would sign so as not to obstruct the peace process.

Sudan

President Omer al-Bashir received a letter on Saturday (July 28) from South Sudan President Salva Kiir on the expected resumption of oil production next September. South

Sudan Oil Minister Ezekiel Lol Gatkuoth told reporters that oil production will resume on September 2, with 45,000 barrels/day from the El Toor and Toma South fields. Production will also restart in other oil fields in Munga and Unity, and by the end of the year, said the Minister; production in blocks 1, 2, 4 will be at maximum capacity."

The United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Field Support, Atul Khare, visited Abyei last week. In his two-day visit, Mr. Khare visited Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism JBVMM sites to inspect the mission's operational progress, its challenges and plans. He thanked UNISFA for its efforts and praised Force Commander, General Gebre Adhana Woldezgu, for building a team and running an inclusive administration. He said his visit aimed to strengthen the coordination and support between Headquarters and the mission. In April, the UN Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) until October 15.

State Defense Minister, Ali Mohamed Salem, on Wednesday (August 1), received a delegation from China's State Administration for Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense. The State Minister praised China's contribution to the development projects in Sudan, and expressed keenness to promote the strategic economic and defense partnerships with China. The delegation underlined China's desire to engage in economic partnerships involving heavy industries sector in order to meet Sudan's civil and defense needs.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy's successful Diaspora outreach tour in North America...

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed held a successful six-day Diaspora outreach tour in three major cities in North America, Washington DC, Los Angeles and Minnesota at the end of last week and this week on Monday (July 30).

The Prime Minister arrived in Washington DC on Thursday (July 26) at the beginning of a visit of scheduled meetings with the Ethiopian Diaspora community residing in North America. The meetings were held under the theme: "Break the Wall and Build a Bridge". The Prime Minister led a delegation including Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu; the Minister for the Government Communication Affairs Office, Ahmed Shide; the President of the Oromia Regional State, Lemma Megersa; and other high-level government officials. Upon arrival at Dulles International Airport, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy was warmly welcomed by Ethiopia's Ambassador to the US, Ambassador Kassa Teklebirhan and members of the Ethiopian Diaspora community.

In an electrifying address to over 25,000 members of the Ethiopian Diaspora in Washington DC, Convention Center and an additional 55,000 more watching the event on TV screens outside the hall on Saturday (July 28), Prime Minister Dr. Abiy capitalized on his call: "Let's break the wall, let's build a bridge," adding that "the bridge that we build is not only beneficial for us but also one that passes to posterity". He said: ". Let's

build one Ethiopian community. Let's look inward and examine ourselves-let's only take the best from our history and join in common purpose. Let's build a just society.”“Over the past 40 years, a wall of hatred, revenge and division had been built,” which he said, was “a divisive wall built by every one of us and one that set us apart from one another”. He called on the Diaspora to join hands to tear down this divisive wall.

Washington, he said, was a living witness to the fact that Ethiopianism is not something that we know when we are at home, but something we carry in our hearts as we travel everywhere beyond home”. He said: “We Ethiopians have shown the whole world that we can finally lean on one another, stand together, have one common vision and toil for it...We have also showed the world we can hug one another and love our fellow nationals. The world has today witnessed all of these through this historic gathering.”

He described the Ethiopian Diaspora as pillars of Ethiopia's growth, freedom and prosperity, further stressing that “If we want to build a country where democracy and justice prevailed, we must first reconcile with ourselves”. He told the Diaspora that it embodied “our rich, diverse nationhood and are our global ambassadors. He said: “We come to you not because of our immediate needs. It's because you're integral to our identity, our renewal, our democracy, our growth, our healing and our human capital.”While reminding the Diaspora of the pledge he made to the Diaspora to save a dollar a day to support development projects in Ethiopia, in education and health services, the Prime Minister revealed that a committee of 10 professional Ethiopians residing in North America has been set up for the facilitation of the Diaspora Trust Fund. He added that this fund would primarily be used to finance the education of the Visually Impaired and People with Disabilities. He reminded his listeners that the government has provided a bank account number for the Ethiopia Diaspora Trust Fund.

Mayor of Washington DC, Ms. Muriel Bowser, who also addressed the gathering, announced the decision of her office to declare July 28 as “Ethiopia Day in DC”. Ms. Bowser said the decision was ascribed to a number of reasons, including the Sister City Agreement between Addis Ababa and Washington DC, and the fact that Washington DC hosts over 300,000 members of the Ethiopian Diaspora, one of the largest Ethiopian Diaspora population in the United States as well as the current momentum of political and economic reforms championed by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed.

On Sunday (July 29), Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed arrived in Los Angeles for the second leg of his Diaspora outreach tour in North America. He was welcomed by the city's Acting Mayor, Antonio Villaraigosa, who also declared July 29 “Ethiopia Day in Los Angeles, and scores of members of the Ethiopian Diaspora Community. Prime Minister Dr. Abiy was the first Ethiopian Prime Minister to visit Los Angeles. During his address to hundreds and thousands of the Ethiopian Diaspora in Los Angeles, Dr. Abiy again underlined the importance of unity and touched upon the fact that Ethiopia will once again be a great nation. He said, “A nation who has introduced the Gaada System to the world cannot fail to conduct democratic elections”. Recalling that Ethiopia has been able to maintain its sovereignty and freedom, he underlined the importance of translating such glorious treasures to the building a peaceful, prosperous and democratic Ethiopia.

He called on all members of the Ethiopian Diaspora residing in North America to stand together in one spirit for their motherland.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy arrived in Minnesota for the third and final leg of his Diaspora visit to be warmly welcomed by the city's governor and local senators, as well as members of the Ethiopian Diaspora community including an activist Jawar Mohammed. In his address, the Prime Minister once again reiterated the need to "break the wall and build a bridge". He said: "We already hit and broke the wall in Washington DC and in Los Angeles; and here in Minnesota, it's time to clear the ruins." He further underlined the need to learn from Ethiopia's history and from the experience of other countries, and "once again build a great nation called Ethiopia." Also speaking on this occasion was Lemma Megersa, President of the Oromia Regional State who underscored the importance of "strengthening our unity." He added: "When we stand as one, our country-Ethiopia - will always remain to be strong,"

Replying to questions in Minnesota, he said the architects of the conflicts taking place in various parts of the country were "political traders". Measures were being taken against them and the government would continue taking action to daunt their effort. He said the government has attached prime importance to tackle conflicts as well as problems in protection of human rights and good governance. The Prime Minister said that work done after the rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea would help reinforce people-to-people bonds and economic ties between the two nations. Talks since the signing of declaration of peace and friendship hadn't raised border issues so far; they had focused mainly on ways to strengthen people-to-people ties, as with airline links and direct telephone connections. Preparations were underway to begin road transport and use the Eritrean ports. Asked about responsibilities for the gains made and the challenges faced during the past, he said the people will take the ownership and responsibility for successes achieved; and as for challenges, these were the responsibility of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) He ruled out the possibility of a transitional government in Ethiopia, telling the audience that the country is two years away from national elections and that his party, the EPRDF, has been working hard to compete against other parties. He added: "My ultimate goal is to ensure that a democratic election takes place in Ethiopia," and told opposition party leaders that he wanted to hear their recommendations for the future of Ethiopia.

During his meeting with the members of the Ethiopian Diaspora in Minnesota, the Prime Minister also announced the decision of Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh to open a Consulate-general Office in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This will be the second city in the US to have an Ethiopian Consulate-General Office, along with Los Angeles.

In addition to his Diaspora meetings, the Prime Minister also addressed the 18th Annual Badr- Ethiopian Muslim Convention - in Washington DC on Friday (July 27). He emphasized that "Islam means Peace, Rahmet and Blessings". Reiterating that "We've benefited nothing from damaging ethnic and religious divisions," he went on to point out that "If you put strong trust in your country and don't hesitate, we will make history in a very short period of time." In his address, Dr. Abiy also paid tribute to Engineer

Semegnew Bekele, whom he described as a hardworking Ethiopian hero, expressing his heartfelt sorrow over his unexpected and shocking death. He noted that the circumstances, “in daylight in the heart of our capital was a provocation intended to shake our resolve.” It would not succeed, he said.

The Prime Minister also held discussions with over 24 US-based Ethiopian opposition political parties at a political Consortium held in Washington DC. He underlined the importance of capitalizing on dialogue between all political stakeholders and the need for working together for the best interests of the nation. Leaders of the parties said this was the first time they had been proud to call an Ethiopian prime minister “Our Prime Minister”. They also emphasized the need for an all-inclusive political convention in a bid to advance the national consensus.

...and other official sideline meetings during the Prime Minister’s visit to the US

On the sidelines of his Diaspora tour, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy held several other meetings on Friday (July 27), with US Vice-President Mike Pence, the President of the World Bank, Jim Yong Kim and the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Ms. Christine Lagarde.

The Prime Minister met Vice President Pence at the White House. Both sides underlined their countries’ shared values, noting that Ethiopia and the United States enjoyed a strong partnership and bilateral ties. They also emphasized their commitment to building an even stronger partnership in the days ahead. Vice President Pence congratulated the Prime Minister on Ethiopia’s democratic reforms and reinforced US commitment to support Ethiopia’s development. He applauded the Prime Minister’s historic reform efforts, including improving respect for human rights, reforming the business environment, and making peace with Eritrea. The Vice President encouraged continued Ethiopian leadership to resolve regional conflicts in the Horn of Africa, as well as strengthening U.S.-Ethiopia trade and investment.

In his meeting with the President of the World Bank, Jim Yong Kim, the two sides discussed ways of enhancing cooperation. The Prime Minister underlined that Ethiopia had started big dreams; and “we’ve the potential to realize our dreams”. He noted Ethiopia’s greatest potential lay in its human capital, with youth accounting for 70% of the country’s population, but added, “Our dream will only remain a dream if we fail to tap this potential”. The Prime Minister said his government would work hard to tackle corruption, and it would also focus on changing peoples’ attitudes towards corruption. President Kim said the World Bank had been “closely following you ever since you took office, and we commend your efforts in establishing transparent and accountable structures”. He added, “We endorse the reforms being taken and we support your efforts”. He said: “The World Bank is ready to provide robust support to Ethiopia”. Overall, the discussions covered a range of issues including the future of disruptive technology, human capital, sustainable debt financing and the risk of debt distress.

Dr. Abiy also met with Ms. Lagarde Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund at IMF Headquarters in Washington and had productive discussions over IMF support for Ethiopia's reform plans and priorities. After their meeting, Ms. Lagarde said she had been very pleased to welcome the Prime Minister to the IMF. She said they had an engaging and productive meeting. She had congratulated the Prime Minister on the Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship recently signed with Eritrea, which, she said, would have a positive impact on the stability of the region. She also commended his recent policy announcements and what she described as "his ambitious economic reform agenda." She stressed that she had reiterated "the IMF's commitment to work with the Ethiopian authorities to ensure that the economy achieves high rates of sustainable and inclusive growth to reduce poverty."

Patriarch Merkorios returns to Ethiopia as the Holy Synods unite

His Holiness, Patriarch Merkorios returned to Addis Ababa on Wednesday (August 1) after 26 years of exile in the United States. His return marked the reconciliation the two Holy Synods of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church. Prime Minister Abiy through the "Medemer" formula has sought to win over hearts and minds throughout Ethiopia, the region and most recently in the last week, in the Diaspora, working to heal wounds, reconcile formerly disengaged communities, offering amnesties, and sending palm leaves to governments once considered "terrorist". One of the many achievements that "Medemer" has brought has been the reconciliation of the two Ethiopian Orthodox Synods and the return of Abune Merkorios. There have been several efforts in the past, but it was the current effort by the Prime Minister and the recently set up Arbitration Committee that achieved reconciliation.

The split between the two synods started in 1991 when Patriarch Abune Merkorios was persuaded to abdicate his position and forced into exile. He retired to the United States where he set up the Synod in Exile, creating two synods for the first time in the Church's history. This has contributed heavily to the rift between Ethiopian orthodox Christians in the Diaspora abroad as well as Ethiopians Christians in the country.

The Prime Minister said: "A great Church like the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has been divided in two for the last twenty years. Bringing the two sides together is a great deed. With this in mind we want everyone involved to see the national interest and come as one because forgiving will make us a better person." He underlined the importance of the unity of the Church when he met in mid-July the Arbitration Committee established to reconcile the two Synods, in dispute for more than two decades. The Prime Minister stressed that priority must be given to peace and reconciliation of the two Synods, as this would contribute significantly to the ongoing nation building process.

The Arbitration Committee working to reconcile the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church Holy Synod in Ethiopia and the Holy Synod in Exile was made up of bishops, religious leaders and famous people. It briefed the Prime Minister on the progress made

in reconciling the rival synods before the Committee left for the United States earlier in the month. The Church also hosted a farewell event for its own delegates traveling to U.S. for the negotiations with exiled religious leaders. The Patriarch of Ethiopian Orthodox Church, His Holiness Abune Mathias said the church was ready in all aspects to bring peace among religious leaders. He also called on religious leaders in the U.S. to forgive and be reconciled, and to bring peace in the church.

The delegation then left for the U.S. to hold talks with leaders of the Holy Synod in Exile. In the week following July 20, the Arbitration Committee in the U.S. worked hard to bring delegates on both sides to agree to terms to officially end the schism and finally unite the Synods into one single Holy Synod. On July 26 at Washington DC's Debre Mihret, St Michael's Cathedral, the Church announced news of the successful reconciliation. It was widely and enthusiastically welcomed by millions of Ethiopian Orthodox Christians. Prime Minister Abiy expressed his delight at the agreement: "One can never imagine Ethiopia without this sacred and great church," he said, noting that a major reason for focusing attention on the Church's unity was that "Orthodoxy itself is a country".

The Arbitration Committee members thanked Prime Minister Abiy for his initiative and efforts to build peace, unity and reconciliation in the country in general and in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church in particular. Abune Merkorios, the Fourth Patriarch of the Church, will retain the title of Patriarch with full privileges but will be conducting spiritual services and Abune Mathias, the Sixth Patriarch, will now jointly head the Church and its Holy Synod and be responsible for its administration along with performing spiritual services.

The agreement on the reunification of the Holy Synod of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church signals that Prime Minister Dr. Abiy's efforts to promote reconciliation among Ethiopians at home and abroad is continuing to achieve impressive success.

Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed's visit to Eritrea

Somalia President Mohamed Abdullahi began an historic three-day visit to Eritrea at the invitation of President Isaias, on Saturday (July 28). He was accompanied by the Ministers of Information, Culture and Tourism, Transport and Construction and the State Minister for Foreign Affairs. In advance of the visit, Somali presidential spokesperson, Abdinur Mohamed, said "Somalia is ready to write a new chapter of its relations with Eritrea," adding that the visit "will open the doors for diplomatic relations and new cooperation between the two nations." A statement said, "President Mohamed's visit will pave the way for Somalia's full diplomatic presence in Asmara, to promote bilateral ties and strengthen multilateral and economic cooperation. Eritrea would equally have a diplomatic mission in Mogadishu". It also underlined that the president was "keen on regional cooperation and is leading efforts to ensure Somalia is at the forefront towards

stronger regional integration to foster trade and usher in a new phase of prosperity for all.”

Following bilateral talks, the Presidents of Somalia and Eritrea on Monday (July 30) agreed to establish diplomatic ties, signing a ‘Joint Declaration On Brotherly Relations and Comprehensive Cooperation’. The Declaration noted the deep bonds of friendship between the peoples of Eritrea and Somalia and recalled their consistent solidarity and support for each other’s aspirations for freedom, independence and progress. Determined to build on their brotherly relations and mutual solidarity to forge a partnership that benefits the two nations and the region, the two governments, therefore, agreed on four points.

The first was that Somalia had been hampered in realizing its potential due to internal problems and external intervention, and Eritrea strongly supported the political independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Somalia as well as the efforts of the people and government of Somalia to restore the country’s rightful stature and achieve the lofty aspirations of its people. Somalia and Eritrea would endeavor to forge intimate political, economic, social, cultural links as well as defense and security cooperation. The two countries agreed to establish diplomatic relations and exchange ambassadors, promote bilateral trade and investment as well as educational and cultural exchanges. In addition, the two countries agreed to work in unison to foster regional peace, stability and economic integration.

Eritrea’s Minister of Information said the Declaration showed the region, each other and international partners that the Horn of Africa was more stable, that its leaders were less polarized, more pragmatic and open, in the wake of the Ethiopian-Eritrean rapprochement.

It came just three weeks after Ethiopia and Eritrea announced an end to two decades of conflict, rapidly restoring diplomatic ties and flights between their capitals and Somalia Information Minister Dahir Mohamed Geelle who said the leaders also discussed regional security and changing relations among Horn of Africa countries, said: "You will see Eritrean and Somali ambassadors in both capitals very, very soon." During his visit President Mohamed called for the lifting of sanctions on Eritrea. He said: "We urge all economic sanctions and embargo imposed on the people of Eritrea must be lifted so that the economic integration of the Horn of Africa region can be realized."

At a banquet welcoming President Mohamed “to your home”, President Isaias spoke of the post-Cold War history of Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea and the Sudan as they embarked on the path of nation building. He said the region had been affected “ethnic and clan cleavages”, the “scourges of poverty and hunger spurred by external pillage and internal thievery”. However, President Isaias stressed, this epoch of crises, conflict and instability was now coming to an end. The people of Eritrea had triumphed over the politics of ethnic polarization and foreign subservience and were marching forward at a rapid pace “to crystallize a correct national and regional policy framework” and the people of Somalia, he said, “will, as ever, be fellow travelers with the peoples of Ethiopia and Eritrea.” President Isaias wished President Mohamed “best of success in your serious

endeavors to overcome all obstacles and promote all-rounded bilateral and regional partnership in the economic and security fields.”

During his visit to Eritrea, President Mohammed Abdullahi and his delegation, accompanied by President Isaias, also visited various developmental sites on Sunday. At the Tekera, Misilam and Demas dams, he was briefed on the importance of the dams in the storage for agricultural activities, putting in place solar energy system, ensuring food security as well as in the implementation of the strategic national development programs.

The UN Security Council briefed on Eritrea-Somalia Sanctions

The UN Security Council heard the quarterly briefing by the Chair of the Eritrea-Somalia Sanctions Committee, Ambassador Kairat Umarov, on Monday this week (July 30). The briefing included the Chairman’s report on his recent visit to the region, to Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Somalia.

Ambassador Umarov (Kazakhstan) welcomed the Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship signed by President Isaias and Prime Minister Abiy on July 9 as well as the visit by Somalia President Mohamed Abdullahi to Asmara at the weekend. He said the Committee had visited Djibouti, Ethiopia and Somalia. In Addis Ababa, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed had expressed readiness to start dialogue with Eritrea. Ambassador Umarov expressed his regret that Eritrea had not invited the Committee to Eritrea, nor had it provided its views on the regional situation. He reiterated the Committee’s commitment to engage with Eritrea and regretted there had been no response to a letter sent to Eritrea’s Permanent Mission. He emphasized that the Committee’s visit to the region had been a diplomatic and trust-building exercise aimed at engaging directly with authorities to obtain first-hand information. On Somalia, Ambassador Umarov said the Committee would seriously consider the request to sanction individuals and entities receiving illicit charcoal from Somalia. He said the remaining arms embargo should not be lifted until political and security reforms were established alongside strong institutions, and cautioned against a premature withdrawal of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) as Somali forces are not yet ready to take full responsibility for the country’s security. In conclusion, he said, the Committee’s visit to the region had allowed it to gather valuable information that would enable it to enhance implementation of sanctions on Somalia and Eritrea.

Following the briefing, Ambassador Tekeda Alemu (Ethiopia) said much had occurred since the Chair’s visit, including the historic rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea, 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.” Indeed, the improved relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea seemed to have facilitated the restoration of the friendly relations between Eritrea and Somalia as became evident when the President Mohamed Abdullahi paid a state visit to Eritrea a few days ago. “It is impossible to ignore that this is a major boost for progress in the stabilization of the situation in Somalia. The Council must appreciate the significance of this development for the security of the region.” The recent positive momentum must be sustained. The Council, he said, had a particular responsibility to support the bold steps taken by Ethiopia, emphasizing the need to encourage actions taken “outside the box”.

Eritrea’s representative, Nebil Said Idris, said in recent weeks, historic developments have taken place in the Horn of Africa, with Eritrea and Ethiopia ending two decades of war and opening a new chapter of peace and friendship, and Eritrea and Somalia, through the joint declaration signed that very day, had agreed to exchange ambassadors and join hands to address peace and security issues. Given this emerging context, he said, the most appropriate action for the Security Council to take would be to lift sanctions, unequivocally indicating support for those positive developments. He welcomed the call by several States, including Ethiopia and Somalia, for sanctions to be lifted. It was unacceptable that some Council members were still setting preconditions and “changing the goalposts”. Those countries seek to keep political pressure on the Eritrean people for reasons unrelated to the maintenance of international peace. He said: “The Security Council should not miss another opportunity to contribute positively to regional peace and security in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea,” adding that by lifting sanctions without conditions, the Council could send a positive message that it supported the desire of people in the region to live in peace and economically thrive together. He emphasized Eritrea was committed to redouble its efforts and join hands with other countries in the region to ensure peace and accelerate socioeconomic progress.

Somalia’s delegate, Abukar Dahir Osman, said sanctions were a tool designed to tackle security challenges, including in the fight against Al-Shabaab and terrorism, which remains a vicious threat. However, Somalia is not what it was when the sanctions were imposed, with significant progress having been made in public financial management, security sector reform, weapons management and accountability. The Government was developing standard operating procedures to achieve a comprehensive weapons management system and establishing a weapons and ammunition management commission. It was committed to ensuring that Somalia’s resources are not used to finance Al-Shabaab’s operations. The National Security Council, in February, endorsed an interim agreement on fisheries revenues, while the Cabinet, in April, agreed to ban the domestic sale of charcoal. After decades of war, Somalia’s efforts were slowly bearing fruit and the Committee and the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea should consider Somalia’s progress, as should the Council, focusing on spoilers, rather than those engaged in the challenging task of State-building, and given Somalia’s record of compliance with the sanctions regime, he requested the Council to revise and update existing measures.

Ambassador Mohamed Siad Doualeh, Djibouti's representative, raised concerns Djibouti's ongoing border dispute with Eritrea, pressing the Council to urge Eritrea to engage in mediation efforts. His Government agreed with the African Union Assembly's decision to request the African Union Commission to continue helping the two countries peacefully resolve their problem. He said the Council should urge Eritrea to engage in mediation efforts, emphasizing that the opportunity to build a future of peace and development in the region cannot be squandered. He suggested the Council send a Monitoring Mission to Eritrea within one month, with the condition that Eritrea fully cooperated with the mission, providing full access to all information and records the mission wanted to review and all personnel it wanted to interview. The Mission should report within a month. The Council should require Eritrea to account for the missing Djibouti prisoners of war. Thirdly, he suggested the Secretary-general, in close collaboration with the Security Council, convene an urgent meeting of the parties to facilitate an agreement between them upon a mutually acceptable means of settlement. A solution should be issued within 120 days and if either Djibouti or Eritrea did not accept it the case should be referred to the International Court of Justice. He said, "Djibouti would support action by the Council to facilitate Eritrea's compliance by laying out a clear path and a reasonable timetable towards this end."

Ethiopia told the Security Council on Monday that it would work towards normalizing relations between Djibouti and Eritrea, both of which share a border with Ethiopia. Ambassador Takeda said it would like to bring the leaders to the negotiating table. He said the Djibouti Foreign Minister had been in Addis Ababa last week to deliver a message from Djibouti President Guelleh to Prime Minister Dr. Abiy. The Djibouti Foreign Minister said his discussions with both Dr. Abiy and Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh had been "very productive and useful." Ethiopia, said Ambassador Tekeda, had expressed "readiness to do whatever is necessary to contribute to the normalization of relations between Eritrea and Djibouti and it is our firm commitment this is critical for peace and security in our region".

Sweden's U.N. ambassador, Olof Skoog, the Security Council President for July, said the future of sanctions was being discussed by council members. He said there was a promising diplomatic initiative involving Eritrea and Djibouti, adding that there was a willingness to support the region in such efforts. He said the Swedish point of view was that there was a need to be cautious not to set targets and benchmarks that might hinder the current positive momentum, and instead ensure that "we allow Eritrea now to partake in the international arena and let peoples in the region enjoy the peace dividends." He said, "We believe that the council should seize this moment to firmly recognize peace and normalize the relations between the international community and Eritrea by deciding to review the sanctions regime as soon as possible."

UN Security Council renews AMISOM's mandate

UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2431 (2018) on Monday (July 30) extending the mandate of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) until the end of May 2019, and delayed plans to continue draw-down of troops by four months. 1,000 of the 20,000 strong AMISOM force were scheduled to leave by the end of October this year. The resolution postpones their departure until the end of February 2019, adding that there would be no further delays after that. UN Secretary-general Antonio Guterres, confirming the views of AMISOM troop-contributing countries, said in a letter to the Security Council that plans to cut AMISOM "were not realistic". The British-drafted resolution emphasized that Somali security forces should be built up "with the aim of Somali security institutions taking the lead by December 2021." Somalia is scheduled to hold elections in 2021 by which time the Somali National Forces will be tasked with ensuring security.

The resolution sets out the strategic objectives of AMISOM to enable the gradual handover of security responsibilities to Somali security forces by December 2021. It lists these as: enabling the gradual handing over of security responsibilities from AMISOM to the Somali security forces contingent on abilities of the Somali security with the aim of Somali security institutions taking the lead by December 2021; reducing the threat posed by Al-Shabaab and other armed opposition groups; and assisting Somali security forces to provide security for the political process at all levels as well as stabilization, reconciliation and peace-building in Somalia.

It also identifies AMISOM's authorized priority tasks. These include: maintaining presence in the sectors set out in AMISOM's concept of operations; assisting, as appropriate, Somali security forces to protect the Somali authorities to help efforts towards stabilization, reconciliation and peace building, and security for key infrastructure; protect personnel, facilities, installations, equipment and mission, as well as UN personnel; conduct targeted offensives, including jointly with the Somali security forces; secure key supply routes, in particular those essential for humanitarian access and for AMISOM logistics, a joint responsibility for the UN and the AU; mentor and assist Somali military forces, and police, in close collaboration with UNSOM; reconfigure AMISOM, as security conditions allow, in support of the transition plan and in favor of police personnel; and receive defectors, as appropriate.

The resolution notes that the transition process will be contingent on the abilities of the Somali security forces as well as progress on the political and security front. It requests the African Union to submit a detailed plan, no later than 15 November, for reducing uniformed personnel, and along with the United Nations, to conduct a joint operational readiness assessment by 15 September to identify capacities and requirements within the authorized troop ceiling. It also stresses that AMISOM's civilian component should focus on supporting the Mission's eventual drawdown, in line with the transition plan and the ultimate aim of Somali security forces taking the lead for security responsibility by December 2021. Welcoming the Secretary-general's plans for a technical review of the

Mission by 31 January 2019, the Council reiterated its call for additional funding and technical assistance from new and existing donors.

Overall, the Council reiterated its determination to support efforts to reduce the threat posed by Al-Shabaab in Somalia, and underlined its commitment to support an inclusive Somali-led political peace and reconciliation process. It welcomed the development of a conditions-based transition plan with clear target dates for the progressive transfer of security responsibilities from AMISOM to the Somali security institutions and recognized the federal Government of Somalia had the primary responsibility to protect its citizens and build its own national security forces. It also welcomed the Federal Government of Somalia and the Federal Member States' renewed commitment at the Somalia Partnership Forum in Brussels (July 16-17) to accelerate security sector reform. The Council reaffirmed the strong commitment of international partners to support the Federal Government in establishing under the National Security Council and regional security councils. It commended the contribution of AMISOM to lasting peace and stability in Somalia, recognized the significant sacrifices made by AMISOM forces and expressed appreciation for the continued commitment of troops, police and equipment to AMISOM by the Governments of Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

Among other details, the Council requested the AU and UN to conduct, in collaboration with partners, a joint operational readiness assessment of AMISOM, to be completed by September 15, 2018, in order to identify capacities and requirements to support the implementation of the transition plan, and provide a baseline for a revised concept of operations the AU will develop by November 1. In this connection, the Council wanted the AU to provide updates on the provision of force enablers and multipliers. It urged the AU to generate these within the existing troop ceiling. The Council also stressed AMISOM's civilian component should be fully operational to support AMISOM's military and police tasks and focus its efforts to support the transition and eventual drawdown in line with the transition plan.

It welcomed the intention of the Secretary-general to conduct a technical assessment of AMISOM by 31 January 2019, to review AMISOM's reconfiguration in support of the transition plan and make recommendations on improved consultation with AMISOM regarding its support package and the progressive transition from AMISOM to Somali security responsibility. It called for new and existing donors to support AMISOM through the provision of additional funding for troop stipends, equipment and technical assistance, and contributions to the United Nations Trust Funds for AMISOM and the Somali National Army, calling on the AU to consider how to provide sustainable funding for AMISOM, and on AMISOM to increase performance and effectively apply limited donor resources to the authorized uniformed personnel ceiling. It welcomed the commitment of international partners to provide more coordinated delivery of mentoring, training, equipment, capacity-building and remuneration of police and military forces agreed at the London Somalia Conference (May 2017) and reiterated at the Somalia Security Conference (December 2017) and the Somalia Partnership Forum (July 2018). It requested the Secretary-general to continue to provide a logistical support package for

UNSOM, AMISOM and 70 AMISOM civilians and for the 10,900 Somali security forces, stressing the need for responsive and effective field support.

In conclusion, the resolution also expressed its continued concern at the numbers of refugees and IDPs, and the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Somalia and its impact on the people of Somalia. It underlined the importance of respect for international humanitarian law and the protection of civilians, especially women and children, by all actors in Somalia.

Ambassador Tekeda Alemu (Ethiopia), who underlined AMISOM's indispensable role, thanked Council members for their flexibility and compromise in reaching a consensus. Emphasizing that much remains to be done in terms of post-conflict recovery and peace building, he welcomed the resolution's emphasis on AMISOM's civilian component, and stressed the importance of enhanced cooperation to support an inclusive political process. He also welcomed the focus on assessing the Mission and making recommendations on the gradual transition of security.

UN Peacekeeping: falling budget, rising casualties, but still “very important”

Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, spoke last week about the continuing value of peace-keeping as “a very important tool” in the promotion of peace and stability, even though UN Peacekeeping faced the challenges of budget cuts and an increasingly dangerous field environment. In an interview with UN News, M. Lacroix pointed out that the recently launched Action for Peacekeeping initiative called on Member States, host countries, troop- and police-contributing countries, and other contributors, to renew collective engagement to achieve peacekeeping excellence. The initiative, launched by Secretary-General Guterres in March, aimed to galvanize Member States' support for peacekeeping operations and reduce peacekeeping casualties. UN Peacekeeping's original goals were primarily limited to maintaining ceasefires and stabilizing situations on the ground so that efforts could be made at the political level to resolve conflicts by peaceful means. Those missions consisted of military observers and lightly armed troops with monitoring, reporting and confidence-building roles in support of ceasefires or limited peace agreements. Today's multidimensional peacekeeping operations are called upon to maintain peace and security, to facilitate political processes, protect civilians, disarm combatants, support elections, protect and promote human rights and restore the rule of law. The aim of the reform of the UN peace and security architecture is to ensure that the UN will end up stronger in prevention, more effective in mediation, and more cost-effective in operation. The reforms are also part of a broader, holistic UN reform examining management and the future development of the organization.

The recent report of Lt. General Cruz of Brazil, released in January, revealed that fatalities among peacekeepers due to violent acts had risen sharply, with 2013-2017 being the deadliest five-year period in UN peacekeeping. Mr. Lacroix said the more dangerous

environment underlined the need for improved training and adequate equipment. Last year there was the highest number of fatalities in peacekeeping for over two decades. Mr. Lacroix said the UN was now working to improve the training of police and military contingents. “We have to make sure that they have the right equipment. We have to make sure that they are well commanded and that there is accountability for leadership at every level.” All this, he said was included in the action plan being implemented across all UN Peacekeeping missions. He also underlined the importance of making sure that mandates should be focused on key priorities, on protection of civilians, on promoting and helping find a durable, political solution. Environments were becoming too dangerous to have open mandates. Missions could not do everything. This was why the Secretary-General had launched the Action for Peacekeeping initiative, to explain to Member States what the new challenges UN Peacekeeping faced and how to address these as well as reasons for mobilizing to help peacekeeping missions.

Mr. Lacroix emphasized the need for engagement by regional and sub-regional organizations. He said: “We have to be realistic. Peacekeeping is one tool; it’s among many others.” He pointed out that all such engagements from regional organizations must be supported. At the end of June, Mr. Lacroix visited major troop-contributing countries in South Asia, to Bangladesh, the second-largest troop- and police-contributing country, to Nepal, which currently deploys 5,000 troops, India, which has contributed the largest total number of troops in peacekeeping history, and Pakistan, the fifth largest contributor of uniformed personnel.

Mr. Lacroix also advocated the bolstering of African Union peace operations and other regional involvement. Ethiopia, of course provides a good example of involvement in UN and AU peacekeeping. Since the creation of the UN in 1945, it has strongly adhered to the principle and policy of maintaining peace and collective security. It has a long history of participation in United Nations peace operations dating back to the 1950s, participating in peace-keeping missions in Korea, Congo, Ivory Coast, Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia. With over 8,000 uniformed personnel currently serving in UN missions, Ethiopia is currently the top contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, supplying 8,420 personnel to various missions, 8% of the UN’s total peacekeeping force. Of these 624 are women and Ethiopia is also the leading contributor of female peacekeepers to UN missions. Currently it supplies all the over 4,400 military personnel of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), and a similar number of uniformed personnel the AU peacekeeping force in Somalia (AMISOM). , providing to that operation.

The Under-Secretary General went on to emphasize that peacekeeping had a price. It had to have adequate resources for the implementation of the mandate, particularly as peace-keeping adjusted to current difficult security conditions today. Peace-keeping could not go too far in reducing resources. Certainly, some missions had been terminated, some downsized but this because they had successfully carried out or were successfully carrying out their mandates. In other cases, conditions had changed. This was not because of reduced funding, he said, but added that it was important to continuously try to be more cost-effective, as Member States expected.

Does peacekeeping represent good value for money? M. Lacroix pointed out that recent closure of some Missions, e.g. in Ivory Coast and Liberia, was proof that peacekeeping can achieve good results. UN peace-keeping was also protecting hundreds of thousands of civilians, particularly in Africa. He didn't know whether this could be quantified or equated with financial resources but "the reality is plain that we are saving lives, and many, many lives." Equally, durable political solutions, of course, depend on more than peacekeeping, they require the collective ability to achieve those political solutions and that is outside the role of peace-keeping.

Referring to fighting sexual exploitation and abuse, he said UN peace-keeping still needed to do more, to make sure that every allegation was needs of victims. We have a victims-centered approach. It was important for troop- and police-contributing countries to react more quickly. There has been progress but much more needed to be done. M. Lacroix also stressed the importance making sure any kind of misconduct would be brought to attention so it could be acted upon. This certainly applied to procurement and the importance of ensuring that resources did not get into the wrong hands.

The Under-Secretary underlined again that UN peacekeeping remained a very important tool to help promote peace and stability. At the same time, it was necessary to be realistic. Peacekeeping was one tool among many others. It was not suitable for any type of situation. Peace enforcement, counter-terrorism, these did not involve peacekeeping. There had to be other ways of addressing those situations, he said. This, indeed, he emphasized, was one reason for strongly supporting regional and sub-regional organizations' engagement in peace operations. Equally, these had to be supported. This, indeed, was why he himself advocated stronger support for African Union peace operations. Greater collective effort, he stressed, was still needed. Decisions on the transition, he said, needed to be based on the situation on the ground. Ambassador Abukar Dahir Osman (Somalia) welcomed the resolution's focus on Somalia's efforts to assume responsibility. This would not be easy, he said, but with support from the international community, it would be achieved. Partnership would be crucial, particularly with donor and troop-contributing countries, in building a professional and inclusive security sector that enables Somalis to live free from the threat of Al-Shabaab.

UNHCR and UNOCHA: latest reports on Somalia's humanitarian issues

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and UNOCHA have issued reports for June regarding internal displacement of persons (IDPs) and refugee conditions in Somalia, providing, detailed information on major developments. With above average *Gu* rains (March through June) ending, food security has improved considerably compared to the last two years of drought. Equally, the country suffered from flooding in March and June and from the impact of Cyclone Sagar in May, affecting over a million persons, and temporarily displacing 274,000. The forecast of the

monitoring agencies shows that most internally displaced persons will remain in need of emergency humanitarian assistance throughout the year.

In its latest factsheet, the UNHCR noted that it commemorated World Refugee Day (June 20) in 21 places in Somalia, to demonstrate its solidarity with refugees. Somalia is the fifth highest country of origin of refugees in the world, with nearly a million Somali refugees worldwide, the majority living in Ethiopia (256,000), Kenya (255,500) and Yemen (256,000). As of 30 June, UNHCR says around 3.6 million Somalis have been displaced: 2.6 million internally and almost one million leaving the country. In addition, Somalia itself is also providing international protection to nearly 31,000 refugees and asylum-seekers.

The UNHCR also said 800 more Somali nationals agreed to be repatriated voluntarily in the month of June from Kenya (655) and from Yemen, Tunisia and the Ukraine. Overall, UNHCR has recorded 35,622 Somalis who returned from Yemen spontaneously, and it has assisted 83,669 refugees to return to Somalia in safety, since the beginning of the voluntary return program in December 2014. These include nearly 7,000 in the first six months of the year, the majority from Kenya.

The internal displacement of people (IDPs) has continued. In June 2018 alone, 33,000 persons were displaced because of drought (36%), conflict or insecurity (33%) and floods (21%). In response to the IDP situation, the UNHCR said it had managed to provide humanitarian assistance to 587,151 IDPs, only 39 % out of the annual target of 1.5 million. It had established 658 (41%) sites of Camp Coordination and Camp Management Clusters (CCCM) out of 1600 target sites. The Shelter and NFIs Cluster provided assistance to 388,293 persons (32 per cent) of the 1.2 million persons targeted in the first half of the year. The Cluster faced difficulties over use of public land, high flight costs, road inaccessibility; insecurity; and illegal check points for the transportation of humanitarian aid. The Protection Cluster was hampered by financial constraints, general insecurity, and limited meaningful access to people of concern. Overall, although food security has improved significantly in most parts of the country, the projection by Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET) shows that Internally Displaced Persons will remain in crisis (IPC Phase 3) and will likely continue to face food consumption gaps until January 2019.

FEWSNET also pointed out that the magnitude of the above average rainfall and subsequent flooding, in addition to exacerbating pressures on already-vulnerable communities, meant new challenges in the humanitarian situation. The spread of waterborne diseases sharply intensified. In June alone, there were a total of 1,692 new cases of acute watery diarrhea reported, and vector-borne diseases were also more prevalent with 2,332 new malaria cases in June (a 53% increase), and 1,546 new measles cases (33% increase). It said insecurity had also intensified, with an increasing number of attacks being undertaken by non-state armed actors, with al-Shabaab especially active in the capital. The increasing tension and clashes between Somaliland and Puntland displaced an estimated 13,000 people.

The major difficulties for the UN organizations have included humanitarian access in parts of south and central Somalia, lack of information at site level, forced evictions and low levels of community participation. Contributions for UNHCR operations in Somalia amount to some US\$ 34.1 million, 18% of the US\$152.3 million requested and required.

UNOCHA figures for the overall funding of the Humanitarian Response Plan 2018 for Somalia with estimated needs at US\$1.5 billion show it is largely under-funded, putting severe financial pressure on the clusters, including food security, nutrition, WASH and health. Of the US\$632 million for food requirements, only US\$186 million has so far been funded; of the US\$254 million for nutrition, US\$60 million; of US\$129 million for WASH, US\$29 million; of US\$124 million for health, US\$19 million. Overall, as of July, funding for clusters has reached no more than a third of requirements.

The overall population of concern is estimated at 2,648,000 IDPS, as well as 119,291 returnees, 15,533 asylum seekers and 15,426 refugees.