

News in Brief

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News in Brief

Africa and the African Union

The 6th Retreat of the Executive Council of the African Union took place in Addis Ababa this week (September 12-13), to continue its dialogue on reform of the AU Commission. It concluded its session drawing up an outcome document highlighting measures to be taken to improve implementation mechanisms, organization of structural changes, options regarding leadership elections and for recruitment, administrative and financial reforms. This will be presented to an Extra-ordinary Summit of the African Heads of State and Government on AU Reform in November in Addis Ababa. **(See article)**

The 65th IGAD Council of Ministers and the 33rd Extra-ordinary meeting of Heads of State and Government met on Wednesday (September 12), in Addis Ababa Ethiopia to bring an end to the long-drawn out South Sudan peace process and oversee the “final, final” signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS). **(See article)**

The IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government has restored Eritrea’s membership of IGAD. The IGAD leaders agreed that Eritrea should return to IGAD at their 33rd Extra-ordinary session on Wednesday (September 12) in Addis Ababa. Eritrea withdrew from IGAD in 2007 in disagreement over policy towards Somalia.

African Union Day is September 9, but this year the African Union Commission celebrates on Saturday, September 15. In a statement, Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat, wished all “Fellow Africans, Happy African Union Day.” He reminded Africa that, “Today we celebrate the Union’s transformation into a continental organization that is people-centered in its focus driven by Agenda 2063; an organization that is a clear testimony to the determination of our leaders to expedite the achievement of continental unity and to find African solutions to all African problems and challenges.” **(See article)**

The Chairperson of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, issued a statement on Friday last week (September 7) welcoming the signing of the Joint Declaration on Comprehensive Cooperation between Ethiopia, Somalia and Eritrea in Asmara, as well as the visit undertaken by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs to Djibouti. He said the steps taken were a major milestone in Africa’s endeavour to silence the guns by 2020 and promote deeper regional and continental integration, in line with Agenda 2063. They were a clear demonstration of the value and effectiveness of the search for African solutions to African problems. The Chairperson reiterated the African Union’s readiness to support the countries of the region in every way they thought appropriate.

The 8th edition of the African Green Revolution Forum (AGRF) was held this year in Kigali last week (September 5-8) with close to 2,000 delegates from across Africa and the world to discuss agricultural transformation in Africa. The Forum was held under the theme “Lead. Measure. Grow: Enabling new pathways to turn smallholders into sustainable agribusinesses”. **(See article)**

European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, in his annual state of the union address on Wednesday (September 12) proposed a new Africa-Europe alliance, based on co-operation rather than charity, leading to a continent-to-continent free trade agreement. He also said the EU plans to provide 10,000 more border guards to tackle unlawful immigration by 2020, denying that this would be militarising Europe.

The IGAD Mediation Support Unit (MSU) in collaboration with the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD) opened a three-day High-Level Retreat for Mediators from the IGAD region in Addis Ababa on Wednesday (September 12). Under the theme of “Enhancing Dialogue and Reconciliation for Conflict Prevention and Transformation”, topics being discussed included: the need for dialogue and reconciliation for conflict prevention and transformation; the geo-political context in the IGAD region; effective dialogue in conflict prevention and transformation; strengthening the agency of religious leaders in dialogue and reconciliation; inclusion of women and youth in dialogue and reconciliation processes at the community, national and regional levels as well as challenges and best practices towards promoting dialogue and reconciliation.

Ethiopia

In his New Message, on Tuesday this week (September 11), President Dr. Mulatu Teshome called on Ethiopians to stand united for development to compensate the time lost over recent instability. He said the reforms undertaken over the past four months had brought good opportunities and encouraged political parties to sit around the table and talk. All Ethiopians, he said, should focus on major national agendas instead of minor differences; this is the time to join hands for peace, love and our common goals. He said all Ethiopians should aim to make 2011 “a year in which we all work together with a single goal, to realize our country's growth and development by eradicating poverty from our beloved country.” Religious leaders also called for tolerance and for the people to live up to their history of living together in harmony and avoid any acts of hatred and evil deeds in the New Year. **(See article)**

President Dr. Mulatu left for Accra, Ghana to attend the final funeral service of the late former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on Wednesday (September 12). A service took place on Thursday at the Conference Centre before he was finally laid to rest at the new Military Cemetery. Kofi Annan, the 7th Secretary General of the UN, died at the age of 80 in Switzerland after a short illness.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed celebrated the New Year together with President Isaias of Eritrea and military officers from both countries, opening two border crossing points between Ethiopia and Eritrea. He said they had heralded the New Year by demolishing trenches along the border. Speaking at Millennium Hall on New Year's Eve, the Prime Minister stressed, "The future in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa region as a whole augurs well for extricating poverty and setting in motion a path of growth and prosperity." He added: "Ethiopia is a

country we share, and we have to work for peaceful co-existence and prosperity." (See **article**)

Prime Minister Dr Abiy held talks with South Sudan President Salva Kiir on Thursday (September 13). The discussion focused on the current situation in South Sudan and ways to implement immediately the revitalized peace agreement signed on the previous day. President Kiir told journalists after the meeting that “we discussed bilateral relations between the two countries.”

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church has recognized Prime Minister Dr. Abiy and First Lady Zenash with a special award for bringing peace and reconciliation to Ethiopia and Eritrea and to the region. The Prime Minister said the “award belongs to all who fought selflessly and prayed for this change to happen”

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy has confirmed that China has given Ethiopia 20 extra years to pay back a loan for the \$4bn, 750km standard gauge railway line to the port of Djibouti, which opened last January. China’s Export-Import Bank loaned Ethiopia some 70% of the total project cost. On his return from the Forum on China Africa Cooperation he said FOCAC “During our stay, we had the opportunity to enact limited restructuring of some of our loans,” Abiy said. “In particular, the loan for the Addis Ababa-Djibouti railway which was meant to be paid over 10 years has now been extended to 30 years.”

The 9th Extraordinary Session of the AU Executive Council, enlarged to include Ministers in Charge of ACP and/or Ministers in charge of negotiations with the EU, meet on Friday (September 14) to consider a Post-Cotonou 2020 agreement. State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene reaffirmed Ethiopia’s position that it would continue to support a common position on a Post-Cotonou 2020 Agreement, but underlined that any new agreement must take into consideration the current challenges, the needs of the African people and the objectives and priorities included in Africa’s Agenda 2063.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Aklilu Hailemichael held discussions with a Chinese Business Delegation led by Mr. Zhao Fuxi, Executive Vice Chairman of Shanghai Federation of Industry and Commerce and Executive Vice President of Shanghai Chinese Overseas Friendship Association on Monday (September 10). Dr. Aklilu briefed the delegation on investment opportunities in Ethiopia, and called on Chinese companies to invest in manufacturing, agri-business and tourism. Mr. Zhao promised to encourage companies to participate in investment in Ethiopia and called for the creation of “platforms of cooperation” between the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectorial Association and the Shanghai Federation of Industry and Commerce.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Aklilu received copies of the credentials of the newly appointed Danish Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ambassador Karin Poulsen on Friday (September 14). They discussed on ways to further strengthen bilateral cooperation between the two countries. Dr. Aklilu commended their strong diplomatic relationship and encouraged Danish companies to take advantage of the opportunities in agro-processing, manufacturing, pharmaceutical, energy, industrial parks, and logistics as well as the government support for investors. Ambassador Karin Poulsen praised the reforms being undertaken in Ethiopia and commended the new developments in the Horn of Africa, particularly the Ethio-Eritrea rapprochement. She said Denmark would work very closely with Ethiopia in, green energy,

agro-processing, climate and private business promotion, and she would do her best to further strengthen the bilateral relationship.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Professor Aferwork Kassu met with James Reynolds, the Head of the International Committee of the Red Cross delegation to Ethiopia on Monday (September 10), and discussed ways to enhance collaboration between Ethiopia and the ICRC. Highlighting the ongoing reforms in the country, Professor Aferwork said firmly the government would continue to work with ICRC for the wellbeing of Ethiopians, adding, “Initiatives from ICRC to support socio-economic progresses will always be welcome”. Mr. Reynolds said the ICRC was ready to support the ongoing reforms and to assist in the rehabilitation of internally displaced people in Oromia, Southern and Somali regional states. It would, he said, be happy to train police and other security agencies on human rights issues and humanitarian law standards.

A workshop to discuss sustainable methods to deal with the increasing spread of water hyacinth polluting Lake Tana, which represents 50% of Ethiopia’s freshwater resources, opened in Bahir Dar on Thursday (September 13). Ambassador Dina Mufti, Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the United Nations Office in Nairobi said the workshop is a key beginning to provide a solid roadmap to tackle the invasive species. The State Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Ato Kebede Yimam, stressed that if not controlled water hyacinth could become a major development challenge to Ethiopia. The workshop is being attended by representatives from the United Nations Environment Program Freshwater Ecosystem Unit and researchers and academics.

An International Monetary Fund staff team led by Mr. Julio Escolano on Wednesday (September 12) began an assessment of Ethiopia’s economic growth for 2018. The team will spend two weeks evaluating performance of the economy, fiscal policy, finance and external sectors. It will present a draft report on the assessment to policy makers.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, speaking at the opening of 39th session of the Human Rights Council (September 10) expressed her delight at the Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship signed in July between Eritrea and Ethiopia. She said her office stands ready to support both countries in protecting human rights, adding, “We particularly look forward to seeing an end to indefinite conscription into the Eritrean military.” She also noted the inter-communal violence between the Gedeo and the Guji communities in Ethiopia, and urged a thorough, impartial and independent investigation into any human rights violations.

Ambassador Taye Atske Selassie Amde, Ethiopia’s new Permanent Representative presented his credentials to United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Monday (September 10). The Secretary-General underlined the importance of the recent positive developments in the Horn of Africa and welcomed the shuttle diplomacy and diplomatic efforts undertaken by the UAE. He emphasized the special relationship existing between the UN and regional organizations including IGAD. He expressed the readiness of his office to assist Ethiopia in dealing with refugees, and recognized the role of Ethiopia at the UN in Peacekeeping, Management and Economic Reform discussion. Ambassador Taye briefed the Secretary-General on the remarkable political transformation taking place in Ethiopia and its impact on the region. He emphasized Prime Minister Dr. Abiy’s commitment to regional peace and stability, and the hope that the restoration of the relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea would set an example to others in the region and beyond.

The PVH Corp. one of the world's largest apparel companies whose brands include Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger, Van Heusen, and Speedo, has been selected as a winner of the 2018 U.S. Secretary of State's Award for Corporate Excellence. It is getting the award for Sustainable Operations as lead investor in an apparel manufacturing facility in Hawassa. Chairman and CEO Emanuel Chirico said PVH focused on protecting the local environment, using sustainable energy, ensuring sufficient supplies of clean water and creating a safe and inclusive workplace providing real opportunities for the residents of the surrounding area." The US State Department said the ultimate goal for PVH's model industrial park was "to provide a better future not only for the workers and their families, but also to inspire responsible industrialization across Ethiopia".

Eritrea

Egypt's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sameh Shoukry delivered a message on Thursday (September 13) to President Isaias from President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi on ways to strengthen cooperation and coordination on the situation in the Horn of Africa and the region. They discussed the Eritrea/Ethiopia peace and friendship accord as well as the implementation of the tripartite agreement between Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia. Foreign Minister Shoukry said strengthening bilateral relations between Eritrea and Egypt would have a significant contribution in the development of economic and security as well as in the peace process in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea basin. Presidential Adviser, Yemane Gebreab, said the visit of Mr. Shoukry was part of continuous meetings and consultations between Egypt and Eritrea. He underlined that Eritrea supports the efforts of President Abdul Fattah Sisi to restore the role of Egypt in the region.

Ambassador Tibor Nagy, US Assistant Secretary for Africa has welcomed the rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea but has expressed said concerns over Eritrea's human rights record which he said hindered cooperation for Washington. He told a congressional hearing on Wednesday (September 12) that it was "too soon to talk about lifting United Nations sanctions imposed in 2009." He said concerns the US had raised with Eritrea included the detention of U.S. embassy local staff and several Americans for "politically-motivated reasons". He said the jailing of religious and political prisoners and indefinite, obligatory national service, as well as a tightly-controlled system of government were also worries. The US also wanted a full explanation from Eritrea over past weapons purchases from North Korea.

Somalia

President Mohamed Abdullahi, speaking at the opening of the session of Parliament in Mogadishu on Monday (September 10), reiterated his government's commitment to fostering economic growth and stability in the country and the region. He said his administration had registered remarkable progress in the country's recovery progress. **(See article)**

President Abdullahi has called for a National Security Council meeting on Monday (September 17). The NSC, formed last year as part of the National Security Architecture, includes the five state presidents of Jubaland, Puntland, Southwest, Galmudug and HirShabelle. The five state presidents at a meeting of their Council for Inter-Governmental Cooperation in Kismayo at the end of last week, declared a 'no cooperation' stance with the Federal Government. **(See article)**

The World Bank has warned that political disputes and lack of agreement between the federal and state governments risked curtailing Somalia's efforts at attaining debt relief. It said any slowdown on the reform path could delay the normalization of Somalia's relations with International Financial Institutions could delay Somalia's access to IDA and critical national investments. **(See article).**

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres appointed Nicholas Haysom (South Africa) as his Special Representative for Somalia and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia. He will succeed Michael Keating (United Kingdom) on October 1. Mr. Haysom is currently the Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan, a position he has held since 2016.

The Senate said this week it was sending senators to the regional states to find ways to resolve the dispute between the Federal Government and the States. It has also called on the two levels of government to cease rhetoric which could inflame tensions.

South Sudan

The Government and the opposition parties involved in the long-drawn out IGAD peace process finally signed the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) on Wednesday (September 12), in Addis Ababa in the presence of the IGAD Heads of State and Government. The Agreement was signed by President Salve Kiir, SPLM-IO leader, Riek Machar, the South Sudan Opposition Alliance (SSOA), Gabriel Chang Changson, and the SPLM-Former Detainees. **(See article)**

South Sudan will pay its outstanding oil debt of \$1.2 billion to Sudan as oil output increases with reopening of more oilfields, Petroleum Minister, Ezekiel Lol Gatkuoth said on Monday (September 10). South Sudan agreed to pay \$3 billion to Khartoum as compensation for the oil reserves Sudan lost after South Sudan's independence. Mr. Gatkuoth said South Sudan had paid off nearly \$2 billion dollars before the civil war that broke out in December 2013, and with the recent reopening of the Unity oil fields, South Sudan will be able to use increased oil profits to pay all debts.

The Ministry of Petroleum said on Monday (September 10) it had signed an agreement to extend oil exploration and production agreements for three blocks. It extended contracts for the state-run Nile Petroleum Company (Nilepet), China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), Malaysia's Petronas and India's Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC Videsh). The new agreement would allow the three foreign oil companies to continue pumping oil in the Unity oilfields for six years. Petroleum minister, Ezekiel Lol Gatkuoth, said the new agreement would be vital in boosting South Sudan's oil production.

Sudan

President Omar al-Bashir dissolved the National Consensus Government formed after the National Dialogue Conference in May 2017 on Sunday (September 9) and separated the positions of First Vice-president and Prime Minister, both held by Bakri Hassan Saleh. The President appointed Moutaz Mousa Abdallah, previously Minister of Electricity, Water Resources and Irrigation, as Prime Minister to replace Bakri Hassan Saleh. The new members of government, 21 ministers down from 31, were announced on Thursday (September 13).

Most were members of the former government but have changed positions, with only Defense Minister Awad Ibn Ouf, Foreign Minister El-Dirdeiry Ahmed, and Presidential Affairs Minister Fadul Abdallah Fadul maintaining their previous posts.

The Turkish Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Bekir Pakdemirli, visiting Sudan this week (September 9-11) said Turkey had signed a \$100 million agreement to invest in oil exploration and production in Sudan. Following a meeting with President Omer al-Bashir on Monday, Pakdemirli said the two countries also signed a number of animal wealth and agriculture investment agreements. He said his meeting with the President discussed all issues pertaining to bilateral cooperation as well as matters of common concern. Earlier the Turkish Deputy Minister of Economy al-Fatih Matin arrived in Khartoum accompanied by a delegation of 40 Turkish businessmen looking for investment opportunities in Sudan. The Sudan government announced the formulation of a roadmap to implement agreements signed with Turkey in the economic, financial, banking and commercial fields as well as gas, oil, agriculture, livestock and minerals projects.

Ethiopia celebrates its New Year on Meskeram 1, 2011 (E.C.)

In his New Message, on Tuesday this week (September 11), President Dr. Mulatu Teshome called on Ethiopians to get ready to fulfill their responsibilities in the New Year. The President said “In the New Year, we should stand united for development to compensate the time lost over the past years due to the instability in the country.” He said the reforms undertaken over the past four months have brought good opportunities and encouraged political parties to sit around the table and talk. This would help to see a better Ethiopia in the future. The President said: “All Ethiopians should focus on major national agendas instead of minor differences; this is the time to join hands for peace, love and our common goals...Every Ethiopian must aspire towards making the Ethiopian year 2011 a year in which we all work together with a single goal, to realize our country's growth and development by eradicating poverty from our beloved country.” The President also noted the return of various high-profile Ethiopian opposition figures, activists and government critics from exile after agreements with the government during the past four months. He called for all to build the Nation together. He said: “We will enter into the right track to democracy once we begin building tolerance, listen to each other and develop civilized culture.” Wishing all Ethiopians a peaceful, prosperous, and joyous New Year, he called on all Ethiopian citizens need to do their part and stand united to change themselves and build a better country in the New Year. Earlier, the President also celebrated the New Year in Mekelle with the National Defense Force North Division with the Chief of Staff of the National Defense Force, General Saare Mekonnen and the Deputy Administrator of Tigray Regional State, Dr. Debretsion Gebremichael.

Religious leaders also called for tolerance and for the people to live up to their history of living together in harmony and avoid any acts of hatred and evil deeds in the New Year. Abune Mathias, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church, said, “The New Year celebration creates a positive attitude towards transformation and new goals.” The Deputy President of the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council, Mufti Hajji Omar Idris, urged Ethiopian Muslims to reinforce their support for the ongoing reforms. Catholic Cardinal Berhaneyesus Demerew urged the youth to stand united for peace and unity. Pastor Tsadiku Abdo, President of the Evangelical Churches Union of Ethiopia, said the active involvement

of all citizens was crucial to maintain the ongoing reforms and avoid recurrence of violent incidents, and Reverend Yonas Yigezu, President of the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, said the fact that the new leadership of the country has said the ideas for peace, love and forgiveness had elevated Ethiopia's image in the global fora.

Speaking to a huge gathering at the Millennium Hall on New Year's Eve, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed emphasized "The future in Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa as a whole augurs well for extricating poverty and setting in motion a path of growth and prosperity." He said: "Ethiopia is a country we share, and we have to work for peaceful co-existence and prosperity." The event brought together high-level officials, religious figures, leaders of opposition parties and returning exiles and thousands of city residents, as well as representatives of Regional State governments. The Prime Minister also celebrated the New Year when, together with President Isaias of Eritrea and military officers from both countries, they opened Debay Sima-Burre and Serha-Zalambesa border crossing points. Dr. Abiy said they had "heralded the new year by demolishing the trenches along our border." "As of today", he added, "Ethiopia's Defense Forces along the border with Eritrea will be gathered to camps to ease the tension that was often extreme. The same will be done from the Eritrean side." The opening of the border points reaffirmed the commitment of both sides to peace, though necessary details about cross-border trade, currency exchanges and other details have yet to be finalized.

In a message on Facebook, Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh described the New Year as the opening of a new chapter and the beginning of a new dawn for Ethiopia. The Minister reminded Ethiopians of the country's greatness and underlined the importance of strengthening the long march to realize Ethiopia's rise once again, which he said, would be won with love and reconciliation. To achieve such an end, Dr. Workneh urged Ethiopians from all walks of life to come together in unison and do all they can to witness the ushering in of a new dawn. The Foreign Minister said the New Year would provide a showcase of Ethiopia's grand diplomatic and political success story, to benefit the Horn of Africa and Africa as a whole. The closure of the chapter of conflict with Eritrea and the launch of efforts to resolve and mediate any remaining conflicts between neighbours was a milestone towards peace in the region. It would truly change the political landscape of Horn of Africa, and, he added, it was already beginning to do so.

The celebration of African Union Day

African Union Day is September 9, but this year the African Union Commission celebrates on Saturday, September 15 with day-long activities at African Union Headquarters. The day includes a welcome address of the Commission Chairperson, Moussa Faki Mahamat will be followed by an African Fashion Show, "Showcasing the beauty of Africa", sports activities and a high-level debate and panel discussion on the AU Day theme: "African Union: Achievements, Challenges and Next Steps".

AU Day presents the opportunity to celebrate landmark achievements of the African Union in various areas, such as peace and security, continental integration, women and youth empowerment, or the eradication of disease. It offers time to reflect on the Union's changes and achievements as well as renewing commitments to realize "the Africa we want" as embedded in Agenda 2063. It is also an occasion to promote the visibility of the African

Union and its activities across the African continent, and any place where the AU has representative offices. The Commission has called on all Africans to celebrate, to commemorate the day itself, to reflect on the progress made, the challenges faced and on possible solutions to these challenges, as well as to promote African culture and respect for diversity through various African indigenous activities and commemorate the milestones of the African Union.

It was on July 9, 2002, that 43 African leaders gathered in Durban, South Africa to launch the African Union as the successor to the Organization of African Unity. The objective of the African Union is to unify the fifty-five Member States and accelerate the process of continental integration to enable Africa to play its rightful role in the global economy while also addressing Africa social, economic and political problems.

Since 2002, the African Union has witnessed substantial progress in various areas. It has drawn up the Continent's blueprint for the future, Agenda 2063, and has witnessed considerable recent successes: the adoption of the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment following the launch of the African Passport at the July 2016 Summit in Kigali; the launch of the Single African Air transport Market at the January 2018 Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; and of the African Continental Free Trade Area at the March 2018 Extraordinary Summit. These will all encourage the economic integration agenda of the Continent. Equally, Africa Union also encourages reflection on the challenges facing Africa's advance to continental integration and to the total eradication of poverty as well as the conflicts that still exist.

On the occasion of African Union Day, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, wished all "fellow Africans, Happy African Union Day." He reminded Africa that, "Today we celebrate the Union's transformation into a continental organization that is people-centered in its focus driven by Agenda 2063; an organization that is a clear testimony to the determination of our leaders to expedite the achievement of continental unity and to find African solutions to all African problems and challenges."

He noted the Union had made a considerable progress in many areas but the work ahead "requires that every Member State and African citizen stand together and work towards building the Africa We Want." He said the African Union was working closely with member states to promote democracy and good governance at the national level. Equally sustained efforts were being deployed in the areas of peacekeeping and mediation. "The promotion and protection of human and peoples' rights", he said, "are progressively taking root on the continent, despite different obstacles and difficulties in many African countries."

The Commission Chairperson said the African Union had been working closely with IGAD to secure a peace agreement between the warring parties in South Sudan, an agreement aimed to achieve a permanent ceasefire and the formulation of a transitional government. This, he said, had raised expectations to end South Sudan's four-and-a-half-year civil war, which had killed tens of thousands, pushed millions to the brink of famine, and created Africa's largest refugee crisis. He noted the AIU had deployed human rights observers to Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to the Central African Republic, Mali, Somalia and South Sudan. It was, "a tangible contribution to the inculcating of a culture of human rights in these countries and a modest effort towards sustainable peace and security." He also pointed out that the African Union also deployed a number of Electoral Observation Missions including to Mali, Zimbabwe and Rwanda. The main objective of these missions, he said, was to

ensuring peaceful, credible and transparent elections that would promote a culture of democracy and peace and in the process deepen good governance.

This year, the African Union declared a continental fight against corruption in all its forms, and the continent was engaged in the fight against corruption in Africa under the theme “Winning the Fight against Corruption: A Sustainable Path to Africa’s Transformation”. Corruption, the Chairperson underlined, “destroys the lives of ordinary people and undermines their trust in their leaders and public institutions.” The fight will continue until corruption is eradicated, and that is why July 11 has been declared African Anti-Corruption Day. Mr. Faki paid tribute to the sterling efforts of President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria for leading the anti-corruption campaign as the Champion of the theme for 2018.

The Commission Chairperson also emphasized that the African Union was currently undergoing a reform process to make the organization more effective and people-centered. He commended the tireless efforts of President Paul Kagame of Rwanda for accepting the responsibility of championing the reform of the African Union. He said Africa was “looking forward to benefitting from his transformational leadership and experience.”

He called for the celebration of African Union Day to reinforce the collective spirit of solidarity and collaboration that existed among all stakeholders - the African Union, Member States, and the Regional Economic Communities – in the effort to build The Africa We Want, as articulated in Agenda 2063.” He concluded: “As we celebrate the African Union Day, let us, as African women and men, youth and old, in the continent and the African Diaspora, rededicate ourselves to the realization of the African Union vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena.”

IGAD meetings finalize the South Sudan peace process

The 65th IGAD Council of Ministers and the 33rd Extra-ordinary meeting of Heads of State and Government met on Wednesday (September 12), in Addis Ababa Ethiopia to bring an end to the long-drawn out South Sudan peace process and oversee the “final, final” signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS).

The IGAD Council of Ministers held its 65th Extra-ordinary session with the Foreign Ministers of Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda, as well as representatives of the UN Secretary General, the EU, the Africa Union Commission, China, the IGAD Partners Forum, and the Troika of Norway, the UK and the US. Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, Ethiopia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Chairperson of the IGAD Council of Ministers, welcomed delegates, noting the session was convened at a time when a wind of peace was blowing through the region and offering the opportunity to lift relations to a higher level as well advance and deepen economic integration. He thanked Sudan’s President Omer al-Bashir for his leadership in the final rounds of the IGAD-mediated South Sudan talks in Khartoum, and President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda for his role. He also applauded the positive gesture by Kenya to encourage the mediation process to continue and be concluded in Khartoum.

Ambassador Dr. Ismail Wais, IGAD's Special Envoy on South Sudan, delivered his report on the outcome of Khartoum round of talks and on the recommendations to resolve the South Sudan conflict to the Council deliberation. He detailed the High-Level Revitalization Forum's mediation activities, achievements, observations and recommendations. The Khartoum Round had been launched on June 25, as a continuation of the two phases of the Forum convened in Addis Ababa in November last year and in February. These earlier phases provided the foundation upon which subsequent negotiations were anchored. The Cessation of Hostilities and Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access, for example, was signed in December 2017, though a number of outstanding governance and security issues remained. The mediation team then developed a range of bridging proposals for consideration by the conflicting parties, though disagreements persisted between the parties. IGAD Chairperson, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy facilitated face-to-face meetings between President Salva Kiir and Dr. Riek Machar, and this was followed by the rounds of talks held in Khartoum.

Following the 64th Extra-ordinary Council of Ministers meeting in Khartoum on August 9, the High-Level Revitalization Forum's mediation team, in collaboration with experts from Sudan, Kenya, Djibouti and Ethiopia, had been tasked with hammering out the modalities to reach agreements on outstanding Transitional Security Arrangements, Governance and Security issues. These were: resolution of the outstanding bracketed issues within Chapter-1 of the ARCSS on judicial reforms and membership of the National Constitutional Amendment Committee (NCAC); consolidation of the revitalized governance and transitional Security Arrangements; and other amendments of the remaining Chapters of the Peace Agreement, consolidation and the review of full Revitalized ARCSS 2018 text. They also prepared the implementation matrices of all chapters concluded in the Khartoum round of negotiations. The parties then initialled a full text of the Revitalized ARCSS on August 28 in Khartoum. This marked an end to formal negotiations under the year-old process of the High-Level Revitalization Forum.

However, there still remained five outstanding issues concerning the number of states and demarcation of tribal and state boundaries; the decision-making ratios during the Transitional Period in the presidency, legislature, the Council of Ministers. and state and local governments; the Permanent Constitution-making process; inclusion of Kenya and Ethiopia join Sudan and Uganda to deploy troops in South Sudan to ensure full commitment of the parties to the agreement; and the procedure for selection of Ministerial Portfolios. The opposition parties accepted these would be re-considered by the IGAD Summit.

The IGAD leaders endorsed amendments to address these concerns. In the signed Agreement, the question to be posed in the referendum "shall be the same for the entire country unless it is decided in the Referendum Commission on Number and Boundaries of States that each State shall have different question or set of questions more understandable to the people". Annex D, asking the South Sudanese to choose between 32 or 10 states, was reinstated. The permanent constitution will be drafted by the Constitutional Review Commission and submitted for the National Constitutional Conference, in response to the opposition request. The Agreement also provides a number of rules to govern the decision-making process at the presidency, the government and in the parliament particularly when the parties fail to reach a collegial decision. However, the quorum for the Council of Ministers will continue at 23, though with the provision that at least six of them must be from opposition parties. The request to add Kenya and Ethiopia to Sudan and Uganda as guarantors, tasked with the monitoring of the ceasefire, wasn't apparently accepted. The Agreement states: "The current monitoring and verification mechanism shall be restructured and reconstituted into the

Ceasefire Transitional Security Arrangement, Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (CTSAMVM). It shall be led by Sudan and Uganda." Any deployment of Ethiopian and Kenyan troops in the Regional Protection Force will be handled through the engagement of IGAD and the UN Security Council.

The IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government met on Wednesday afternoon. The Presidents of Djibouti, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda and Kenya's Foreign Minister attended as well as the representatives of other bodies present at the Council of Ministers' meeting. Prime Minister Dr. Abiy, Chairperson of IGAD, welcomed and thanked all stakeholders for their role and support to the IGAD-led mediation process to end the prolonged conflict in South Sudan. He noted that this stage had been reached after Ethiopia and Eritrea as well as Eritrea and Djibouti, and Sudan and Eritrea, had been reconciled and started processes of normalization and rapprochement. The restoration of peace and fraternity between and among the members of the regional community, he said, had created a conducive environment to lift relations to a higher level and pave the way for economic integration.

Dr. Abiy thanked Sudan's President Omer al-Bashir for his leadership of the IGAD-mediated South Sudan talks in Khartoum and President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda for his role. He also thanked the conflicting parties and other partners for their tireless efforts and commitments to close down the dark chapter of conflict and respond to the aspirations and hopes of South Sudanese People. He called on the parties to stand firm and ensure full implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan to end their protracted war and restore lasting peace to South Sudan. It was, he said, imperative to build viable institutions and develop trust between and among the parties. They must cooperate together so as to meet the common vision and aspirations of their peoples. The Chairperson commended IGAD and all the parties for their continued efforts and commitment to bring peace to South Sudan and also to the rest of the IGAD region. This would, he said, result in consolidation of the gains made in pursuing IGAD's regional economic integration agenda.

Ambassador Maalim requested the Republic of South Sudan to embrace regional peace and integration and build on the momentum created by the wave of the recent peace initiatives in the IGAD region. Special Envoy Ambassador Dr. Wais appreciated the support extended by the IGAD Member states and noted particular inputs by Presidents Omar al-Bashir and Yoweri Museveni and by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy. He reported that the negotiations were complete, with the parties ready to sign the peace agreement. The out-going chairperson of JMEC, Festus Mogae thanked IGAD and the South Sudan government for having entrusted him with a key role and hoped this time the parties would implement their signed agreement for benefit to the people of South Sudan. The representatives of the IGAD Partners' UNSG, EU, China and IGAD Partners Forum, TROIKA and Africa Union Commission and partners of offered their strong commitment to support and advance the IGAD-led peace-building process as well as the regional economic integration taking place in the Horn of Africa.

Finally, in the presence of the IGAD Chairperson and the Heads of State and Government and IGAD partners, the South Sudanese Parties signed the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS). They expressed their strong commitment to implement the Agreement fully and completely, and to open a new beginning under which all South Sudan's parties would come together to build an inclusive government to provide fully for the needs, demands and hopes of the people of South Sudan.

The signing of the agreement was welcomed by UN Secretary-General António Guterres who called on the international community to “remain seized” of the situation in South Sudan throughout the implementation of the peace agreement. In a statement from his spokesperson, the Secretary-General said the UN stood ready, in close coordination with IGAD and the African Union, to assist the parties in implementing the agreement. The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for South Sudan, David Shearer, said the landmark peace agreement between the South Sudanese Government and main political opposition offered hope, but rebuilding trust and overcoming suspicion would be key to ensure the success of the current peace deal between the Government and the opposition. He noted: “The key ingredient still lacking is trust,” adding that resolving those differences would be vital for a better future of the country. He said it was “beholden on all of us here today to help encourage trust between parties.”

The Troika of Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States in a statement following the signing ceremony also hailed the efforts and the collective commitment demonstrated by IGAD countries to end the five-year conflict. However, the three countries were doubtful if the Agreement would be fully implemented considering the repeated violations of the earlier ceasefire agreement and attacks on civilians and aid workers. The statement said: “We remain concerned about the parties’ level of commitment to this agreement, and to the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement signed in Addis Ababa in December.” The statement said the parties needed to make significant changes in their approach to underline their serious commitment. “This must include, but not be limited to: an end to violence and full humanitarian access; the release of political prisoners; and a real commitment to effective and accountable implementation, demonstrated by supporting robust security and enforcement mechanisms, checks on executive and majority power, and the transparent use of resources for the benefit of all South Sudanese... Without progress in these critical areas, we remain concerned the agreement will not deliver the peace that the people of South Sudan deserve.”

The AU Executive Council discusses reform of the AU Commission

The 6th Retreat of the Executive Council of the African Union took place in Addis Ababa this week (September 12-13). The style of the meeting, an extension of the 5 previous retreats, aimed to provide a platform for Member States to overcome organizational limitations and brainstorm on the key AU reform, the progress made, the outcomes that the reform process should deliver and possible ways forward to enable the Commission to translate reform agendas into practice. The Executive Council’s dialogue on reforming the African Union Commission is in line with the decision passed by the Assembly of the African Union in the ordinary summit held in Nouakchott, Mauritania to pursue institutional reforms to ensure a well organized African Union Commission fit for its purposes.

During the two-day meeting, a report identifying the major gaps and proposing ways forward was presented to the Executive Council of the Union. It emphasized that reform of the AU Commission was a central element of the AU’s institutional reform process. It detailed the significant amount of diagnostic work undertaken on the functioning of the Commission to develop recommendations on how to improve overall efficiency and effectiveness. The report consistently identified a number of key institutional challenges: weak accountability and

management, exacerbated by poor delineation of roles and responsibilities and the absence of and clear delegation of authority at political and management levels.

During the two days of consultations, the Executive Council underlined that within the framework of the institutional reform process, the Commission needed to focus on the priority areas which have been essentially highlighted in Agenda 2063. To ensure effectiveness of delivery against identified priorities, it recommended that there should be a clear division of labour and effective collaboration between the AU Commission, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the Regional Mechanisms (RMs), the Member States, and other continental institutions, in line with the principle of subsidiarity. During the retreat, representatives of Member Countries stressed the need to ensure that the continental priorities were delivered in the most effective and efficient manner. In relation to this, based on proposals tabled by the reform unit, they proposed recommendations on institutional realignment. These included: the establishment of a lean and performance-oriented senior leadership team at the African Union Commission (AUC); re-evaluation of the AUC's structures to ensure that they were of the right size and capability to deliver on agreed priorities; review and update the mandate and structure of AU organs and institutions in alignment with agreed priority areas; and conduct a professional audit of bureaucratic bottlenecks.

Reforming the existing administrative and financial trends of the Commission was another point of discussion. It was noted that dealing with administrative and financial challenges was a longstanding issue. On the basis of the Reform Unit's report participants stressed the need to take strong reform measures in administrative matters including financial management. Reforms were encouraged in the area of recruitment and staffing of the Commission at all levels, including both elected and non-elected employees.

During the discussions it was also noted there was an urgent need to better harness the continent's own resources to deliver future growth and development as envisioned in Africa's Agenda 2063. Setting up timely, predictable assessed contribution collection mechanisms and centralizing fund-raising were recommended as possible solutions to reduce financial deficits. This would reduce dependency on external partner funds for implementation of continental development and integration programs, and provide an equitable and predictable source of financing for the Union. Institutional reform should also recommend that financing of the Union should not only be sustainable, but must provide full ownership by Member States.

The Chair of the Executive Council, Louise Mushikiwabo, Foreign Affairs Minister of Rwanda, recalled that the Reform of the Commission was a central element of the overall AU reform process. She said: "I think we can all agree that we need a strong and effective AU Commission to drive our continental agenda. We have a key opportunity over the next two days to do some collective thinking on how best we can achieve this." She said the heart of the reform of the AU Commission must be about people, systems and processes. We must be able to attract and retain the best that Africa has to offer to deliver for this Continent, "making sure that we have motivated staff, driven by Pan-African values, and strong ethics who are delivering within an accountable and rules-based administrative framework." The Commission must be able "to avoid duplication and overlap, manage its resources prudently, observe the highest fiduciary standards and ensure value for money while delivering results.

Earlier, the Chairman of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, welcomed the Ministers to the AU and said, "Since the launch of the institutional reform process of our

Union, significant progress has been made in its implementation”, adding that the reform process if well implemented will help address the issue of the financing of the Union. He said the internal procedures and working methods of the Union were being revised to allow effective implementation of the decisions.

In his address to the assembly, Ethiopia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu underlined that to achieve the Pan-African vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, “we need a better governed, more accountable, high performing and efficient Commission that can deliver concrete results on the priorities outlined in Agenda 2063, for the Africa we want’. He indicated that despite the studies and assessments done to reform the Organization, the AU Commission continued to face limitations, including weak accountability and management and poor definition of roles and responsibilities. He also emphasized the purpose of the reform must be to make the AU Commission fit for the purpose of achieving the objectives and priorities outlined in Agenda 2063. He said the 6th Retreat would allow member countries to make important contributions and hold consultations to speed up implementation of the reforms.

The Executive Council of the African Union concluded its session by drawing up an agreed outcome document. This highlighted measures to be taken in the areas of improving implementation mechanisms, the organization of structural changes, reforms and options regarding leadership elections, and for recruitment, administrative and financial reforms. This outcome document will be presented to an Extra-ordinary Summit of the African Heads of State and Government on AU Reform, due to be convened in November in Addis Ababa.

The World Bank warns political disputes in Somalia could affect debt relief process

The World Bank has warned that political disputes and lack of agreement between the federal and state governments risk curtailing Somalia’s efforts at attaining debt relief. In its third Somali Economic Update released on Monday (September 10) in Mogadishu, the Bank said growth in Somalia remained fragile and the risks associated with delays in reform are high in light of slowed economic growth in 2017. It added: “In turn, a slowdown on the reform path could delay the normalization of Somalia’s relations with International Financial Institutions through the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries process. That, in turn, would delay Somalia’s access to IDA and critical national investments.”

According to the World Bank report, Somalia’s economy registered growth of only 2.3 per cent in 2017 owing to drought which cost the economy an estimated \$3.2 billion in addition to sharp decline of livestock exports. Livestock exports fell by 75% reaching a low of 1.3 million live animals. A total of 5.3 million had been exported in 2015. In effect, the report noted, the drought was responsible for a 9% trade deficit as exports declined from 15.1% of Gross Domestic Product in 2016 to 14.5% in 2017. Imports, however, rose from 61.9% to 69.6%. The World Bank also identified security concerns and higher oil prices as other risks that could delay growth. The report suggested Somalia’s growth would be 3.2% in 2018 and 3-4% in 2019-20.

The report also raises concerns over possible fiscal risks in the event of any disruption of mobile money platforms. An estimated 155 million mobile money transactions amounting to about \$2.7 billion a month take place in Somalia. The report noted that this has eased

transactions immensely and provided opportunities for economic growth. However, the lack of regulation posed serious potential effects. The domestic economy was highly dependent on the stability and continued operation of mobile money platforms, and any substantial disruption, including technical glitches, could be devastating. The report highlights several risks: the lack of any legal requirement for mobile network operators to deposit funds in a trust or a bank account, so customers are exposed to the possibility of losing their money if providers enter into risky investments; in the absence of know-your-customer requirements, customers are not protected in case of dispute; the ease of opening multiple mobile accounts without identification makes countering money laundering and tracking terrorist funding difficult.

The report calls for a raft of measures to regulate the mobile money sector to ensure transparency and accountability and the integrity of the financial sector. A proper regulatory regime would manage financial risks and bolster the contribution of mobile money to inclusive growth, resilience and poverty reduction. Strengthening service delivery through innovation and consumer protection including data privacy and protection would then follow. The report noted that 70% of Somalis use mobile money services for person to person arrangements while merchant/retail payments account for the second highest volume of transactions followed by salary transfers, bill payments, remittances and cash transfers from development organizations.

The African Green Revolution Forum in Kigali

The 8th edition of the African Green Revolution Forum (AGRF) was held this year in Kigali last week (September 5-8) with close to 2,000 delegates from across Africa and the world to discuss agricultural transformation in Africa. Attendees included current and former Heads of State and Government, Agriculture and Finance Ministers, leaders of global development institutions, sharing their insights on lessons learned and progress made in agricultural transformation efforts around Africa. AGRF 2018 edition was held under the theme “Lead. Measure. Grow: Enabling new pathways to turn smallholders into sustainable agribusinesses”.

The African Green Revolution Forum (AGRF) is a platform for global and African leaders to develop actionable plans that will move African agriculture forward. The most important forum for African agriculture, AGRF brings together stakeholders in the agricultural landscape to take practical actions and share lessons that will move African agriculture forward. Held this year in Kigali, The Forum awarded the 2018 Africa Food Prize to the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture of Nigeria, and also launched the 2018 Africa Agriculture Status Report.

Opening the Forum Rwanda Prime Minister Ngirente noted that AGRF 2018 came at a time when the continent was committed to address agriculture and food security issues as highlighted in African Union Agenda 2063. He noted Rwanda’s agriculture sector was planned to grow by 10% annually and taking agriculture to the next level would require strong measures to translate existing strategies into tangible actions. He said: “Without leadership, measurement, evidence-based planning and accountability in program implementation, Africa will not be able to consolidate the modernization of its agriculture and agro-businesses.”

The Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, Vera Songwe, called on African countries, governments and the private sector to expedite agricultural transformation, drawing in smallholder farmers and private agri-businesses. "Africa's agriculture and agri-business markets are set to rise to US\$ 1 trillion by 2030", she said, and added, "Africa's farmers are the small and medium enterprises we need to achieve sustainable growth on the continent."

Africa spent approximately \$70 billion on food imports in 2016 and this is expected to reach \$110 billion by 2025 if not checked. Ms. Songwe said the African Continental Free Trade Area could provide a powerful catalyst for trade and exports of agriculture commodities within Africa. Intra-African trade for food products now stands at 17%, compared to the EU's over 60%. Trade liberalization under the Free Trade Area, however, could be expected to result in significant export growth of about 30% percent in various food products and strengthen the regional supply chain on agro-processing. Ms. Songwe also underlined the importance of women's land rights as crucial for the growth of Africa's agriculture sustainably and equitably and pledged ECA's support in association with the Forum as a way of growing agriculture productivity and prosperity.

Jennifer Blanke, Vice President of African Development Bank noted that the Bank "working with distributors to make sure that they get the right kinds of seeds and technologies to farmers for increased productivity as well as increased revenues, The Bank is currently working with the World Bank, the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa , and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to mobilise US\$1 billion to scale up agricultural technologies across Africa under a new initiative called Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation.

2018 Africa Agriculture Status Report released on the opening day of the Forum underlines the need for African nations to act now to deliver reforms around access to land and markets, extension services, and private sector investments in order to unlock their agricultural potential. It emphasizes the importance of long-term government commitment coupled with strong policies to attract foreign investment as critical to the sector's overall advancement. One of the authors of the report, Boaz Keizire, head of policy and advocacy at the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, gave five examples where government-led initiatives would assist: a widely-communicated agricultural vision, strategy and implementation plan; an enabling business environment; local capacity to deliver services; coordination between farmers, civil society, private sector and relevant government ministries; and mutual accountability to deliver on promises and minimize corruption.

The report also noted that the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program (CAADP), an Africa-wide framework was drafted in 2003 to serve as a blueprint on how to accelerate agricultural growth on the continent. The program recommends an allocation of at least 10% of national budgets for agriculture, and 1% of agricultural income to be spent on research. All African heads of state agreed to CAADP and have used it as the basis of domestic strategies. However, few countries have come close to meeting these targets. The report commended Ethiopia and Rwanda. Ethiopia, it said, had placed agriculture at the center of its development policy agenda. Public investment in farmer training and sector modernization had largely been focused on extension services in rural areas and improving productivity, and this had helped to drive down rural poverty by half.

