

*News in Brief*

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Kenya to start implementing Economic Partnership Agreements with the EU*

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**Africa and the African Union**

The African members of the UN Security Council (A3), Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, and Ethiopia until the end of the year, have continued to work to persuade the Security Council to pass a resolution to provide sustainable, predictable and flexible financing for Africa Union-led peace support operations authorized by, and acting under, the Security Council's authority and within Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. **(See article)**

**Ethiopia**

President Sahle-Work Zewde appointed 20 ambassadors to represent Ethiopia on Monday (December 24).

President Sahle-Work received the credentials of the Ambassador of Eritrea to Ethiopia, Ambassador Semere Russom, on Thursday (December 27). She also received the credentials of newly appointed Ambassadors from Egypt, Somalia, Thailand and Tunisia. President Sahle-Work expressed Ethiopia's keenness to work to strengthen relations with these countries and noted the new hopes of peace and cooperation in the Horn of Africa region, spearheaded by Ethiopia's new leadership.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy launched a national initiative to ease doing business for investors on Wednesday (December 27). The national investment plan mainly identified over 80 distinct actions that would be delivered across operations provided by 10 government agencies. The measures will be monitored by the Policy and Performance Unit of the Prime Minister's office and coordinated by the Ethiopian Investment Commission.

Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen led a delegation which included State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene, to the Sudan for a working visit to the Republic of the Sudan last week (December 19-21). **(See article)**

Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu welcomed Professor Asmerom Legesse, renowned Eritrean scholar of the indigenous Oromo socio-political system, the Gadaa, thanking him for his contributions to introducing the Gadaa System to the world. He said Professor Asmerom's visit was historic and renewed strong bonds between the

people of Ethiopia and Eritrea. Two days earlier, Professor Asmerom was awarded a Doctorate of Letters Honoris Causa by Addis Ababa University.

Dewano Kedir, Permanent Secretary at the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, welcoming a Chinese delegation led by Yao Fukang, deputy director of Standing Committee of Luzhou Municipal People's Congress, called on Chinese firms to boost their involvement in Ethiopia's manufacturing sector.

The House of People's Representatives has approved a new draft bill to establish a Commission for Regional Boundaries and Identity-related Issues. It will be accountable to Prime Minister Dr. Abiy.

The House of People's Representatives on Tuesday (December 25) approved a draft bill to establish a Reconciliation Commission, with the objective to maintain peace, justice, national unity and consensus and reconciliation among Ethiopian peoples. It will identify principles and values as the basis for national reconciliation, narrow differences created and create consensus.

The Ethiopian Air Force Academy graduated 50 Rwanda Air Force personnel on Thursday last week (December 20). Rwanda Airforce Chief of Staff Major General. Charles Karamba and Ethiopian Air Force Commander Brigadier General, Yilma Merdasa, attended the ceremony.

“SIRA”, a new App to put “job opportunities in the hands of migrant returnees”, was launched on Wednesday (December 26). SIRA App is part of the phasing out of a four-year International Labor Office project “Support the reintegration of returnees in Ethiopia”, and will link returnees and employers in low and middle skills occupations. It is part of the ILO and Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs assistance for returnees from Saudi Arabia through the EU funded, “Support to the reintegration of returnees in Ethiopia” project (2015-2018).”

## **Djibouti**

President Ismail Omar Guelleh praised Prime Minister Dr. Abiy for his deep-seated commitment to regional peace and prosperity and his considerable success in implementing this. He was speaking at the closing session of a three-day meeting of Djiboutian ambassadors and high-level diplomats on Thursday last week (December 20).

## **Kenya**

Kenya has said it will begin to implement the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) that the East African Community (ECA) has been negotiating with the European Union, even though other members of the East African Community remain reluctant to do so. **(See article)**

Defence Cabinet Secretary Raychelle Omamo and the Chief of the Defence Forces, General Samson Mwathethe paid a surprise visit to Kenyan troops serving in AMISOM on Monday (December 24). They visited three military camps and thanked troops for their dedication.

## **Somalia**

Two bomb blasts in central Mogadishu on Saturday (December 22) which killed at least thirty people and wounded more, were strongly criticised with President Mohamed Abdullahi condemning al-Shabaab's "cowardly attacks". He said: "We will continue defeating terrorists in order to lead the Somali people to stability and prosperity."

IGAD has welcomed the commitment of the Federal Government of Somalia to hold a universal, fair and free election in 2020, and expressed its willingness to support the ongoing regional election process. "at this critical time for unity of purpose and sustainable peace and stability in the county." It said it would remain committed to support the Federal Government of Somalia in accelerating the political decision-making process necessary to build consensus and national unity.

A two-day national youth conference opened in Mogadishu on Wednesday (December 26) with the theme of "the development of youth participation in the politics of the country". Organized by the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports it was opened by Deputy Prime Minister, Mahdi Mohamed Guleed.

## **South**

## **Sudan**

UN OCHA in a report issued on Friday last week (December 21) noted that December 2018 marked the fifth anniversary of the outbreak of the conflict in South Sudan. It said while progress was being made in the implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement there was still a very significant legacy of conflict and civil war.

President Salva Kiir on Monday (December 24) received a delegation of the Former Political Detainees led by Rebecca Nyanddeng Garang in Juba this week. Mrs. Garang reiterated their keenness to implement the revitalized peace agreement and called for popular support.

President Kiir discussed peace implementation with Angelina Teny SPLA-IO's Chair of National Committee for Defence and Security in Juba on Friday last week (December 21). She said the committees were working in "a spirit of cooperation" but delays in implementation were due to logistical challenges caused by lack of financial resources.

Army Chief of Staff General Gabriel Jok Riak and the SPLA-IO Deputy Chief of Staff Lt. General James Koang Chuol Ranley joined thousands of people in Bentiu to celebrate the revitalized peace agreement on Monday (December 24). Speakers at the celebration reiterated their commitment to the full implementation of the peace agreement.

In a statement at the end of last week, IGAD Council of Ministers said they learned with "deep shock" about the detention, physical assault and abuse against members of the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring and Verification Mission (CTSAMVM) team by men in military uniform and civilian attires of the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU) in Jubek state, Central Equatoria.

## **Sudan**

In a press conference held in Khartoum on Thursday (December 27), Information Minister and Government Spokesperson Bushara Juma said "Nineteen people lost their lives in the incidents including two from security forces" since the protests began on 19 December."

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### ***Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen pays a working visit to Sudan***

Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen led a delegation to the Sudan for a working visit to the Republic of the Sudan last week (December 19-21). The delegation, which included State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene, was warmly welcomed in Khartoum by Vice-President Osman Mohamed Yesuf Kibir. The visit was aimed at boosting the bilateral relationship between the two countries in all areas in the spirit of the consensus reached during the recent exchange of high level visits. It is to be recalled that Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed visited Khartoum in May (May 2-3), and President Omar Hassan al-Bashir visited Jimma on December 8, where the two leaders were also joined by President Omar Guelleh of Djibouti in inaugurating flagship projects.

During the visit, Deputy Prime Minister Demeke held fruitful discussions with President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, Prime Minister Mutaz Musa, First Vice-President Bakri Hassan Salah and Vice President Osman Mohamed Yesuf Kibir. The talks covered issues of mutual interest, focusing on the need to reactivate all the existing bilateral mechanisms and to rekindle the spirit of friendship and solidarity between the two sisterly countries. The two sides agreed to hold a High-level Joint Commission meeting at a mutually agreed future date, and high-level Steering Economic Committee meeting next February in the Sudan.

The two sides underlined the need to accelerate regional economic integration and ensure sustainable peace in the Horn of Africa sub-region. They agreed to fight the proliferation of small arms, illegal migration and human trafficking. They highlighted the need to reactivate the work of the joint boundary demarcation committee in order to address some unsettled and long overdue issues with the ultimate goal of creating a harmonized cross-border cooperation.

Deputy Prime Minister Demeke also held discussions with Prime Minister Mutaz Musa, emphasizing ways of deepening cooperation between the two countries on trans-boundary water issues through trilateral and multilateral mechanisms. He briefed Mr.

Musa on the progress of the construction of the Great Renaissance Dam (GERD), and commended the Government of Sudan for its unwavering support for this major project.

State Minister Mrs. Hirut also held talks with Sudan's State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Osama Faisal, on Thursday December 20. They exchanged views on ways to deepen cooperation between the two countries, and discussed the convening of the high-level Steering Economic Committee. They also discussed how to strengthen implementation of various bilateral agreements. The State Ministers exchanged views on how to reinforce the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to spearhead regional economic integration and ensure sustainable peace in the sub-region.

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### ***A3's UN resolution to finance AU-led peace operations under negotiation***

The African members of the UN Security Council, the A3, for 2018 were Ethiopia, Cote d'Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea; and for 2017 were Egypt, Senegal and Ethiopia. In October, the A3 held a series of meetings with the leadership of the United Nations, including the Secretary-General, the Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping and Field Support as well as the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights to secure support from the United Nations Secretariat for a proposed draft resolution on the financing of African Union-led peace support operations authorized by and under the Security Council's authority.

The Secretary-General expressed full political backing for the draft resolution on financing and instructed his team to provide all the necessary support to the A3 resolution. The objectives of the draft resolution are to provide a framework which allows the Security Council to agree in principle that AU-led peace support operations can be financed from the UN-assessed contribution though the decision will not impose an immediate commitment but be decided on a case by case basis as recommended by the UN's High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO).

Last month, negotiations started on the A3's proposed draft resolution. A preliminary exchange of views was followed by two rounds of negotiations. The majority of the members of the Security Council were strongly supportive of the draft resolution, however there were also some substantive differences among the Security Council

members. Consultation is now expected to continue in the coming months. The AU Peace and Security Council is also expected to provide further guidance and direction to make the resolution acceptable.

It has taken a long time to reach this point although the United Nation and the Africa Union in general, and the UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council in particular, have joint frameworks and consultation mechanisms, intended to enhance their partnership to address the prevention of conflict and increase common understanding on the causes of conflicts in Africa. The issue of financing peace and security operations has been under discussion for some time and important decisions and resolutions have been adopted at both the Africa Union and the UN Security Council.

It was in 2015 that the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government decided to implement a decision on Alternative Sources of Funding for the African Union and its operations. The decision allowed Member States to enhance ownership of the budget of the African Union by financing 100% of the Operating budget, 75% of Programs and 25% of the Peace and Security Budget. The Assembly agreed the decision should become effective in January 2016 and be phased in incrementally over a five-year period.

Following this, the UN Security Council recognized the need to enhance the predictability, sustainability and flexibility of financing Africa Union-led peace support operations authorized and acting under the Security Council's authority and consistent with Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. The UN Secretary General presented a report to the Security Council last year on the options for authorized operations and support for the AU-led peace support operations operating under UNSC resolutions. Earlier, in November 2016, the Security Council through resolution 2320 (2016) expressed its readiness to consider the proposals of the AU, for future authorization and support by the Security Council for AU peace support operations authorized by the Security Council, including the suggestions for financing and accountability. It invited the AU to update the Security Council within six months of the adoption of the resolution, with details of the proposed scope of peace operations to be considered; the progress, benchmarks, and timelines for implementation of the AU Peace Fund, consistent with applicable international obligations, as well as accountability, transparency, and compliance frameworks for AU peace support operations.

In September 2017, during Ethiopia's Presidency of the Security Council, the Council through resolution 2378 (2017) expressed its intention to give further consideration to practical steps that could be taken, and the conditions necessary, to establish the mechanism through which African Union-led peace support operations authorized by and under the Security Council's authority, could be partly financed through United Nations assessed contributions, on a case by case basis, and in compliance with relevant agreed standards and mechanisms to ensure strategic and financial oversight and accountability. This would also take into account the work of the United Nations

Secretariat and the African Union Commission, acknowledging the development of operations mandated or authorized by the AU.

The AU Peace and Security Council at its 770th meeting in May last year commended the African Members of the UN Security Council for their efforts which led to the adoption of UN Security Council Resolutions 2320 (2016) and 2378 (2017). It appealed to them to continue spearheading the African Common Position on predictable and sustainable financing through UN assessed contributions for AU mandated/authorized peace support operations with specific financing decisions to be made on a case-by-case basis. The Peace and Security Council also decided to schedule a special session with the Permanent Members and the African Members (A3) of the UN Security Council to discuss predictable and sustainable financing through UN assessed contributions for AU mandated/authorized peace support operations.

The discussions on the proposed resolution on sustainable funding for AU peace support operations will now be carried forward by the African members of the Security Council for 2019 – South Africa, Cote d’Ivoire and Equatorial Guinea.

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### ***Kenya to start implementing Economic Partnership Agreements with the EU***

Kenya has said it will begin to implement the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) that the East African Community (ECA) has been negotiating with the European Union, although only Kenya and Rwanda have so far signed the agreements. Uganda, Tanzania and Burundi have been reluctant to do so.

The issue was raised last week on the side-lines of the Africa-Europe High Level Forum in Vienna when President Uhuru Kenyatta and Rwandan President Paul Kagame met with senior EU officials. Kenya’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement indicating President Kenyatta and President Kagame had agreed with the President of the European Union Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, and the president of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani, to start implementing the agreement. A statement by Kenya’s Foreign Affairs Principal Secretary, Macharia Kamau, said, “the leaders had unanimous consensus on the application of the principle of variable geometry as a mechanism of launching the implementation of EPA commitments for Kenya and Rwanda in their distinguished identity as the only EAC countries that have so far signed the EPA agreement.”

Variable geometry means that while EAC negotiated with the EU as a bloc, both sides acknowledged that there might be differences, some irreconcilable, among the member states. The negotiations allow that this need not delay implementation as long as mechanisms exist to resolve problems at some point. This means one or more member states can continue to pursue their aim while allowing those opposed to hold back for a

possible solution in the future. The EAC countries jointly negotiated the EPAs until 2014 but there has been some concern including the possible threats to local industries. The EU, which had insisted the agreement would be valid only if all five EAC countries signed it, consistently said there was no threat to nascent local industries because the agreements allowed either side to reintroduce safeguards against flooding of goods. Under EPAs, EAC member states gain duty-free access to the EU market for their produce while partially and gradually allowing EU imports into their territory “taking full account of the differences in levels of development between the EAC and the EU”.

Mr. Kamau said Kenya’s action would not affect the momentum of integration in the ECA as the matter was only one aspect of the community: “There is no threat on integration because variable geometry is an implementation tool and it will not be the first time it has been used in the EAC.” He said the clock was ticking: “We had spent a significant amount of time negotiating. That is why it was agreed at the political level that we can proceed.” He noted that Kenya could now apply for the funds as provided for in Article 75 of the agreement. It could expect to be able to access a portion of the € 40billion available under EPAs to develop priority areas listed in the agreements. These include infrastructure, green energy, agriculture and market access, establishment of disease-free zones, blue economy, water resource management, technical and vocational training, training of farmers, customs/border management and private sector development.

The EAC imported goods worth €3.6 billion from the EU last year, including machinery and mechanical appliances, equipment, spare parts, vehicles and pharmaceutical products; it exported €2.4 billion, mainly coffee, cut flowers, tea, tobacco, fish and vegetables, leaving a balance in the EU’s favour of €1.2 billion.