

News in Brief

*Prime Minister Dr. Abiy briefs Ethiopia's ambassadors on foreign policy
...and the annual conference of Ambassadors and Consul-Generals
Deputy Prime Minister Demeke pays a working visit to Sierra Leone
The Permanent Representatives' Committee launches the 32nd AU Summit
A terrorist attack in Nairobi*

News in brief

Africa and the African Union

The 37th Session of Permanent Representatives' Committee of the African Union was held in Addis Ababa this week (January 17-18), launching the 32nd AU Summit. The theme of the Summit is "Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa." The meeting of the Executive Council, of Foreign Ministers, will be held February 7-8; and the Assembly of Heads of State and Government will take place, February 10-11. **(See article)**

Ethiopia

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed met with some 60 Ethiopian Ambassadors and diplomats on Monday (January 14) to discuss the country's ongoing reforms, the challenges and prospects of contemporary international relations and diplomacy and on how to mitigate those challenges. He underlined the need to expand economic diplomacy and diaspora engagement as well as the importance of safeguarding the rights and interests of Ethiopian nationals abroad, focusing on Ethiopia's neighbours and promoting integration in the Horn of Africa. **(See article)**

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy held discussions with heads and representatives of financial institutions on Sunday (January 13) to discuss sectoral reforms focusing on further capacitating financial institutions to be more competitive and competent in strengthening their role in building the economy. The discussions also identified policy, procedural and governance bottlenecks within the sector.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy met with the Vice President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr. David Mabuza on Monday (January 14). Following up discussions held with President Ramaphosa in Addis Ababa last November, their talks covered strengthening historic bilateral relations and cooperation on issues of mutual interest.

Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen led a delegation on a two-day working visit to Freetown, Sierra Leone last week, to enhance bilateral and diplomatic ties. **(See article)**

Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu led African Ambassadors, diplomats and AU Commissioners as well as invited guests in the first celebration of Ethiopia's Cultural Diplomacy Day, on Saturday (January 12) at Entoto and Yaya Village. The occasion was to promote Ethiopia's extension and unique cultural, historical and natural wealth to the diplomatic community in Addis Ababa and the international community.

The week-long annual conference of Ambassadors and Consul-Generals from the 46 Embassies and 14 Consulate abroad, and Directors General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs opened on Tuesday (January 15). Discussions have covered contemporary regional, global, and geopolitical trends affecting Ethiopia and neighbours, Diaspora engagement, business diplomatic activities and the growing importance of economic diplomacy as well as other areas. **(See article)**

Minister of Culture and Tourism, Dr. Hirut Kassaw, who is leading an ‘experience-sharing’ visit to Turkey, met with Mr. Serdar Çam, President of the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) on Wednesday (January 16). She expressed appreciation for TIKA’s support for the restoration of the Al-Nejashi Mosque in Tigray Region and the Ottoman Consulate in Harar. They underlined the need to make full use of the great potential of culture and tourism to further strengthen partnership and cooperation between Ethiopia and Turkey.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Markos Tekle received copies of credentials of the newly appointed Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to Ethiopia, Ambassador Yaprak Alp on Thursday (January 17). Similarly, State Minister Dr. Markos received copies of credentials of the newly appointed Ambassador of the Slovak Republic, Ambassador Drahomir Stos.

Ethiopian Investment Commission has launched an initiative to revise Ethiopia’s investment law regime. Commissioner Abebe Ababayehu said the initiative aims to modernize the investment regulatory and administrative framework, align the legal regime with recent changes in economic policy priorities, consolidate rules and regulations, rationalize the investment incentives regime, revisit investment areas open to the private sector, and adopt best practices, including One-Stop-Services and a faster grievance handling mechanism.

Kenya

An attack on a hotel in Nairobi on Tuesday this week (January 15) left 21 people dead and nearly thirty injured, before the terrorists were killed. Al Shabaab claimed responsibility. **(See article)**

Somalia

Security Minister Abukar Hassan Islow met with Turkey’s Minister of Interior, Suleyman Soyly, on Wednesday (January 16) in Ankara. They said they were working to bring bilateral relations to a better level and expressed satisfaction on the realization of agreements signed last year. Mr. Soyly said relations with Somalia were “fraternal rather than diplomatic” and would be written in letters of gold. He accepted an invitation to visit Somalia later in the year.

South Sudan

The Joint Defence Board, responsible for the formation of the unified forces of the signatories to the peace agreement, is starting the process to build united military, security and police units, despite concerns over funding.

Sudan

Speaking in Nyala, capital of South Darfur, on Monday, (January 14) President al-Bashir referred to the government's efforts to address the economic crisis adding that it couldn't be "dealt with by sabotage and destruction." He said the government could only be changed through the ballot box not by carrying out acts of sabotage and protests. He said the security situation was stable across the country and renewed his call for rebel movements to join the peace process.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy briefs Ethiopia's ambassadors on foreign policy...

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed opened the week-long annual Ambassadors meeting held with the leadership of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Director Generals, Ambassadors and diplomats. The discussions cover the country's ongoing reform, the impact on foreign policy, the progress and challenges in responding to contemporary global issues of national interest, enhancement of economic diplomacy, Diaspora engagement, the reforms within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and considerations of lessons learned in the last year.

The Prime Minister emphasized that Diplomacy was one pillar of economic development; it was the vital bedrock for socio-economic progress. He said: "Our Ambassadors and diplomats are the face and soul of Ethiopia abroad. An Ambassador should relentlessly promote Ethiopia abroad for national gain, stimulate a positive country image, mobilize investment, tourism and better engage the Diaspora for national dialogue." He said, "We want the Foreign Ministry to become a catalyst for economic development, to maintain the positive country image and most importantly trigger citizen-centered diplomacy in our bilateral, regional and multilateral diplomatic activity nexus."

Dr. Abiy commended the Ambassadors for their tireless effort and hard work over the years abroad, concomitantly stressing the importance of the embassies playing a much more active role in promoting investment, and informing and updating potential investors on investment opportunities, trade, and tourism sectors. He stressed the importance of Ethiopian diplomacy in the future focusing on safeguarding the rights and interests of Ethiopian nationals abroad, concentrating on relations with immediate neighbors and on the promotion of integration within the Horn of Africa.

The Prime Minister also gave a Certificate of Appreciation to Africa's longest serving diplomat, Ambassador Konjit Sine-Giorgis in recognition of her outstanding and invaluable contribution to Ethiopia's foreign policy. Ambassador Konjit started her career in 1962, a year before the establishment of the Organization of the African Unity (OAU) and held numerous positions serving as an ambassador in Austria, Egypt, Israel and Canada as well as in Ethiopia missions in New York, Vienna and Geneva and to the OAU, the AU and UNECA.

....and the annual conference of Ambassadors and Consul-Generals

During the week, the conference sessions, and discussions led by the State Ministers, Mrs. Hirut Zemene, Dr. Markos Tekle, Dr. Aklilu Hailemichael and Ambassador Birtukan Ayano, shed light on different aspects of the progress, problems and challenges of the diplomatic missions and the Ministry. The discussions considered regional, global, and geopolitical

trends affecting Ethiopia and its neighbors, reviewed the efforts of economic diplomacy and Diaspora engagement in country development.

State Minister Dr. Markos chaired a panel on trends influencing Ethiopia's diplomatic stance in a highly interconnected, interdependent globalized world. The discussion considered the implementation of institutional reform, building a refurbished and active diplomacy to strengthen Ethiopia's foreign relations with all nations on the basis of the core principles of mutual respect, mutual benefit, reciprocal trust and common interest. Participants provided ideas, exchanged views, shared information and best practices to engage Ethiopia's active diplomatic activities to offer a better way forward to respond to current geopolitical trends for the country's development.

State Minister Dr. Akililu Hailemichael and Permanent Secretary Ambassador Dewano Kedir chaired a panel discussion on Wednesday, focusing on the challenges of developing business activities in diplomatic missions. The discussions underlined the growing importance of economic diplomacy to attract foreign investment, tourism, and business, and considered the various of tools, methods and channels available to establish positive relationships with foreign government representatives, MNCs, and others stakeholders. Economic diplomacy was considered further with stakeholders from the Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Investment Commission and the Ministry of Trade and Industry. This allowed for detailed scrutiny of possibilities, an exchange of ideas, information and best practices on how to best rejuvenate the instruments, methods and channels to trigger synergy across the board, and help propel economic growth through a multidimensional, multifaceted concerted effort.

State Minister Ambassador Birtukan Ayano and Permanent Secretary Ambassador Nega Tsegaye chaired discussions on the structural reforms undertaken by Human Resource management, dealing with recruitment, training, coaching, and performance appraisal and the developments to maximize high organizational performance.

Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu Wrapped up the week-long panel discussion with Ambassadors and diplomats on Friday (January 18) and shed light on contemporary political dynamics of Ethiopia and its implication on foreign relations as well as in-depth look at prospects and challenges on Ethiopia's economy in line with its economic diplomacy venture. He said, " Ethiopia's voice is heard loud and clear across the globe despite lingering and looming geopolitical and global trends," adding: "Ethiopia's impressive remarkable double digit economic growth in the entire continent has echoed our unparalleled commitment to eradicate poverty, deepen our democracy and sustain country development across the globe."

Commending the sound institutional reforms made to replenish the Ministry's overall posture and stamina, Dr. Workneh said, " The institutional reform is part and parcel of our move to enhance, better equip and trigger confidence across the board to meet our vision and mission for the advancement of Ethiopia's national interests."

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a vision for a prosperous and sustainable Ethiopia fully integrated in a globalized and equitable world with a diplomatic network overseas providing greater visibility and outreach. It aims to become a leading diplomatic institution in Africa, with the ability and capacity to marshal strategic partners for the continent and the region, and plays a central role in the achievement of peace and stability in the Horn of Africa. This week's discussions, accentuating the growing importance of economic diplomacy to attract

foreign investment, tourism, and business, and defining the tools, methods and channels to establish positive relationships with foreign government and others stakeholders, will go a long way towards achieving the Ministry's aims.

Deputy Prime Minister Demeke pays a working visit to Sierra Leone

Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen led a delegation to Freetown for a working visit to the Republic of Sierra Leone at the end of last week (January 11-13). The delegation, which included Ministers as well as senior government officials, was warmly welcomed in Freetown by Vice-President, Dr. Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh. The visit aimed to boost bilateral and diplomatic ties between the two countries, and Deputy Prime Minister Demeke held fruitful discussions with the President of Sierra Leone, Julis Maada Bio on ways to consolidate the relationship in all areas of cooperation in a spirit of mutual benefit. Their talks covered issues of interest to both countries, focusing on the need to reactivate existing bilateral mechanisms and expand cooperation on social and economic areas in a spirit of friendship and solidarity.

The two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding on a Political Consultation Mechanism and an Agreement on General Cooperation. Speaking at the signing ceremony, President Julius Maada Bio stressed that Ethiopia's progressive, democratic and development-oriented policies which had made serious strides in moving people out of poverty and its character of leadership were worth emulating. He said "This is a great and strategic relation that we must follow because Ethiopia has achieved quite a lot. So, we have to follow that relationship for the good of our people here in Sierra Leone."

Deputy Prime Minister Demeke underlined that Ethiopia truly valued time-tested and strong diplomatic ties of close to half a century. He noted Ethiopia and Sierra Leone's roles in the anti-colonial struggle and their significant contributions to the establishment of the Organization of African Unity and its transformation into the African Union. He also applauded the commitment shown by Sierra Leone in sending Peace Keeping Troops and Police Officers to the African Union Mission in Somalia, AMISOM.

A high-level consultative meeting on bilateral cooperation was held during the visit, attended by ministers and senior officials from both sides. The two sides exchanged views on potential areas of cooperation, including education, health, tourism, mining, real estate development, aviation, democracy and good governance. They agreed to strengthen existing cooperation in the health sector, citing the deployment of Ethiopia's health professionals to Sierra Leone in order to help deal with the spread of Ebola in 2014, and to work on identification of feasible areas of cooperation in other fields.

The Permanent Representatives' Committee launches the 32nd AU Summit

The 37th Ordinary Session of Permanent Representatives' Committee of the African Union was held in Addis Ababa at the headquarters of the African Union this week (January 17-18). The meeting prepared the agenda of the 32nd AU Summit with appropriate recommendations for consideration by the AU's Executive Council. The theme of the 32nd Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union is "Refugees, Returnees and Internally

Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa.” The Permanent Representatives’ Committee Meeting is the first of the three statutory meetings held under the framework of the 32nd Summit of the African Union. The second meeting is that of Executive Council, of Foreign Ministers, being held February 7-8; and the final meeting of the Summit is the Assembly of Heads of State and Government which will take place February 10-11.

The Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Kwesi Quartey, on behalf of AU Commission Chairperson, Moussa Faki Mahamat, spoke at the opening session attended by AUC Commissioners, the Ambassadors of the 55 African Union member states based in Addis Ababa, representatives from the diplomatic corps, the international community, civil society, private sector and invited guests. He noted the Commission had been undergoing far-reaching, sweeping and progressive reforms during the past few months, and underlined: “Gender-Parity is top on the agenda of leadership, transparency, openness, good governance and rule of law, both within the Commission as well as in Ethiopia.” The Deputy Chairperson emphasized the need for these reforms to help Member States work together and enhance their cooperation to achieve the targets set for the Commission. The pillar of this process, he said, was the Permanent Representative Committee (PRC). He emphasized that: “The Administrative and Financial Reforms are at the core of the Commission’s Institutional reform agenda and together we intend to contribute our best efforts towards our Pan-African Vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Continent.”

In a series of closed sessions, the Permanent Representatives deliberated on the reports of their sub-committees, the reports of meetings of the AU Specialized Technical Committees (STCs) during the last six months, the reports of the Commission, and of AU Organs and Specialized Agencies, and items proposed by Member States. The Meeting also considered and prepared draft agenda decisions, and proposed declarations for the 34th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council and the 32nd Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly.

During the meeting, speakers emphasized the timeliness and relevance of the theme to Africa. Ethiopia joined other Member States in highlighting some of the substantive issues contained in the various draft reports organized by the African Union Commission. The Ethiopian delegation noted Ethiopia’s experience in hosting close to a million refugees and the way the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) was operationalized to give hope to the refugees. Referring to Internally Displaced Peoples, Ethiopia stressed figures were frequently changing and said the Commission should make every effort to obtain the latest data. In Ethiopia, for example, close to a million people who had been classified as internally displaced people only a few months ago, had now been returned to their places of origin.

A terrorist attack in Nairobi

Terrorists stormed a bank within a hotel complex in Nairobi before a suicide bomber detonated himself in the foyer of one of the buildings of the Dusit D2 Hotel complex on Tuesday afternoon this week (January 15). Several vehicles exploded in the hotel car park as they then attacked the hotel, shooting indiscriminately. Kenyan specialist security forces almost immediately launched an operation to flush out the terrorists. Hundreds of people had been trapped inside and President Kenyatta said a total of 700 civilians had been rescued by security forces when the operation came to an end. The attack left 21 people dead with another 28 in

hospital. All five terrorists were killed; and the police said on Wednesday that they had arrested two people believed to have assisted the terrorists.

Following the attack, President Kenyatta said the country was on the highest alert, and would remain so, "I assure every Kenyan and foreign visitor that you are safe." He also urged Kenyans to remain vigilant; security, he said, was "a joint responsibility between citizens and government." He said: "We are in the process of building a new Kenya that is prosperous, secure, and inclusive, and in which every Kenyan has an opportunity to thrive. We will allow no one to derail or frustrate our progress. No one in Kenya today, or at any time, should doubt our resolve to maintain security in our country, our determination is unswerving. We have prevailed and shall always prevail over evil."

President Kenyatta welcomed the messages of solidarity and condolence he had received. Among these, Ethiopia's Prime Minister Dr. Abiy strongly condemned "the senseless and violent attack committed against innocent civilians", and expressed his condolences to the families of the bereaved, and to all Kenyans; the Federal Government of Somalia condemned "this heinous act of terror" by al-Shabaab which, it noted, routinely targeted innocent people. María Fernanda Espinosa, President of the UN General Assembly, and António Guterres, the UN Secretary-General denounced the attack; Mr. Guterres expressed UN's "total solidarity with the people, the government, and the president of Kenya."

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, condemned the attack in the strongest possible terms. He stressed that the attack, once again, underlined the imperative for renewed and reinvigorated efforts to combat terrorism throughout Africa. He commended the swift response by the security forces of Kenya, and expressed the solidarity of the AU with the government and people of Kenya. He reiterated the AU's commitment to continue to work to stabilize the situation in Somalia and the fight against al-Shabaab through AMISOM.