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News in Brief

Africa and the African Union

AU Commission Chairperson, Moussa Faki Mahamat, on behalf of the African Union Commission, wished a happy and prosperous 2019 to all the citizens and leaders of the African continent, as well as to the African Diaspora around the world.

Ethiopia

Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi paid an official visit to Ethiopia this week. Minister Wang held talks with President Sahle-Work Zewde, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed, and Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu as well as visiting the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa, before travelling on to Burkina Faso, Gambia and Senegal. **(See article)**

Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu visited Khartoum on Monday (December 31) and delivered a message from Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed to President Omar Hassan al-Bashir of the Sudan. He discussed bilateral and regional issues with the President, and welcomed the recent release of over 1000 Ethiopian nationals from Sudan prisons, underlining the strengthening of people-to-people ties. They agreed on the importance of working together to advance the economic integration efforts in the Horn of Africa region as well as the promotion of regional peace and stability.

Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh also met with Sudan's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Dr. Al-Dirdiri Mohamed in Khartoum on Monday (December 31). He said the sustained political consultations at higher levels was a "clear testimony that the two sides are committed to strengthen the relationship further ahead and work more closely on issues of mutual benefit to the peoples of Ethiopia and the Sudan." Dr. Mohamed said Sudan would "continue to work for the strengthening of relations at regional and international platforms."

Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu bade farewell to Ambassador Susanna Moorehead, the outgoing UK Ambassador to Ethiopia and Djibouti and Permanent Representative to the AU and UN Economic Commission for Africa on January 2. **(See article)**

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene received Ambassador Semere Russom, Eritrean new Ambassador to Ethiopia on Thursday (January 3). She noted the special attention to the efforts made to enhance people-to-people-ties. Ambassador Semere, who pledged to elevate bilateral cooperation between the two countries, said the team of Ethiopian doctors currently in Eritrea would further strengthen the people-to-people ties.

Ethiopian tourist attractions were exhibited to Chinese Tour Operators and Travel Agents in Liaoning Province, China last week at a Tourism Promotion Forum organized by the Ethiopian Embassy in Beijing together with Ethiopian Airlines. **(See article)**

Ethiopia's two-year term as a non-permanent member of the United Nation Security Council ended formally on Monday (December 31). **(See article)**

The Attorney General has announced that 530 prisoners have been pardoned in connection with Ethiopia's Christmas celebrated on January 7. This is in addition to the more than 13,000 people who have benefitted from the Amnesty Bill, whose grace period ends on January 23.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs would like to take this opportunity to wish an enjoyable, profitable, and prosperous 2019 to all our readers, wherever they may be.

Eritrea

Ethiopia's Ambassador to Eritrea, Ambassador Redwan Hussien welcomed the delegation of 40 health officers and specialists from Ethiopian medical institutions to Asmara on Sunday (December 30). The delegation was led by Dr. Lia Tadesse, State Minister of Health. The delegation will be in Eritrea for two months, providing voluntary medical services in local hospitals.

Somalia

President Mohamed Abdullahi signed the Federal Government's US\$340 million budget for 2019 on Tuesday (January 1), two days after the Lower House of Parliament unanimously endorsed it. The budget, approved by the Cabinet in October, is 24% higher than last year's \$275 million.

President Mohamed on Monday (December 31) signed into law legislation on National Disability Agency. He said the government would try to "provide quality education, health and jobs to the disabled community as we continue to establish an independent body to protect their interest."

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared UN envoy, Nickolas Haysom, *persona non grata* on Tuesday this week (January 1). The Ministry said Mr. Haysom could no longer operate in Somalia after he had acted in violation of protocol and was "deliberately interfering with Somalia's internal affairs." Mr. Haysom wrote to the Minister of Internal Security calling for investigation into the arrest of Sheikh Muktar Robow, following allegations of violence. U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres appointed Mr. Haysom as Special Representative for Somalia and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) in September 2018.

United Nations Secretary-General Guterres strongly condemned Tuesday's attack (January 1) on the UN compound in Mogadishu, saying that intentionally attacking UN personnel may constitute "a violation of international humanitarian law." The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (SRCC) for Somalia, Ambassador Madeira,

also condemned the attack. He said it was another proof that the militants have no regard for the sanctity of human life.

Police commander, General Bashir Abdi Mohamed, has announced that 1,000 soldiers are due to join the forces tasked with maintenance of security in Mogadishu. They have completed training and will shortly begin work in the capital. Speaking this week, General Abdi expressed optimism about the future security situation in the capital

South Sudan

In a statement on December 31, the AU Peace and Security Council expressed its support for deployment of the IGAD Regional Protection Force and emphasized the need “to create conducive conditions for the effective implementation” of the Revitalized Peace Agreement. The IGAD force will be composed of four hundred ninety-nine (499) each from Kenya, Uganda, and Sudan, and ninety-nine (99) each from Somalia and Djibouti.

Sudan

President Omer al-Bashir on Sunday (December 30) called on the police to refrain from the use of excessive force to quell demonstrators. Their duty, he said, was to maintain security not to kill civilians.

Opening New Chapters, Ushering in a New Dawn: Ethiopia in 2018

It has been a year of dramatic political changes in Ethiopia, with Monday (April 2) marking a historic day in its political history when Dr. Abiy Ahmed, at the age of 42, became one of Africa’s youngest leaders, sworn as the new Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. In his inaugural speech, Dr. Abiy began by extending his appreciation of former Premier Hailemariam Dessalegn for his exemplary decision to voluntarily step down as part of the solution for the instability that had affected the country in recent years. This exactly proved the former Prime Minister correct when he said: “I see my resignation as vital in the bid to carry out reforms that would lead to sustainable peace and democracy”. Dr. Abiy went on to speak of the importance of unity, love and forgiveness, acknowledging the EPRDF’s failures and promising to mend the party as well as free political space; the media and civil society.

One of the biggest surprises of 2018 was the extent and speed of the reforms announced by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy who has welcomed home exiled opposition figures, announced one of the world's few "gender-balanced" cabinets, survived an assassination attempt and has made it clear he is determined to hold free and fair elections in a country ruled by a single dominant coalition since 1991. Dr. Abiy has released and pardoned political leaders, lifting bans on political parties, websites and various media outlets that were deemed terrorists and affiliates. He has invited them back to operate within a democratic Ethiopia. These groundbreaking changes helped in convincing exiled opposition groups and the Ethiopian Diaspora community that the changes were genuine. They brought many on board again to participate in the country’s affairs. A draft pardon proclamation to streamline the way the government can release wrongly accused and imprisoned individuals and organizations has been submitted to parliament for approval. Previous anti-terrorist, cyber-terrorist and charities

legislation and proclamations are being redrafted by the newly appointed attorney general to pave way for greater democratic reforms. At the same time, major efforts to combat corruption and rent-seeking have been launched.

With the police, the military, internal security, correctional facilities and other elements within the military-security establishment of the country suffering from a serious lack of public confidence, reforming these institutions in a top-down approach was a vital step towards restoring public trust and stability. Here, and in other bodies, Dr. Abiy started by replacing old-guard veterans in rapid succession, where appropriate in a respectful manner to ensure continuity in accordance with state protocol and full-honours for the retirement of long-serving officials. The success of his policies was underlined in October when the EPRDF Congress gave Dr. Abiy's leadership a massive vote of confidence, re-electing him as party chairman and Demeke Mekonnen as his deputy, confirming his position as prime minister until the next general election in 2020.

Most dramatic has been appointments of women to many top posts. President Sahle-Work Zewde is Africa's only female head of state, and for the first time in Ethiopia's history, women hold half of the government's 20 ministerial posts, with security portfolios placed in the hands of Aisha Mohammed as Defense Minister and former parliamentary speaker, Muferiat Kamil, heading the newly created Peace Ministry, covering the police and intelligence agencies. Human rights lawyer Meaza Ashenafi has become Ethiopia's most senior judge as President of the Supreme Court.

Dr. Abiy markedly departed from the usual trend of conducting diplomacy within the Horn of Africa, with a "win-win" approach towards neighbours, rejecting the previous decades' old trend of the typical "us-versus-them" and "allies vs. enemies". In May, he visited Sudan and Djibouti and in June travelled to Egypt. His biggest success came in putting an end to the "no peace-no war" situation with Eritrea that had persisted for decades, improving regional economic ties and cooperation. The dramatic diplomatic thaw between Ethiopia and Eritrea has reshaped the diplomacy of the Horn of Africa. Following Dr. Abiy's announcement that Ethiopia would fully accept and implement the findings of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Border Commission, he and President Isaias of Eritrea had visited each other's countries within a matter of weeks. Borders were re-opened and families re-united after twenty years or more apart; Eritrea reopened its embassy in Addis Ababa and in August Ethiopia reopened its embassy in Asmara; direct phone lines were restored between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and strangers called each other to say hello as the two leaders brought over twenty years of distrust and conflict to an end. Flights restarted between Addis Ababa and Asmara. Prime Minister Abiy and President Isaias celebrated the Ethiopian New year on September 11 with members of the Ethiopian and Eritrean defense forces along the common border.

It didn't end there. Eritrea restored relations with Somalia and agreed to normalize ties with Djibouti, celebrating as the U.N. Security Council lifted sanctions. As Ethiopia and Eritrea made peace and restored normal relations, easing tension around the region, U.N. Secretary General António Guterres emphasized that there was "a wind of hope blowing in the Horn of Africa."

Underlining the need to further expand ties with neighboring countries, the Prime Minister has referred to the close cross-cultural and inter-cultural linkages among all the peoples of the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia is an emblem of Pan-Africanism, the founder and seat of the African Union, member of many important international organizations, and it plays a notable role in

regional, continental, and global issues. Dr. Abiy says the Government will further reinforce and continue its relations with all “our African brothers.” On New Year’s Eve, he referred specifically to relations with Eritrea: “While expressing our readiness to resolve our differences through dialogue, I take this opportunity to call on the Eritrean government to take a similar stand not only for the sake of our common interest but also for the common blood relations between the peoples of the two countries.”

Speaking at the Millennium Hall on New Year’s Eve, to a huge gathering which brought together high-level officials, religious leaders, members of opposition parties and returning exiles, and thousands of city residents, as well as representatives of Regional State governments, the Prime Minister said firmly: “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,” adding, “Ethiopia is the country we share, and we have to work for peaceful co-existence and prosperity.”

The positive winds of change evident in Ethiopia under the leadership of Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed have, indeed, opened a new chapter in Ethiopia’s political, economic and social history, offering realistic and genuine possibilities of change to meet the hopes and expectations of the country’s youthful population. These changes, among others, are in line with the new political and democratic realities of Ethiopia. Problems, of course, remain, and there have been intra-ethnic clashes and heightened tensions in some areas, but over this last year Ethiopia has indeed turned the page, opened a new chapter and ushered in a new dawn. It has been welcomed and embraced by Ethiopians throughout the length and breadth of the country, and across the world. It offers great hope and expectations for 2019.

China’s Foreign Minister visits Ethiopia and the African Union

Mr. Wang Yi, State Councillor and Foreign Minister of the People’s Republic of China, arrived in Ethiopia for an official visit on Thursday (January 3). During his visit, Mr. Wang Yi held separate talks with Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed, and with Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, on bilateral, regional and international matters. The State Councillor and Foreign Minister also paid a courtesy call on President Sahle-Work Zewde, as well as visiting AU Headquarters.

During the meeting with the Prime Minister, both sides underlined the importance of the time-tested relations between the two countries. Acknowledging China’s immense contribution to Ethiopia, Prime Minister Abiy highlighted the importance of the strengthened relationship capitalizing on new forms of technology in addition to continuing support for infrastructure development. Mr. Wang Yi appreciated the successful reform initiatives that have been undertaken over the past few months in Ethiopia. He emphasized that Ethiopia was on the right path and stressed that China remained committed to supporting their relationship, noting that it was also determined to develop new dimensions to it.

Dr. Workneh recalled the State Councillor’s earlier visit to Ethiopia in 2017 and welcomed him on this first leg of this visit to Africa in the first week of 2019. They exchanged views on a number of issues. Dr. Workneh, expressing Ethiopia’s desire to further strengthen its Comprehensive Strategic Cooperative Partnership with China, emphasized the government’s

wish for China's continued and increased involvement in the privatization process of major enterprises in Ethiopia. He also requested the Chinese government to encourage companies to participate in investment of priority sectors through such modalities as Public Private Partnerships (PPP). The Minister referred to the launch of the eight principles by President Xi during the recent FOCAC Summit in Beijing, and China's commitment in allocating US\$60 billion to finance these initiatives. He expressed Ethiopia's efforts to continue to be a beneficiary of the FOCAC outcome. He said Ethiopia looked forward to actively participating in the upcoming Belt and Road Forum to be held in Beijing later this year and emphasized the government's strong interest to work together with China to facilitate the smooth operations of flagship projects of the Belt and Road Initiative including the Ethio-Djibouti Railway.

Mr. Wang Yi expressed his appreciation of the strong leadership and active role played by the Ethiopian Government in undertaking the wide spectrum of reform in the country, including securing peace in the region and the normalization of relations with Eritrea. He assured Dr. Workneh of China's support to Ethiopia for a wide range of economic and technical cooperation and reiterated that Ethiopia was seen as a show case for China-Africa Cooperation. He reaffirmed China's readiness to provide support for the operationalization of the Ethio-Djibouti railway. He said China would also encourage Chinese companies to invest in Ethiopia and was ready to import soya beans and other agricultural products.

Mr. Wang Yi and Dr. Workneh also exchanged views on regional and international issues, focusing on normalization efforts with Eritrea and regional integration. They discussed collaboration between their two countries during Ethiopia's Non-Permanent membership of the UN Security Council which ended last month and the reform of the UN Security Council. They concluded their official meeting with a joint press conference.

State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi also paid a courtesy call on President Sahle-Work Zewde, President of Ethiopia. President Sahle-Work, remembering her participation in the first China Africa Forum two decades ago, said she was delighted by the widening both the scope of FOCAC and the elevation of Ethio-China relations to greater heights. She welcomed China's support in the international arena and expressed her hope that the two countries would continue to work together for a strong multilateral system. While congratulating the President on the assumption of her duties, the State Councillor expressed his government's commitment to support Ethiopia's reforms and to remain to be a long-term and reliable partner to Ethiopia. He expressed his admiration for the understanding of global issues by Ethiopian leaders and the country's positive role in regional and international affairs.

During his visit to the AU Headquarters on Friday (January 4) Mr, Wang Yi held talks with African Union Commission Chairperson, Moussa Faki Mahamat, on the progress made since the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Beijing summit last year. They also discussed bilateral issues before a meeting of officials from the AU Commission with the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Mr. Wang Yi then participated in the initiation of the Integrated Service Center Project for the AU, which the Government of China has agreed to finance, design, construct and equip.

Foreign Minister bids farewell to the departing UK Ambassador Moorehead

Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu bade farewell to Ambassador Susanna Moorehead, the outgoing UK Ambassador to Ethiopia and Djibouti and Permanent Representative to the AU and UN Economic Commission for Africa on January 2. The Minister thanked the Ambassador for her efforts to enhance and complement relations between Ethiopia and UK. He highlighted the true friendship and common vision both countries enjoyed including collaboration on a myriad of issues of mutual concern at regional and global levels. The Minister said: “Our long-standing historical and important relation has garnered practical outcomes as Ethiopia is undertaking sweeping reforms in good governance, opening up political space and democratization.” He added, “Independent, strong and trustworthy institutions are vital bedrocks to bring progress in democratization and we call for the international community to support our endeavours in this regard.”

Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh also underlined the need to further bolster trade and investment ties between Ethiopia and the United Kingdom. He said, “Ethiopia and the UK have enjoyed rich diplomatic relations covering a range of areas, including trade, culture, education and development cooperation.” Dr. Workneh awarded the Ambassador a Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of her outstanding contribution in enhancing the bilateral ties between Ethiopia and the UK.

Ambassador Susanna Moorehead expressed the UK’s continued commitment to support Ethiopia and the efforts of ensuring regional peace, stability and economic integration in the Horn of Africa. She said, “I’m pleased to witness Ethiopia’s political transition during my tenure of duty and Ethiopia has been a stabilizing force in a difficult and highly uncertain region.” She stressed that the UK was keen to support Ethiopia in human capital development, job creation and institution building.

Ambassador Moorehead, talking to journalists subsequently, praised the massive political and socio-economic changes witnessed in Ethiopia in recent times. She said changes have brought about a new era not only for the country but also for the entire region. Ambassador Moorehead said her term as ambassador had been “a fascinating three years.” During her term, the UK had provided around 1 billion US dollars for development projects including programs that benefited 4 million pregnant mothers and children under 5, and increased access to safe drinking water for 5 million. She said the UK had always seen Ethiopia as a key strategic partner, and its commitment to Ethiopia was unchanged.

Ethiopia concludes UN Security Council Term

The Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the UN, Ambassador Taye Atske-Selassie and Director General of International Organizations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ms. Fortuna Dibaco, acknowledged the end of Ethiopia’s two years as a Non-Permanent member of the UN Security Council at a press conference this week. Ethiopia’s membership ended in December 31. Ambassador Taye told the media this week that Ethiopia, during its time on the Council had underlined its role as a “firm, stalwart advocate of international peace and

security spearheading principled and balanced positions on global issues of peace contributing constructively towards concerted and consistent efforts in search for peaceful resolutions of global conflicts and crisis situations.”

Commending Ethiopia’s persistent progress in multilateral diplomacy and its strong belief in effective multilateralism at the UN, Ambassador Taye underscored that Ethiopia has played a key role during its time as a Non-Permanent member of the Council, not only shouldering responsibilities in pressing regional and continental issues. He highlighted Ethiopia’s proactive and consistent activities in the Horn, including, among others, providing the UN force in Abyei (UNIFSA), as well as contributing to the UN/AU Hybrid force in Darfur (UNAMID), and to AMISOM in Somalia, Ambassador Taye also stressed that Ethiopia for many years had been one of the steadfast and leading contributors of UN Peacekeeping, providing a contingent of 12,000 personnel, both men and women, involved in UN peacekeeping duties, as well as exerting efforts to make meaningful and constructive contributions, providing a voice of reason, calling for unity and consensus in responding to some of the most difficult, complex and arduous peace and security challenges of today.

Ambassador Taye underlined: “The lifting of sanctions on Eritrea and the IGAD-led peace process in South Sudan has depicted Ethiopia’s unflinching commitment towards positive developments in the region and its voice for the continental peace and security architecture.” Ethiopia joined the United Nations on 13 November 1945 and has been an active member since 1945.

Ethiopia’s tourist attractions promoted in China

Ethiopian tourist attractions were exhibited to Chinese Tour Operators and Travel Agents in Shenyang City, Liaoning Province, China last week. The Ethiopian Embassy in Beijing in collaboration with Ethiopian Airlines organized a Tourism Promotion Forum to promote Ethiopia’s tourism potential and destinations, in Shenyang, on Saturday (December 26). The Forum was organized under the theme, "Explore Ethiopia: The Land of Origins." Ethiopia is second to none in Africa with its plethora of unique tourist attractions although its tourism development and strategic promotional efforts have yet to lead to a necessary paradigm shift in the sector. There’s still much to be done to expand and diversify tourism development and products and market these for tourists. The need for this is underlined by the increasing numbers of people in countries like China who are becoming interested in travel to discover the epic landscapes, ancient cultures and exotic wildlife to be found in Ethiopia as well as other countries.

The Forum in Shenyang City, firmly anchored in the steadily expanding people-to-people relations within the China-Africa cooperation agenda, attracted more than 60 representatives of major tour operators, travel agents, destination promoters, tourist media. Government officials from the Liaoning Provincial Commission of Tourism Development and the Shenyang Tourism Commission also graced the occasion, The Deputy Party Secretary of Liaoning Provincial Commission of Tourism Development, Mr. Wang Xiaojing, noted that Ethiopia was one of the African countries that the Chinese Government had designated “Approved Destination Status” for Chinese tourists. He emphasized that the Forum would

serve as a platform to allow Liaoning tourists and tourism stakeholders to explore Ethiopia as a new tourist destination for the region's population.

As a principal organizer of the event, the Ethiopian Embassy in Beijing presented Ethiopia's diverse tourist attractions, focusing on the country's immense geographic and cultural heritage, its long and rich history and spectacular biological diversity. It demonstrated exactly why Ethiopia was rightly dubbed the "Land of Origins". Ethiopian Airlines also promoted its services to potential customers and highlighted its flight destinations from and to Ethiopia across the globe including local flight destinations, which have become something of a demonstration of Ethiopia as a preferred destination for Chinese tourists. The Forum concluded with celebration of the traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony. Overall, it successfully emphasized the complementarities of the immense tourist attractions of Ethiopia and the great tourist potential of Liaoning Province for generating tourists in an out-bound tourist market.

Apart from the plenary sessions at the Forum, the Ethiopian Embassy, together with Ethiopian Airlines representatives, held fruitful bilateral discussions with the heads of Liaoning Provincial Commission of Tourism Development, the Liaoning Comfort International Travel Service Co., Ltd and the Shenyang Youth International Travel Service Co., Ltd. It reached understandings on the promotion of Ethiopia as a tourist destination for Liaoning tourists. Liaoning Province, and its capital city, Shenyang, with a population of some 44 million, is itself endowed with a number of sites of scenic and historical interest which have encouraged interest in tourism. Recent reports have underlined that Chinese urban dwellers as well as the younger generation now see participation in outbound tourism as an indication of happiness and relaxation. Liaoning province has become one of the major sources of outbound tourist generators in China; following this Forum a significant number should be prepared to explore the numerous attractions of Ethiopia.