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**News in Brief**

**Africa and the African Union**

In a keynote address at the Africa Business Health Forum, held on Tuesday last week (February 12) on the side-lines of the AU Summit, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed emphasized the need for affordable and quality healthcare in Africa, spearheaded by governments and private sector working collaboratively, to enable equitable access for all. **(See article)**

A two-day US-Africa Trade and Investment Forum was held last week on the side-lines of the AU Summit in Addis Ababa. Hosted by the United States Mission to the African Union and the US Corporate Council on Africa, it aimed to support private sector engagement in the African Continental Free Trade Area as well as drive US-Africa trade, investment, and business engagement. **(See article)**

The EU High Representative, Vice-President Federica Mogherini, at a press conference following the EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting at the beginning of the week, said she had reported on her talks during her recent visit to the Horn of Africa. She noted the EU support to “the wind of reconciliation and opening, in particular between Ethiopia and Eritrea.” She said the EU was going to reinforce its work in the region with a strong presence on the ground.

**Ethiopia**

The 4th round of Ethio-Eritrea ministerial consultation took place in Addis Ababa on Thursday (February 21). The consultation was led by Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyu and Foreign Minister Osman Saleh of Eritrea. The two sides deliberated on how to take further the cooperation agendas launched few month back based on the understanding reached between the leaders of the two countries. In this connection documents exchanged on establishing formal High-level Joint Commission, port utilization, transport, trade and customs were further enriched.

The new UK Ambassador to Ethiopia, and Permanent Representative to the AU and UN Economic Commission for Africa, Ambassador David McPhail, paid a courtesy call on Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh on Tuesday (February 19).

Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh met Ambassador Yaprak Alp of Turkey on Tuesday (February 19) to discuss ways of enhancing bilateral relations. They agreed to further strengthen the already strong trade and investment ties between the two countries.

Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh received copies of the credentials of the UAE Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ambassador Mohamed Salem Alrashidi on Wednesday (February 20).

Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh inaugurated Hyundai Marathon Motor Vehicle Assembly Plant in Addis Ababa on Thursday (February 21), in a major push to boost the country's automotive industry. Minister Dr. Workneh said, with the view to expanding the country's automotive industry, the government will continue to support investors who engage in the sector. The plant, which was established at a cost of half a billion Birr, has the capacity to assemble 10,000 cars in eight different models per year; it will also create employment opportunities for 200 people initially, and with the possibility to create 1,000 jobs once it goes fully operational.

Minister of Peace Mrs. Mufariat Kamil attended the Munich Security Conference 2019, held under the theme of "The Great Puzzle: Who will pick up the pieces" at the end of last week, February 15-17. She also participated in an event organized by the Tana Forum and the African Union on "Peace and Integration in the Horn of Africa". Discussions focused on the current peace processes in the Horn of Africa and its implications for regional integration and beyond.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene welcomed Mr. Hamad Al- Meshan, Acting Assistant Foreign Minister of Kuwait on Wednesday (February 20). Both sides agreed to expand ties on aspects of mutual interests in bilateral and regional issues. Mr. Hamad Al-Meshan noted that the Ethio-Kuwait Joint Ministerial Commission, due to meet next in Addis Ababa in June, has been playing a leading role in outlining framework for cooperation. He stated preparations were well underway to sign a bilateral labour agreement.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut received copies of the credentials of the Angolan Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ambassador Francisco Jose da Cruz on Tuesday (February 19).

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Markos Tekle, received a British Inter-parliamentary Union delegation on Monday (February 18). Dr. Markos appreciated UK support to Ethiopia's efforts in advancing democratization, institutional building and economic development and underlined the importance of strengthening parliamentary cooperation. The delegation expressed the UK commitment to support institutional capacity building and Ethiopia's efforts to ensure regional peace and stability and economic integration.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Markos held talks with Federico Bonaglia, Deputy Director of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development Centre on Tuesday (February 19). Mr. Bonaglia expressed OECD's interest to expand its activity in engaging small and medium sized enterprises and in identifying linkages with urban-rural social development projects for viable structural development in line with Ethiopia's policies

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Markos received copies of the credentials of the Chilean Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ambassador Fernando Sepulveda on Wednesday (February 20).

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Birtukan Ayano received the CEO of Hyundai Motor Company, Mr. Won Hee Lee who arrived in Addis Ababa on Thursday (February 21) to attend the Grand Inaugural Ceremony of the Hyundai Marathon Motor Vehicle Assembly plant, the first car assembly plant in East Africa.

State Minister for Industry and Trade, Ambassador Misganu Arega and Ethiopia's Consul-General in Dubai, Mrs. Eyerusalem Amdemariam, opened the Ethiopian pavilion at this year's annual food and beverages trade show in Dubai, the world's largest. Ambassador Misganu said the exhibition was an important platform to promote Ethiopia's wide range of export items and attract potential investors.

Dr. Negash Wagesho, State Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy, visited South Korea last week (February 11-15), visiting a number of environmental infrastructure facilities, including water treatment plants and landfill sites. The delegation also visited the War Memorial Hall for Ethiopian Veterans in the Korean War.

An Eritrean Public and Cultural Diplomacy Delegation arrived in Addis Ababa on Thursday last week (February 14), and spent a week in Ethiopia providing cultural and musical concerts, under the theme of the "Grand Musical Concert to Celebrate the Peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea", in Bahir Dar, Adama and Hawassa, with a finale at the Millennium Hall in Addis Ababa on Thursday (February 21). **(See article)**

Ethiopia and Kenya agreed at the meeting of the Joint Border Commission last week to establish a peace committee to resolve issues that could disturb peace and security of residents in border areas. **(See article)**

Ethiopia issued its Country Refugee Response Plan (ECRRP) for 2019-2020 earlier this month. It is a plan which underlines the progressive nature of the new refugee law, and offers significant progress towards implementation of the nine pledges it made at the Leaders' Summit on Refugees in New York in 2016. **(See article)**

Ambassador Shiferaw Shigutie, Ambassador to South Korea, led an investment business promotion tour to a number of Korean cities last week (February 11-15), providing potential investors with information on the business and investment environment in Ethiopia.

Ambassador Teshome Toga presented his credential to Mr. Xi Jinping, President of the people's Republic of China on Wednesday (February 20). Ambassador Teshome noted that Ethiopia was fully committed to the commitments under the FOCAC and Belt and Road Initiative. President Xi underlined that the relationship between China and Ethiopia was of a great importance; he noted he was looking forward to welcoming Prime Minister Dr. Abiy in Beijing at the 2nd Belt and Road summit in April.

Ambassador Samia Zekaria, Ethiopia's Ambassador to the State of Qatar presented a copy of her credentials to State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Soltan bin Saad Al-Muraikhi, on Tuesday (February 19).

## **Djibouti**

Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peace-building Affairs Rosemary DiCarlo was due to brief the UN Security Council on Eritrea-Djibouti relations under the agenda item “Peace and Security in Africa” on Friday (February 21).

## **Eritrea**

A sixty-strong Eritrean Public and Cultural Diplomacy Delegation arrived in Addis Ababa on Thursday last week (February 14) and spent a week in Ethiopia providing cultural and musical concerts, under the theme of the “Grand Musical Concert to Celebrate the Peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea”, in Bahir Dar, Adama and Hawassa, with a finale at the Millennium Hall in Addis Ababa on Thursday (February 21). **(See article)**

## **Somalia**

President Abdullahi made a two-day visit to Bujumburu, Burundi at the beginning of this week, holding bilateral talks with President Pierre Nkurunziza on Tuesday (February 19). Their talks focused on “strengthening cooperation on security and expanding trade and economic partnerships”. They agreed to boost the war on Al-Shabaab. Burundi provides the second-largest contingent in AMISOM with 5,400 troops.

President Mohamed Abdullahi visited Djibouti for talks with Djibouti President Ismail Omar Guelleh on Wednesday (February 20). The two presidents agreed to strengthen anti-terrorist operations in Somalia as well as discussing ways to further strengthen diplomatic relations. President Abdullahi, who was accompanied by Defence Minister, Hassan Mohamed Ali, Army Chief, Major General Dahir Elmi and National Security Advisor, Abdisaid Muse Ali, thanked President Guelleh for the activities of Djibouti troops in Hiiraan region.

Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre, together with senior officials from the Qatar embassy in Mogadishu, launched the construction of the Mogadishu-Afgoye, Mogadishu-Jowhar road projects being financed by Qatar Fund at the weekend.

Deputy Prime Minister Mahdi Mohammed Gulaid on a visit to Saudi Arabia met the Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Ibrahim bin Abdulaziz Al-Assaf, on Monday (February 18) to discuss bilateral relations and ways of promoting common interests.

Executive Secretary of IGAD Ambassador Mahboub Maalim expressed IGAD’s support for the African Union’s call for the cancellation of Somalia’s debt. He said “Somalia’s efforts at peace consolidation were constrained by the debt burden that prevents it from accessing concessionary financing and normalizing relations with International Financial Institutions”. He added, the institutions that had pledged financial support should “step up their good faith efforts and accelerate the normalization of financial relations with Somalia”.

AMISOM military commanders, and representatives of the Somali National Security Forces and other stakeholders, ended a week-long meeting on Friday last week (February 15). They agreed on the key operations and activities for the new Concept of Operations (CONOPS), approved last year by the Military Operations Coordination Committee, **(See article)**

The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission Ambassador Madeira, inspecting the Jaalle Siyaad Military Academy, a military training institution which AMISOM has occupied for more than a decade, said the Academy would be

handed over to the Somali National Army at the end of this month, after the completion of renovation works.

## **Sudan**

UN Secretary-General António Guterres announced the appointment of Major General Mehari Zewde Gebremariam of Ethiopia as Force Commander of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) on Friday (February 15). He succeeds Major General Gebre Adhana of Ethiopia who will complete his assignment on April 23.

Special Assistant to the U.S. President and Senior Director for Africa at the National Security Council, Cyril Sartor, discussed Phase Two of the Sudanese-American dialogue with the Presidential Assistant Faisal Hassan Ibrahim on Monday (February 18) in Khartoum. He also met with Sudan's Foreign Minister El-Dirdeiry Ahmed and the Speaker of the National Assembly Ibrahim Ahmed Omer.

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## ***Celebrating the peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea***

Ethiopia and Eritrea resumed diplomatic relations on June 18 last year after 20 years of hostility, with Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed making a landmark visit to Eritrea and Eritrea's President Isaias Afwerki visiting Ethiopia. Despite fighting a bloody two-year border war from 1998-2000, the peoples of Ethiopia and Eritrea share numerous complementarities in terms of culture, history and livelihood. Indeed, the people of the two countries are basically one people living in two countries on the ground. It was in line with this that an Eritrean Public and Cultural Diplomacy Delegation arrived in Addis Ababa on Thursday last week (February 14).

On arrival at Bole International Airport, the delegation was warmly welcomed by the Ethiopian Ambassador to Eritrea, Ambassador Redwan Hussien, Eritrea's Ambassador to the African Union, Ambassador Araya Desta, Head of the Addis Ababa Culture and Tourism Bureau, Professor Nebiyu Baye, and the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nebiat Getachew, as well as dozens of members of the Ethiopian Public Diplomacy team.

The Eritrean Public and Cultural Diplomacy team, composed of over sixty Eritreans from different cultural, professional and other walks of life, came to further strengthen historic relations and people-to-people ties between the two sisterly countries. They provided cultural and musical concerts, under the theme of the "Grand Musical Concert to Celebrate the Peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea"; celebrate and strengthen peace between the two countries in Bahir Dar, Adama and Hawassa and as a finale at the Millennium Hall in Addis Ababa on Thursday (February 21). In these cities, the Eritrean cultural and musical groups, performed their concerts and held meetings and discussions with their Ethiopian counterparts to further deepen people-to-people links, relating to different federal and regional government officials and community representatives at all the venues.

Indeed, the Eritrean Public Diplomacy Delegation delivered a very clear message from the people of Eritrea to the people of Ethiopia. The two countries have a long-time relationship and the people of Eritrea are committed to raise the people-to-people relations to a higher level. In addition, they underlined that the people of Eritrea are committed to the mutual

growth of both peoples, and they would like to have an even closer and stronger relationship with the people of Ethiopia.

The closing ceremony of the Eritrean Public and Cultural Diplomacy delegation's visit took place at the Millennium Hall in Addis Ababa on Thursday (February 21). The event had been graced by Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, his Eritrean counterpart Osman Saleh, Special Advisor to the President of Eritrea, Yemane Gebreab, Ethiopia's Minister for Culture and Tourism, Dr. Hirut Kassaw, Deputy Mayor of the Addis Ababa City Administration, Engineer Takele Uma, Addis-based ambassadors, members of the international community and diplomatic corps invited guests and residents of Addis Ababa.

The visit of the delegation was particularly timely as it would have a positive impact in building on the positive momentum launched by the leaders of the two countries. And last but not least the "Grand Musical Concert to Celebrate the Peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea" and the Eritrean Public Diplomacy and Cultural Team visit had visibly strengthened the long-standing and historic relations and people-to-people ties between two sisterly nations.

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### ***Report on 32<sup>nd</sup> Ethio-Kenya Joint Border Meeting***

An Ethio-Kenya Joint Border Commission meeting opened in Adama City, Ethiopia, on Tuesday (February 12). The meeting reviewed the progress of implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the 31<sup>st</sup> Joint Border Commission meeting. The three-day meeting discussed political, socio-economic, peace and security issues across the shared border, and focused on intra-border security, stemming illegal weapons flow and human trafficking, enhancing border trade for the benefit of the border communities, and cooperation on health and education as well as strengthening people-to-people ties between the communities on both sides of the border. The meeting was concluded by the adoption of resolutions that enable them strengthen relations and resolve future conflicts. With a view to dealing with peace and security concerns, the two sides agreed to strengthen a "Peace Committee", made up of officials of the relevant government institutions, local administrators of border communities and elders from both countries.

Mrs. Teyiba Hassen, the Deputy Chief Administrator of Ethiopia's Oromia Regional State, noted that the relationship between Ethiopia and Kenya was longstanding and one based on solid foundations. The peoples of the two countries, she emphasized, were tied together by blood, culture and tradition. She also underlined the importance of their joint efforts to ensure security along the border as well as improve the socio-economic wellbeing of border communities. Moffat Kangi, leading the Kenyan delegation, said the bilateral ties and longstanding cooperation between Ethiopia and Kenya was exemplary for the countries in the region. The two countries, were working together to ensure that their common borders were corridors of peace and prosperity.

Following a plenary session, discussions took place in two clusters, focusing on political and security cooperation, and on economic and social matters. Each cluster reviewed the progress on the implementation of the recommendations made at the previous session in Mombasa in November 2016 and reached a series of agreements and recommendations.

On political and security matters, the two sides agreed on dealing with the inspection and maintenance of boundary pillars; on immigration and human trafficking, security issues along the common border and terrorism. Both sides expressed concerns over the slow pace of implementation and recommended that the Joint Border Commission should devise better methods of fast-tracking its work in compliance with Schedule II and Article XII of the 1970 Boundary Treaty in an efficient and expeditious way. The two countries further emphasized the need for Border Commission and the local administrators to sensitize border communities before commencement of the boundary inspection and maintenance.

To address the problem of irregular migration, the meeting recommended the immigration authorities of both countries should establish five additional Points of Entry/Exit along the common border, phase by phase. The meeting also recommended that local administrators and community leaders from the two countries should convene regular consultative meetings and keep in communication to address issues affecting their communities.

On the cluster covering economic and social matters, covering issues of border trade, customs, health, agriculture, livestock and fisheries and education, the two sides noted the exchange of various draft Memoranda of Understanding. They agreed to speed up the feedback from relevant and concerned institutions for implementation. They also agreed that their border agencies should conduct joint patrols, share information and manage risks related to smuggling and diversion of goods. On the harmonization of working hours, they agreed that this should take place at the Moyale One-Stop-Border-Post. Both sides further agreed that the two customs authorities should continue with monthly meetings to address cross-border challenges.

They acknowledged the existence of strong cooperation on health matters across the border. The meeting recommended the establishment of a Joint Technical Committee on Health to be set up by April, to oversee the implementation of the MoU on health cooperation. Both sides urged the health officials at Moyale to continue convening cross-border meetings on health every quarter. They further agreed to address illegal cross-border movement of human pharmaceuticals and related products.

The two countries also agreed to convene meetings of Joint Border Administrations annually, as stipulated in the Boundary Agreement, as well as unilateral consultative meeting every six months to review the status of implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the Joint Border Administrators/Commissioners' meetings and the regular meetings of adjacent zonal/sub-county administrators at least every three months with the participation of the Peace Committees of both sides. They urged the Peace Committees to conduct their meetings on monthly basis as agreed. They also decided to exchange information on the outcome of the consultative meetings through their respective embassies in Addis Ababa and Nairobi.

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### ***The Africa Business Health Forum***

In a keynote address at the Africa Business Health Forum, held on Tuesday last week (February 12), Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed emphasized the need for affordable and quality healthcare for all, spearheaded by governments and private sector working

collaboratively to enable equitable access. The health financing gap for Africa is estimated at \$66billion, and Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed said: “It is critical to develop new and innovative sources of financing.” The Prime Minister noted that Ethiopia had made significant advances in healthcare. Most African countries have failed to meet the terms of the 2001 Abuja Declaration when AU member states pledged 15% of their budget to health. The Prime Minister stressed that Public Private Partnerships were a good way of driving capital into health projects and offered a win-win situation with services complemented by financial returns. Equally, Dr. Abiy said, while the private sector should play a vital role in financing and supporting national health plans on the continent, it was part of their corporate social responsibility; the rush for access to health by all should not, however, compromise quality.

The Africa Business Health Forum, held on the side-lines of the AU Summit, was organized by the UN Economic Commission for Africa, the Aliko Dangote Foundation and the US-based Global Business Coalition on Health (GBCHealth). Among those attending were President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti, President Mokgweetsi Masisi of Botswana, and Ms. Vera Songwe, Executive Secretary ECA as well as Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed.

Ms. Songwe underlined that Africa’s healthcare systems demand significant investments to meet the needs of the growing populations, changing patterns of diseases and to meet the internationally agreed development index. She emphasized Public Private Partnerships had an important role to play in mobilising additional forms of financing and closing the health infrastructure gap. She noted Africa imported \$17.3billion worth of drugs each year. This offered enormous possibilities for domestic manufacturers as well as for employment. She said Africa could create more than 16 million jobs if the public and private sectors collaborated and invested enough in the drugs industry. By 2030, she said, “an estimated 14% of all business opportunities in the health and well-being sector globally will be in Africa, second only to North America with 21%. This is a huge opportunity for the private sector.” She also stressed that the ECA would play a role in the design and implementation of policy frameworks around the financing of healthcare through Public Private Partnerships and the private sector, adding that building on the African Continental Free Trade Area would also encourage regional trans-boundary health investments especially in the pharmaceutical sector.

The Forum saw the launch of the African Business Coalition for Health (ABCHealth), a partnership between the Aliko Dangote Foundation and the US-based Global Business Coalition on Health (GBCHealth). This aims to collectively mobilize private sector resources, expertise and innovation to strengthen health delivery systems across the continent, mobilizing a core group of private sector champions through a coordinated platform to advance health outcomes and shape health systems across Africa. It will strengthen partnerships, promote an ongoing dialogue between the African private and public sectors, and foster opportunities for the private sector to contribute towards the collective efforts of key stakeholders in strengthening national health systems in Africa.

The Forum also launched the ECA’s Healthcare and Economic Growth in Africa Report which emphasizes the importance of health for economic growth. A one-year increase in life expectancy at birth results in a 0.1% increase in GDP per capita; investing an additional average of between \$21 and \$36 per capita per year over five years in Africa would save 3.1 million lives (of which 90% would be mothers and children), prevent between 3.8 million and 5.1 million children from stunting, and provide economic gains of up to \$100 billion

from additional health investment. Africa has a current health financing gap of at least US\$ 66 billion a year. Imports cater for over 70% of the pharmaceutical market in Africa worth about \$14.5 billion. Business opportunities in the health-care and wellness sector in Africa are estimated to be worth \$259 billion by the year 2030, with the potential to create 16 million jobs.

The report notes the possible future impact of rapid demographic changes, the challenge of urbanization, and changes in disease profiles as well as the shortage of skilled health professionals. It emphasizes the importance of developing effective health financing mechanisms and harnessing the strengths of the private health sector as key strategies to address increasingly complex health challenges. It calls for governments to focus on achieving broad-based economic growth, identify innovative sources for financing healthcare, allocate sufficient resources in health-associated sectors such as water and sanitation and enhance regulatory systems for improved governance of public-private partnerships, and promote intra- African trade in health products and services. The private sector, it suggests, should invest in pharmaceuticals, medical education and digital technologies, build on the African Continental Free Trade Area to identify opportunities, and work with governments through various modalities, including public-private partnerships, to achieve the health-related Sustainable Development Goals and the aspirations of the African Agenda 2063.

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### ***Ethiopia's Refugee Response Plan for 2019-2020***

It was no surprise that the AU Summit, held under the theme of “The Year of Refugees, Returnees, and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa,” took note of the fact that Ethiopia’s new refugee law is one of the most progressive refugee policies in Africa. Certainly, the changed law will enhance the lives of both refugees and host communities; and it is now being supported by the Ethiopia Country Refugee Response Plan (ECRRP), issued earlier this month.

The ECRRP Plan covers the period January 2019 to December 2020, and outlines the intended collective response of 54 humanitarian and development agencies over the next two years in support of all the registered refugee population groups in the country. The Plan aims to ensure that all the support for refugees is carried out within an agreed framework of objectives and performance, allowing for coordination and the provision of timely and effective protection and support for refugees. The Plan also provides for quarterly sectoral reports, itemizing progress against planned deliverables, and a mid-term review at the end of the year to offer the option of reflecting operational changes.

Ethiopia, of course, maintains an open-door policy for refugees, and allows humanitarian access and protection to those seeking asylum on its territory. The House of Representatives’ revisions to the national refugee law, issued last month (January 17), allows refugees the right to work and reside out of camps, access social and financial services, and register life events, including births and marriages. Ethiopia now has one of the most progressive refugee policies in Africa, providing refugee protection within the framework of international and national refugee laws as well as the international human rights treaties that have been ratified by Ethiopia

There are currently over 905,000 refugees hosted in Ethiopia, the majority from Eritrea (173,879), South Sudan (422,240), Sudan (44,620), and Somalia (257,283), though Ethiopia also provides protection to refugees from some 26 countries. The majority of refugees are located in camps in Tigray; Afar; Benishangul-Gumuz; Gambella; and Somali Regional States.

At the close of 2017, the Government formally launched the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) in Ethiopia, effectively paving the way for the implementation of the nine pledges it made at the Leaders' Summit on Refugees in New York in 2016. Through these pledges, Ethiopia offered to: expand its out-of-camp policy (OCP); provide work permits to refugees; increase enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary education; provide access to irrigable land for crop cultivation; facilitate local integration in instances of protracted displacement; earmark a percentage of jobs within industrial parks to refugees; and provide access to vital events documentation to facilitate increased access to basic and essential social services.

The Response Plan allows for innovative, cost-effective and sustainable ways to deliver basic needs and essential services, including life-saving activities. It provides a comprehensive protection and solutions strategy which covers: preserving and enhancing the protection of the environment and living conditions; expansion of improved community-based and multi-sectorial child protection; strengthening access to basic services; expanding labour opportunities; and supporting the implementation of the pledges to expand access to rights, services, and self-reliance opportunities in the longer-term. It will also place an emphasis on the expansion of existing community facilities in health, education, WASH, environmental protection, social protection and gainful employment.

The financial requirements detailed for 2019 and 2020 amount to US\$1,288,604,352. The report breaks the figures down under eight different sectors: Protection, Education, Energy & Environment, Food security, Health & Nutrition, Livelihoods & Resilience, Shelter & NFIs, and WASH. Among the major contributors to the response plan are the Danish Refugee Council; The UN Food and Agriculture Organization; International Organization for Migration; Norwegian Refugee Council; Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; Oxfam GB; Save The Children International; The International Rescue Committee; The Lutheran World Federation; United Nations Children's Fund; and the World Food Program.

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## *US-Africa Trade and Investment Forum*

A US-Africa Trade and Investment Forum was held last week on the side-lines of the African Union (AU) Summit in Addis Ababa. The two-day meeting, February 11-12, was hosted by the United States Mission to the African Union and the US Corporate Council on Africa, and aimed to support private sector engagement in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) as well as drive US-Africa trade, investment, and business engagement. Among those present were Presidents Sahle-Work Zewde of Ethiopia and Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, the Chairperson of African Union Commission, Moussa Faki; AU Commissioner for Trade and Industry, Albert Muchanga; representatives of the U.S. Departments of State and Commerce, USAID, the National Security Council, the Trade and Development Agency, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation. The US Corporate Council on Africa facilitated participation of numerous successful businesses representing the U.S. and African private sectors, including the Executive Director of Dangote Industries and the Chairman, Export Promotion Council, Kenya.

The US Ambassador to the African Union, Mary Beth Leonard, noting that the AfCFTA was a real game-changer in how international and US business looked at Africa, said the long history of trade ties between the United States and Africa was pushing the US to further deepen trade with Africa. The Ambassador quoted US Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Tibor Nagy, that “one of the key objectives of U.S. Africa policy is “to match American investment and ingenuity with the dynamism and entrepreneurial spirit of young Africans.” She stressed that the US through the African Entrepreneur Forum, was supporting the next generation of entrepreneurs to create jobs in their communities, identify challenges to entrepreneurship in Africa, and to recommend entrepreneur-friendly solutions.

President and CEO of the Corporate Council on Africa, Florizelle Liser described the motivation to foster a better trade relationship with Africa. She said: “We have a stake in supporting African regional integration, in creating larger markets and businesses, allowing them to take advantage of economies of scale and drawing Africa into regional and global value chains.” She added: “There are many positive things happening in Ethiopia and the export of products to the US market is an example to what Africa can do and is doing across the continent.”

The AU Trade and Industry Commissioner, Albert Muchanga said work was underway to develop regional value and supply chains and create a more stable and predictable policy framework to guide business decisions and strategies on investing and trading in Africa. He pointed out that work was advancing on liberalization of trade in goods and services as well as the establishment of a payment and settlement platform that would give operational content to the agreement coming into force. He said: “Through the African Continental Free Trade Area, we are offering large economies of scale and scope to the private sector,” adding that the content’s trade liberalization and continental integration would give incentives to invest in larger scale endeavours for a longer time.

The Forum, linked to the AU and the broader African continental and global trade agenda, was designed as a high-level event geared towards supporting private sector engagement with the AfCFTA and driving greater U.S.-Africa trade, investment, and business engagement. The Forum, in fact, provided a platform for a public and private sector dialogue among U.S. and African government officials and private sector leaders, and offered the opportunity for networking the creation of partnerships between businesses from the United States and

Africa, created a avenue for U.S. and African businesses to engage and support the implementation of the AfCFTA, the opportunity to explore the future of U.S.-Africa trade and investment relationship during the final years of AGOA, and look at the implications of the new U.S.-Africa strategy and the potential impact of the proposed free trade agreements, as well as support and facilitate Corporate Council for Africa members' interests.

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***AMISOM Commanders reach a consensus on military operations.***

AMISOM military commanders, and representatives of the Somali National Security Forces and other stakeholders, ended a week-long meeting on Friday last week (February 15) in agreement on key operations and activities to be carried out under the new Concept of Operations (CONOPS), approved late last year by the Military Operations Coordination Committee (MOCC). The MOCC is made up of the Chiefs of Defence Staff and designated representatives of Troop- and Police-Contributing Countries, the Somalia Government, the UN, development partners, and the AU Peace and Security Council.

Simon Mulongo, the Deputy Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (DSRCC) for Somalia said military activities would “consist of comprehensive operations in support of the Somalia Transition Plan and will include stability operations targeting Al-Shabaab hideouts and enhancing protection of population centers.” Lt. General Tigabu Yilme, current AMISOM Force Commander, said AMISOM should “also work on getting the Somalis involved in these operations to enable us to succeed in our plans,” Major General Charles Tai Gituai, AMISOM Deputy Force Commander-in-Charge of Operations and Plans, underlined the importance of teamwork amongst the military commanders, in the successful implementation of the CONOPS.

The Somalia Transition Plan is being implemented in three phases. These include the phased and conditions-based troops’ withdrawal and handing over of priority locations in Mogadishu to the Somali Security Forces, in the short term; degrading of Al-Shabaab and securing Main Supply Routes in the medium term; and support to the Somali National Security Forces as they take full charge of the country’s national security responsibilities, in the long term. Mr. Mulongo said: “This CONOPS is going to be achievable because I see a lot of clarity in our thoughts and the way we have tried to explain it in the plan.” The plan also allows for AMISOM to reconfigure some of the Forward Operating Bases, to ensure the protection of population centres. AMISOM is committed to safeguarding the gains made in securing the country, despite the planned cutbacks in troops.

Under the Transition Plan, the first withdrawal of 1,000 AMISOM troops took place last October. The second withdrawal, of another 1,000, is scheduled for the end of this month, but there has been some concern over its timing. AU Commission Chair, Mousa Faki has called for Somalia to be more effectively stabilized first, noting that “a premature withdrawal is likely to undermine the gains made over the last decade at a great human and financial cost”. He said central to any withdrawal was also predictable financing for AMISOM to make it possible for Somali forces to take over the primary security responsible.