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News in brief

Africa and the African Union

The 46th Session of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Council of Ministers was held this week in Djibouti (February 27). **(See article)**

A U.N. Security Council resolution adopted unanimously on Wednesday (February 26) welcomed Africa's campaign for "Silencing the Guns" by 2020 and expressed readiness to contribute, recognizing the need for international cooperation and partnership to help accelerate progress towards this end. **(See article)**

Ethiopia

President Sahle-Work Zewde held talks with Mr. Laslo Kover, the Speaker of the National Assembly of Hungary on Wednesday (February 27).

A two-day Ethiopia-Kenya Trade and Investment Forum opened on Friday (March 1) in Addis Ababa by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed and President Uhuru Kenyatta of the Republic of Kenya. President Kenyatta who arrived in Addis Ababa on Friday for a two-day state visit headed a delegation of government officials, as well as Kenyan corporate and business leaders. The Forum aimed at further strengthening the trade and economic ties between the two countries.

Ten months ago, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed launched his ongoing series of dramatic political changes, changes affecting both Ethiopia and the region, championing the hearts and minds of Ethiopians, raising a sense of hope, a sense of belongingness among Ethiopia's youth and turning the country's defining moment of democracy into a continental success. **(See article)**

Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen and Sudan's Vice President Osman Mohamad co-chaired the Ministerial level Ethiopia-Sudan Joint High Level Economic and Technical Steering Committee Meeting in Khartoum, this week. **(See article)**

In his address at the Ethio-Kenya Trade & Investment Forum on Friday (March 1), Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu said the forum was an important platform to further strengthen the trade and investment links between the two countries. He further commended the decision of the High-Level Kenyan business delegation to come to Ethiopia, which he says, bolsters cooperation in trade, business, infrastructure and investment.

Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh met with Swedish Foreign Minister and Acting Deputy Prime Minister, Ms. Margot Wallström on Friday (March 1), in which, the latter expressed Sweden's support to the reforms in Ethiopia. Minister Workneh noted that Ethiopia has demonstrated its continued commitment for regional peace and stability. In such score, the rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea has been instrumental to the peace and stability of the wider region, he added. He said a number of key activities are being undertaken to institutionalize the comprehensive peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Minister also called for the international community to support the positive momentum of peace and stability in the region.

Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh and Uruguay Foreign Minister Rodolfo Nin Novoa, signed an MoU on Thursday last week (February 21) to allow for political consultations. Dr. Workneh said Ethiopia was keen to enhance bilateral ties with Uruguay in a number of areas, including cooperation in agriculture, especially beef, and dairy farming. Uruguay opened an honorary consulate in Ethiopia in April 2015.

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Workneh met Mrs. Harriet Baldwin, UK's Minister of State for Africa and International Development on Friday last week (February 22). Mrs. Baldwin underlined the UK's continued support to Ethiopia's reform agenda. She had earlier visited the Adama Industrial Park. She expressed UK's commitment to support Ethiopia in youth job creation, institution building and humanitarian works.

Mme. Marielle De Sarnez, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the French National Assembly, met with State Minister for Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene, on Monday this week (February 25). She welcomed the reforms Ethiopia was undertaking and commended the Ethio- Eritrea peace accord. French President Macron is making a state visit to Ethiopia in mid-March.

At a press briefing held on Friday (March 1) Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson, Mr. Nebiat Getachew, disclosed to the media regarding Ethiopian students in China facing several challenges in connection with fraudulent scholarship offers, visa overstay and subsequent engagements in illegal activities. The spokesperson stressed prospective students to be wary of fraudulent scholarship offers, which he says, are often staged by brokers. He further noted that the Governments of both Ethiopia and China are closely working to assess, monitor and resolve the issues.

The Foreign Relations Strategic Information Resources Center of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs together with the Institute of Security Studies held a seminar on Cyber Security and Cyber Diplomacy in Addis Ababa on Thursday (February 28). **(See article)**

The Foreign Ministry's Diaspora Agency is officially launched on Friday (March 1). Director General Mrs. Selamawit Dawit says the Ethiopian Diaspora can play an important role in Ethiopia's development nexus via knowledge and skills transfer, capacity building, promotion of trade and FDI, and entrepreneurship. She underlined the Diaspora was an asset with huge potential to contribute to Ethiopia's reform agenda.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the Ethiopian Consulate in Jeddah, the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the International organization for Migration, on Tuesday (February 26) repatriated six hundred Ethiopian nationals who had been living in the town of Jizan without residence permits. Another four hundred and forty Ethiopian nationals were successfully repatriated on Wednesday (February 27).

Ethiopian Cargo and Logistics Services has been given the “African Cargo Airline of the Year” and “Air Cargo Brand of the Year in Africa” Awards for the fourth year running at the STAT Times International Awards for Excellence in Air Cargo operations, held in Johannesburg last week. Ethiopian CEO, Tewolde Gebremariam, said Ethiopian’s cargo services now operated across 44 international destinations in Africa, the Gulf, Middle East, Asia, the Americas and Europe.

Djibouti

Djibouti hosted a regular meeting of the IGAD Council of Ministers this week. **(See article)**

Kenya

President Uhuru Kenyatta of the Republic of Kenya arrived in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia for a two-day state visit.

Kenya Electricity Generating Company (KenGen) PLC signed a contract to supply geothermal drilling services to Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP) last weekend. KenGen will provide drilling rigs and accessories as well as rig operation and maintenance for drilling geothermal wells, financed by the World Bank. Kenya is Africa’s number one geothermal energy producer with an installed capacity of 685 MW with an estimated potential of 10,000MW in the Rift Valley.

Somalia

President Mohammed Abdullahi attended the first ever Arab-EU Summit last weekend. He emphasized the importance of the Summit as both areas were facing common challenges in confronting insecurity, economic stagnation, illegal migration and environmental degradation. These were global issues and enhancing the Arab-EU partnership was crucial to address them. He said trade and economic cooperation provided solid foundations for their partnership and underlined the need to strengthen cooperation so business communities could truly benefit.

President Mohamed Abdullahi met with Iraqi President Barham Salih on the side-lines of the European Union -Arab Summit in Sharma El-Sheikh, Egypt. They discussed bilateral relations, their common problem of the fight against terrorism and underlined the need to enhance relations in trade, education and politics.

During the Sharma El-Sheikh summit, President Abdullahi held discussions with Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte and Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven.

President Mohamed Abdullahi held talks with the Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar on ways to strengthen bilateral relations in Doha on Wednesday (February 27). They discussed Qatar’s support for social service development programs in health and education, as ways its assistance in building the capacity of Somalia’s armed forces. The Emir gave an assurance of Qatar’s commitment in investing in the fishing, farming and livestock sector, with the aim of creating employment opportunities for young people.

AMISOM held the first in a series of human rights’ training sessions last week for officers of the Somali National Security Forces **(See article)**

The US Africa Command (AFRICOM) said on Tuesday (February 26) that American airstrikes killed nearly 60 al-Shabaab extremists in the previous three days, bringing the total number of fatalities to at least 200 from over 20 airstrikes so far this year. The latest strikes targeted encampments, training camps, checkpoints used to collect illegal taxes, and attempts by terrorists to mass their forces.

The International Monetary Fund suggests Somalia's economy will expand by 3.5% this year and next year, compared to a forecast of 3.1% last year. It said on Wednesday (February 27) that Somalia's economy was recovering but further efforts were needed "to secure economic resilience and reduce poverty," according to the statement.

South Sudan

IGAD Special Envoy for South Sudan, Ismail Wais, met with the leader of the South Sudan National Democratic Alliance (SSNDA) Lt. General Cirilo, on Monday (February 25) to discuss ways for the holdout groups to join in implementation of the Revitalized Peace Agreement, and end violence in the Greater Equatoria region.

Some 1900 men and women of Ethiopia's 19th battalion serving in the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) for more than eight months have received UN Peace Medals. They were given the medals in a ceremony held on Tuesday (February 26) in Abyei. The ceremony was attended by community leaders and UNISFA commanders. During the ceremony, UNISFA paid tribute to three members of the force who lost their lives in a helicopter crash on February 9.

Sudan

President Omar al-Bashir received the Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs Khalid bin Muhammad al-Attiyah on Saturday (February 23).

IGAD agrees on a Common Strategic Approach to the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden

The 46th Ordinary Session of the IGAD Council of Ministers was held in Djibouti on Wednesday this week (February 27). The meeting, chaired by Ethiopia's Foreign Minister, Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, Chair of the IGAD Council of Ministers, was attended by Mahmoud Ali Youssef, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Djibouti; Ahmed Isse Awad, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Somalia; Dr Al-Dirdiery Mohamed Ahmed, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sudan; Mrs. Hirut Zemene, State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia and Mohamed Ali Hassan, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Djibouti. Also present were Ambassador Mahboub Maalim, IGAD Executive Secretary; Hadiza Mustapha, Special Advisor to the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr. Ismael Wais, IGAD Special Envoy for South Sudan and Dr Mohamed Ali Guyo, IGAD Special Envoy for Somalia; as well as representatives of the European Union, China, Egypt, France, Japan, Russia, Turkey and USA who made statements during the open session.

In his opening remarks, Minister Dr. Workneh emphasized the need to conclude the unfinished business of the reform of the structure and treaty of IGAD and to do so in a way that allowed

IGAD to speed up its economic integration. He said: “I cannot think of a better time than today to realize the restructuring of IGAD so that it can capitalize on the robust situation in our region to bring about most needed Peace, Stability and Prosperity”. He underlined that peace, security and development would benefit from more cooperation, not competition, noting that:” The absence of an organized and inclusive regional mechanism for dialogue and cooperation around the Red Sea impedes progress on a wide range of issues, including economic integration and regional peace and security,” he added. He stressed that the future of the region lay in a commitment to stability and security for all people, as well as inclusive and sustainable growth and economic integration at regional level.

In the communiqué issued after the meeting, the Council underlined the importance of expediting the endorsement of the proposed treaty and structure to reform IGAD; and decided that there was further need for enriched and continued discussion on the organizational structure and treaty of IGAD before the next ordinary sessions of the policy organs.

Following a presentation made by the IGAD Special Envoy for Somalia on the geopolitical and security dynamics of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, the Council acknowledged the threats, risks and challenges of the geopolitical dynamics to the Horn of Africa. Given the strategic interests of IGAD Member States, it underlined the need formulate, common goals and strategic coordination, and recognized the need for IGAD to take a leading role on the issue of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

It said IGAD should adopt a collective approach, “strengthening regional cooperation, and establishing a regional platform for IGAD Member States with a view to promote dialogue with other stakeholders including the AU and other international partners”. The Council also agreed to harmonize and develop a common position to protect the security and economic interests of the region including maritime security, migration, fight against terrorism, prevention of Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing; pollution and the dumping of the toxic waste in some parts of the region.

It also agreed to develop multi-disciplinary policy-oriented research and analysis, directing the IGAD Secretariat to establish a special task force of experts to study, review, and advise on the subject and urgently chart out a regional plan of action with a clear timeline. It agreed that the responsibilities of the IGAD Special Envoy for Somalia should be expanded to cover the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

Ethiopia-Sudan Joint Economic and Technical talks

Sudan Vice President Osman Mohamad and Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen co-chaired the Ministerial level 5th Ethiopia-Sudan Joint High Level Economic and Technical Steering Committee Meeting, which was opened in Khartoum on Thursday (February 28).

This was preceded by two days of experts' discussions on Sunday and Monday this week (February 24-25) in Khartoum, covering the process of economic integration and a wide range of crucial economic and trade issues and related aspects of bilateral cooperation. Sudan's Under-Secretary of Finance and Economic Planning said the technical committee had made a remarkably positive impact on economic cooperation between the two countries. He said mutual benefits had been achieved in a number of areas including banking cooperation, trade, industry, customs, transportation, livestock and investment and free zones.

The head of the Ethiopian delegation, Yohannes Dengayo, noted the development in border trade, transportation and railway cooperation between the two countries. He said the two sides shared a similar vision to achieve peace, development and stability, and stressed Ethiopia's commitment to complete joint security, military and economic cooperation projects, saying the two sides are determined to overcome challenges facing their implementation.

In April 2017, Ethiopia and Sudan signed a number of joint agreements to promote economic relations and strengthen ties, and in February 2018, a further series of multiple agreements to further boost cooperation in a range of development activities.

The UN Security Council resolution in support of "Silencing the Guns" by 2020

A U.N. Security Council resolution, 2457 (2019), adopted unanimously on Wednesday (February 26) welcomed Africa's campaign for "Silencing the Guns" by 2020 and expressed its readiness to contribute, *recognizing* the need for international cooperation and partnership to help accelerate progress towards this goal. It also called on all also relevant United Nations entities, as appropriate, to help. *It called for the UN and the AU* to strengthen efforts to coordinate activities in a mutually supportive manner. It emphasized the importance of partnership and cooperation to improve cooperation and coordination in peacebuilding, and the importance of consultations between the Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council. It acknowledged that the task of building a conflict-free Africa essentially rested on the African Union and its member States. It expressed support for initiatives seeking African solutions to African problems, while also recognizing the need for enhanced international cooperation and partnership. The Security Council also noted its concern "over the challenging security situation in parts of Africa," pointing to threats posed by terrorism, maritime piracy, tensions between farmers and herders, transnational organized crime, and "the persistent violence perpetrated by insurgents, rebel, and armed groups."

Ramtane Lamamra, the African Union's High Representative for "Silencing the Guns" campaign, said that notable progress had been made in preventing, managing and resolving conflicts in Africa, and cited peace agreements in South Sudan and the Central African Republic, elections in Madagascar and Congo, and the renewal of relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia in the Horn of Africa. He acknowledged many major challenges remained as the December 2020 deadline approached, and underlined the urgent need to build a robust culture of preventing crises while fostering peace and tolerance. A number of African countries still remained trapped in a vicious cycle of violent conflict; crime, terrorism and the proliferation of small arms were exacerbated by "the existence of ungoverned spaces" leaving room for illegal activities. He noted corruption, illegal financial flows, poor governance and bad leadership as major sources of instability and conflict. It all underlined the urgent need to build

a robust culture of conflict prevention. “Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020” was not a mere slogan, said Mr. Lamamra, emphasizing that peace could not be achieved without development, and vice-versa, and both needed human rights and good governance. He said another essential key was a positive Security Council response to long-standing and legitimate calls for the funding of African Union-led peace operations through United Nations assessed contributions.

Rosemary DiCarlo, the U.N. Under-Secretary for Political Affairs, said numerous governance challenges remained, including “marginalization of certain groups from political processes, the prevalence of a 'winner-take-all' approach, corruption, and the mismanagement of natural resources." Silencing the guns for good required the participation of all. Expressing concern that women's leadership and participation in the political sphere had slowed, she also emphasized the importance of strong institutions and resilient societies as keys to silencing the guns. She said there was reason for optimism, quoting UN Secretary-General Guterres on ‘the wind of hope blowing in Africa’, noting that across the continent, entrepreneurship was up, access to education had increased and child mortality declined. “Africans are leading the way,” she said, but to silence the guns "it is vital that the international community lends its support to Africa in achieving this objective." She said that while “silencing the guns for good requires the participation of all”, it also means “keeping them from firing in the first place”.

Ethiopia’s transformational reforms continue to progress

The year 2018 saw dramatic political changes in Ethiopia, witnessing a pivotal moment in the country’s history. Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Ethiopia’s reformist leader, embarked on a whole series of bold political and economic reforms both in Ethiopia and in the country’s relations in the region, as soon as he was appointed in April last year.

From the outset, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy began to introduce an unprecedented plethora of political reforms: the state of emergency was lifted two months before it was set to expire; prominent opposition leaders and journalists were released from prison; exiled dissidents and banned media outlets allowed to return to Ethiopia; individuals and organizations charged with “terrorism” under the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation were granted amnesty; and over 260 previously banned websites and blogs have been unblocked.

The Prime Minister launched his campaign of love, unity, and forgiveness, “*medemer*”, addressing people in a series of meetings across the country, resonating widely with most of the country. It has offered an inspiring scenario which uplifted the spirit of Ethiopians and gave them a reason to feel optimistic about the prospects of peace, democracy, and reconciliation. Ethiopia has taken impressive strides towards widening the democratic space, fostering national reconciliation and implementing gender parity at the highest levels. Plans to revise the laws that have impeded the country’s democratic process have been launched, including reforming the Electoral Commission, and revising the Charities and Civil Society, the Anti-Terrorism and Mass Media laws. There are ongoing plans to liberalize the economy.

The Prime Minister’s approach was not confined to Ethiopia, bringing an end to eighteen years of “no peace, no war”, nearly two decades of hostility, between Ethiopia and Eritrea, allowing

UN Secretary-General António Guterres to speak of “a wind of hope blowing in the Horn of Africa”. It has meant the restoration of full diplomatic ties between Ethiopia and Eritrea and the launch of a process to restore full economic links, with roads and flights opened between Asmara and Addis Ababa. It has meant a new dawn between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and the restoration of diplomatic links between Eritrea and Djibouti. Overall, the Prime Minister’s approach has paved the way for the creation of a conducive atmosphere throughout the Horn of Africa, laying the groundwork for increased regional economic development

In fact, in less than a year, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy’s leadership has championed the hearts and minds of Ethiopians, raising a sense of hope, a sense of belongingness among Ethiopia’s youth. There are, of course, problems yet unresolved. The Prime Minister has said shortcomings in a period of transition are something normal for an emerging, progressive democracy, as opposition parties, press freedom, human rights, good governance and the rule of law become established. Fixing problems of unemployment and under-employment, easing economic regulations and breathing new life into small and medium sized enterprises need time as does job creation, democratization and institutionalization of equal opportunity.

Indeed, the Prime Minister has made it clear that the country has the boldness and strength to overcome problems and realize the ongoing democratic and economic reforms.

AMISOM carries out human rights training

AMISOM held the first in a series of human rights’ training sessions last week for officers of the Somali National Security Forces. The training program aims to improve levels of compliance with International Human Rights Law and enhance the knowledge of security officers on human rights issues. The first three-day course was held in Mogadishu and attended by 30 officers from the Somali National Army, the Somali Police Force, the National Intelligence and Security Agency, line ministries and federal member states. Those attending were taken through a set of international laws and instruments on human rights.

Similar courses will be held in each of the five federal states.

The UK Deputy Ambassador to Somalia, Mary Shockledge, said at the end of the three-day course that the program was part of a collective effort by the United Kingdom and other partners “to support the Federal Government of Somalia and the federal member states, to ensure compliance with international human rights, norms and standards within the Somali National Security Forces.” She also noted the program was in line with the recently approved AMISOM Concept of Operations, which identified human rights’ training for the Somalia National Security Forces as one of the key activities to be undertaken during the transition period.

Simon Mulongo, Deputy Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, stressed the strong connection between human rights and stability. He urged Somali security forces to uphold human rights at all times when dealing with civilians. He said: “We have to show the Somali people that we offer greater hope and therefore cannot be compared to terrorist groups who prefer anarchy and lawlessness.”

A Seminar on Cyber Security and Cyber Diplomacy in Addis Ababa

A Seminar on Cyber Security and Cyber Diplomacy was held at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Addis Ababa on Thursday (February 28). Organized by the Foreign Relations Strategic Information Resources Center of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in partnership with the Institute of Security Studies brought together experts and leaders in the field of cyber security and diplomacy.

In keynote remarks at the opening of the seminar, Ambassador Mohammed Dirir, Chief Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, emphasized that the seminar was an important platform to bring together the diplomatic community, researchers and the media to share ideas, to network and to discuss outstanding national and regional as well as global issues related to cyber security and cyber diplomacy.

State Minister of the Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Sisay Tolla, presented a paper on “Cyber Security and Cyber Diplomacy - Addressing the Gap in Cyberspace”. He highlighted aspects of cyberspace related to security and diplomacy, and stressed that cyberspace had now become a source of national sovereignty in the same way as air, sea, land and space, given the interconnectivity of the multitude of physical systems, properties and entities. The State Minister noted the opportunities and challenges of ensuring cyber security, and underlined the importance of building national capacity in four key domains: institutions, policy and regulations, the cyber security workforce and technology.