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News in brief

Africa and the African Union

United Nations Secretary General Guterres has appointed Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, Foreign Minister of Ethiopia, as Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON).

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres announced the appointment of Parfait Onanga-Anyanga of Gabon as his Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa on Thursday (March 14).

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres led a moment of silence at the UN General Assembly in remembrance of the victims of the tragic air crash in Ethiopia on Sunday (March 11)

Ethiopia

French President Emmanuel Macron made a state visit to Ethiopia this week (March 12-13), holding talks with President Sahle-Work Zewde and Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed, and visiting the Rock-Hewn Churches of Lalibela, a UNESCO World Heritage Center. **(See article)**

The House of Peoples' Representatives declared Monday (March 11) a national mourning day for the 157 people from over 35 nationalities who died in the crash of ET 302 on Sunday. The aircraft, *en route* for Nairobi, came down near the town of Bishoftu, 60km south-east of Addis Ababa. Flags were flown at half-mast across the country. **(See article)**

President Sahle-Work Zewde, on the occasion of International Women's Day (Friday, March 8) said "Africa's women are rising; it is time the world took note." Writing in the UK's Financial Times she emphasized that Africa's women were rising to challenge gender discrimination, and the barriers to gender equity were falling. A growing number of women leaders were reshaping Africa, in Rwanda, Seychelles, Ethiopia and elsewhere. **(See article)**

President Sahle-Work Zewde bade farewell to the outgoing Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Ambassador Abdullah Alarjani, on Monday (March 11). Ambassador Alarjani who thanked the people and government of Ethiopia for their support during his time in Addis Ababa, expressed his condolences over the tragic accident of flight ET-302.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed met David Beasley, Executive Director of the World Food Program on Monday (March 11). Their meeting continued discussions held in Rome when WFP committed to further strengthening support to Ethiopia's development efforts in food security, nutrition and capacity building.

Ethiopia has called on the European Commission to consider removing the country from its list of "high-risk third countries" with strategic deficiencies in their national anti-money laundering and counter financing of terrorism regimes. **(See article)**

Deputy Prime Minister, Demeke Mekonnen held discussions with the Vice President of Sudan, Osman Mohamed Yousuf, in Addis Ababa on Thursday (March 14). They exchanged views on ways of further strengthening relations on both bilateral and regional issues,

The 6th Ethio-Tunisia Joint Ministerial Commission meeting opened in Tunis on Thursday (March 14). State Minister Mrs. Hirut Zemene and Tunisia's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in Charge of Economic Diplomacy, Hatem Ferjani led the respective delegations. The two sides signed cooperation agreements covering tourism, culture, industrial technology, women's affairs and capacity building.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs Mrs. Hirut met Sweden's Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Urban Andersson on Tuesday (March 12). Mr. Andersson expressed his country's continued commitment to support Ethiopia's efforts in the maintenance of regional peace and stability. They also discussed the upcoming International Peace Conference due to be held in Sweden, Stockholm in May.

The 2nd Ethio-Greek Business Forum was held in Addis Ababa on Thursday last week (March 7). It was attended by State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Akililu Hailemichael and Mr. Nikolaos Quick, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece. **(See article)**

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Markos Tekle met a Canadian parliamentary delegation headed by Raynell Andreychuk, Chair of the Canada-Africa Parliamentary Association, on Monday (March 11). The delegation reaffirmed their commitment to support the ongoing reforms in Ethiopia, and to help Ethiopia in areas of science and information technology as well as infrastructural development.

Representatives from the Defense Ministries of Ethiopia and Sudanese signed a protocol on Tuesday (March 12) to deploy joint troops along the border to control smuggling, illegal immigration and cross-border crimes.

Ambassador Teshome Toga, Ethiopia's Ambassador to China, and Abebe Abebayehu, Ethiopian Investment Commissioner, and Ms. Lelise Neme CEO of the Industrial Parks Development Corporation attended the East African Countries Investment Seminar in Shanghai on Tuesday (March 12). Ambassador Teshome gave a briefing on the comprehensive strategic partnership of Ethiopia and China and Ethiopia's commitment for foreign direct investment. The Ethiopian delegation also held discussions with a number of companies interested in investing in textile sectors, among them: Zhejiang Mengna Socks and Hosiery; Zhejiang Clotho Textile; China Hualong Import and Export (Shanghai); Shanghai Sunshine Logistics; Talk2all Telecom (HK); and the Wellfull Group.

Djibouti

French President Emmanuel Macron visited Djibouti on Monday (March 11) and held talks with President Ismail Omar Guelleh (**See article**)

Kenya

French President Emmanuel Macron visited Kenya on Thursday (March 14) to co-chair the One Planet Summit with President Kenyatta (**See article**)

Kenya hosted the fourth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly in Nairobi this week, and the first regional edition of the One Planet Summit on Thursday (March 14). The Assembly is the world's highest-level decision-making body on the environment. (**See article**)

Somalia

President Mohamed Abdullahi attended the Africa Now Conference 2019 in Kampala this week (March 12-13), held under the theme "Towards a secure, Integrated and growing Africa" and delivered a keynote closing speech. He called for a paradigm shift in the development agenda to enable the continent meet development goals, a move from quantitative to qualitative production and to strengthen unity. He said there was need for a continental strategy for economic transformation, investment, growth as well as youth employment.

A joint delegation from the African Union and the United Nations has been assessing progress in implementing the Somalia Transition Plan which lays out the process of the transfer of security responsibility from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to the Somali National Security Forces. (**See article**)

Police Commissioner Christine Alalo, acting Police Commissioner of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) was killed in the air disaster on Sunday. The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, Ambassador Madeira, extended his condolences to the Government and the people of Uganda over her death.

South Sudan

The UN Security Council renewed the mandate of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) until March 15, 2019. This followed a meeting last week when David Shearer, Head of UNMISS detailed the Secretary-General's latest 90-day report on South Sudan concluding implementation of the Peace Agreement, despite challenges, was proceeding "slowly but surely."

Following a two-day meeting in Nairobi on March 11-12, with the IGAD Special Envoy Ambassador Ismail Wais General Paul Malong agreed to join the revitalized peace agreement through negotiations with the government to be facilitated by the IGAD Special Envoy. Ambassador Wais also held talks with the South Sudan National Democratic Alliance groups to discuss ways to join the peace agreement but the Alliance have yet to issue a statement on the outcome of the meeting

The various peace partners have agreed to set up a joint 700 strong presidential protection force tasked with the protection of President Salva Kiir and his deputies during the transitional period.

Sudan

Prime Minister Mohamed Taher Eila announced the names of his "Task Government" of 21 federal ministers and 18 state ministers to address the economic crisis. At a press conference the Prime Minister pledged to fight corruption, develop the mineral industry and open the doors to the private sector and investment as well as raising the capital of national banks.

The Tragic accident of flight ET-302

Ethiopian Airlines, flight ET 302, crashed at 08:44 local time just six minutes after it left Addis Ababa on Sunday (March 11). The aircraft, *en route* for Nairobi, came down near the town of Bishoftu, 60km south-east of Addis Ababa, killing all 149 passengers and 8 crew instantly. Passengers from more than 35 countries were on board flight ET-302.

Ethiopia's House of Representatives declared a day of national mourning on Monday, (March 11) and flags were flown at half-mast on all official buildings in Ethiopia and at Ethiopian Embassies and Consulates abroad. Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed visited the site of the crash and expressed his profound sadness at the loss of life. He gave directions for the fullest investigation of the accident and for all necessary support to families of the bereaved. In a televised statement, on behalf of the Government and people of Ethiopia, he expressed his condolences to the families of passengers and crew members who were on the flight. He gave assurances that the cause of the accident would be fully investigated by technical experts and their findings communicated promptly to the public; and he shared his appreciation of the work of the staff of Ethiopian Airlines following the tragedy.

Messages of commiseration and condolence and of support flooded in from across Africa and across the world. The international community including more than 50 Heads of States, and Foreign Ministers have expressed deepest condolences over the loss of lives and extended their profound sympathy to all families who lost their loved ones. Many messages of support and condolence were posted on social media; officials and ambassadors in countries around the world also expressed their condolences to bereaved families, to the people and Government of Ethiopia, signing the Books of Condolence opened at Ethiopian Embassies and in Addis Ababa. A minute's silence was observed at the opening of the UN Environmental Assembly. At least 45 aid workers, peacekeepers, or staff members of international organizations, many due to attend the Assembly, were among the dead. In a statement, the U.N. Environment Program said the United Nations had lost "staff, youth delegates travelling to the Assembly, seasoned scientists, members of academia and other partners."

On Monday, the Prime Minister's Office thanked the world for the global solidarity offered to Ethiopia and its airline. The Office said: "On behalf of the FDRE Government, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed expresses his gratitude to world leaders and the international community for their messages of condolence and support in our time of mourning all the precious lives lost on board ET 302."

The plane that crashed on Sunday was one of five in use by Ethiopian Airlines, and Ethiopian grounded the others immediately. Several other airlines around the world followed suit. The U.S. Federal Aviation Authority announced on Wednesday that it had imposed an emergency order grounding all Boeing 737 Max 8 planes. It said it had made this decision after refined satellite tracking data and new physical evidence linked the crash, and the October 2018 disaster apparently under somewhat similar circumstances, more closely. It said this warranted further investigation into the possibility of a shared cause for the two incidents. This meant all the 371 aircraft in use were suspended. Boeing said it supported the decision.

The Flight Data Recorder (FDR) and Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) have been recovered and have now been sent to Paris for analysis and investigation.

President Emmanuel Macron of France visits Ethiopia and the AU Commission...

The President of the French Republic, President Emmanuel Macron, at the head of a delegation that included the Minister for Europe and Foreign Minister, Jean-Yves le Drian, and Secretary of State for Trade, Martine Pinville, as well as a number of business leaders, visited Ethiopia on Tuesday and Wednesday this week (March 12-13). His visit follows an official visit by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed to Paris in October last year. During the visit, President Sahle-Work Zewde received President Emmanuel Macron at the National Palace and discussed bilateral and regional issues.

President Macron also met the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat. This followed-up on the declaration of intent for establishing a French-AUC strategic dialogue signed in June last year by Minister of Europe and Foreign Affairs Le Drian and Chairperson Faki. Discussions included consideration of ways of enhancing Franco-African cooperation in the fight against terrorism in the continent and the strategic partnership between the African Union and France. France has been involved in repelling a southward push by extremist armed groups in Mali's north and also in the wider Sahel region, where terrorism has been expanding. Chairperson Faki said their discussions had been wide, "with a view to reinforce the steadfast partnership between France and the AU."

President Macron arrived in Ethiopia at the city of Lalibela where he was officially received by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy on Tuesday (March 12). It was the first time a visiting president had been received at Lalibela. President Macro toured the UNESCO World Heritage Center of the Rock-Hewn Churches. Last year, after Prime Minister Dr. Abiy requested French support for the preservation and protection of the churches of Lalibela, President Macron pledged a Franco-Ethiopian agreement for a new system to protect the churches.

From Lalibela, the two leaders flew back to Addis Ababa where they held talks on bilateral, regional and global matters. They reached a consensus to strengthen and deepen existing relations. They also presided over the signing of a defense cooperation agreement, under

discussion for several years. This allows for strengthening cooperation on training, capacity building and strategic level exchanges between the two countries. At their joint press conference, President Macron said this “unprecedented defense cooperation agreement provides a framework”, adding that it also “opens the way for France to assist in establishing an Ethiopian naval component.” Prime Minister Dr. Abiy spoke of plans to rebuild an Ethiopian navy last year, and in November, General Berhanu Jula, Deputy Chief of Staff for the Armed Forces, said Ethiopia was consulting with other countries regarding the naval reinstatement, capacity, and structure. The defense cooperation agreement also allows for air cooperation, joint operations and opportunities for training and equipment purchases.

Ethiopia and France also signed a Memorandum of Understanding covering the economic sector, to expand Promotion of French Investments in Ethiopia, as well as Joint Declarations on Financial Support to the Economic Transition and on Heritage Cooperation to provide support for conservation and valorisation, for the Lalibela churches and for the National Palace. France has agreed to provide 100 million Euros to help the country's economic transition. Among the business leaders accompanying President Macron during his trip who were in the process of investing or have shown interest to invest were representatives of Canal+, CMA-SGM (logistics), Somadia (cereals), and Meridiam (geothermal). A large French business delegation is also due to arrive at the end of the week.

President Macron’s visit to Ethiopia has already had a significant effect in infusing existing excellent relations with a fresh spirit of cooperation. His visit has not only reinvigorated bilateral relations but also has opened a new chapter of cooperation covering a wide range of mutually beneficial areas. President Macron said: "We are here in a friendly country where we want to strengthen and build a new page in our common history," adding to Prime Minister Dr. Abiy, “Since you became prime minister our vision (of Ethiopia) has profoundly changed.” Prime Minister Dr. Abiy said, "The railway between Djibouti and France is 100 years old and the work that we now want to complete with President Macron is for the long-term. Perhaps in 100 years we'll talk about it again."

Ethio-French relations are of course long-standing. France was the first country to open a diplomatic mission in Ethiopia in 1897 during the reign of Emperor Menilek (1889-1913). The two countries signed a treaty in 1897 recognizing the border between Ethiopia and French Somaliland, later Djibouti, and this launched the process of building the first Ethio-Djibouti railroad, completed in 1917, and providing Ethiopia with access to the port of Djibouti. Emperor Haile Selassie made a State visit to France in 1955 and received President de Gaulle in 1966 and President Pompidou in 1974. President Sarkozy came to Ethiopia in January 2011 and President Hollande in May 2013. Similarly, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi visited France in 2010 and 2011, and Prime Minister Hailemariam in April and December 2013, and in December 2015.

The relationship has covered a wide range of areas, including development, investment and trade, culture and education as well as bilateral and regional political cooperation. The Lycée Guebré Mariam was founded in 1947; currently, it has more than 1700 Ethiopians and foreign nationals enrolled. A Cultural Agreement was signed in 1958, and there are Franco-Ethiopian Alliance schools in Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa and a French Centre of Ethiopian Studies in Addis Ababa, as well as a number of twinning programs between the cities of Debre Berhan, Dire Dawa, Harar, Addis Ababa, Gondar and the SNNP Regional State of Ethiopia and the cities of Blanc-Mesnil, Villeurbanne, Charles-Messiers, Grand Loyn, Vincennes and the Department des Alpes Maritimes, and deepening the people-to-people relations.

A formal Cultural, Scientific and Technical Cooperation Agreement was signed in 1966. Currently, the Ashegoda wind farm project in Tigray regional State with its capacity of 120 MW, is a showcase for French Development Agency cooperation. Other ongoing energy sector projects include geothermal exploration in Tendaho, electric power infrastructure support for the national electricity transmission network, and construction of the new Load Dispatch Centre, funded by soft loans and grants. Urban development sector projects include Support to Water and Sanitation in a number of cities, Solid Waste management in Addis Ababa, and Dedicated Bus Lanes – Bus Rapid Transit projects supported by 135 million Euro soft loans and grants.

There has been an increasing trend in French FDI flows to Ethiopia, now amounting to 7.2 billion Birr. There are currently 121 French investment projects, out of which 65 are operational, 11 are under implementation and 44 are at a pre-implementation stage. France is one of the traditional markets for Ethiopian export commodities, for coffee, hides and skins and leather products and footwear, textiles, roses and horticultural products, amounting to over US\$36 million in 2017, and imports from France, which include industrial products, aircraft, machinery, chemicals, and capital goods, reaching over US\$71.5 million.

Ethiopia and France hold regular and structured political consultations and dialogue to strengthen and consolidate their long-standing bilateral relations. The dialogue covers areas related to domestic politics, and bilateral, sub regional, regional and global issues including migration and climate change. The 3rd Ethio-France Political Consultation, held last month, on February 10, was chaired by Ambassador Dr. Markos Tekle, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne, Secretary of State to the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs of the French Republic. Beyond their bilateral engagement, France and Ethiopia cooperate strategically in their commitment to sustain peace and security in Horn of Africa, notably in support of the peace efforts in Somalia.

...on a four-day, three-nation tour including Djibouti and Kenya

President Macron visited Djibouti this week on Tuesday (March 12), the first leg of his tour of East Africa. Djibouti, strategically located at the southern entrance to the Red Sea on the route to the Suez Canal, hosts a French naval base and facilities to train African troops as well as to monitor the Horn of Africa and Yemen. Djibouti also hosts a number of other military bases, including those of the US and China. The Elysee Palace said the visit to Djibouti would strengthen ties with a traditional ally and increase economic links. Last September, a group of French MPs visited Djibouti and subsequently stressed the need to reinforce France's presence, emphasizing that relations should focus on three sectors: military, economic and cultural.

On his arrival in Djibouti, President Macron underlined its importance as France's largest naval base on the continent and home to some 1,400 French military personnel. As Commander-in-Chief, the President also visited the Centre d'Aguerissement et d'Instruction au Desert de Djibouti to greet the French forces stationed there.

At a joint press conference with President Guelleh, President Macron, noted that several French companies were exploring possible deals in Djibouti related to the country's port operations and in the area of renewable energy. He said France wanted to develop

partnerships that made local employment a priority and which did not lead to excessive debt. President Macron also highlighted the importance of military cooperation and the fight against terrorism. He referred to Djibouti's contribution to the AMISOM mission in Somalia as well as the fight against piracy. He described the ongoing changes in the region as an astounding opportunity, "for sustainable stability, and virtuous integration." President Ismail Omar Guelleh said Djibouti was open and he hadn't lost hope that France would strengthen its investments in Djibouti. He called upon French companies to invest in Djibouti's new International Free Zone.

The last leg of President Macron's tour was Nairobi. It was the first time a French president had visited the country, and Kenya's Foreign Affairs Ministry described relations between the two countries as having reached an "all-time high". On arrival, President Kenyatta and President Macron visited Madaraka railway station in Nairobi renovated by France. France has shown interest in the development of a rapid train service. The French delegation conducted "discussions on bilateral matters, including trade, manufacturing, infrastructure support, and peace and security." President Macron also met with students to discuss sustainable cities, which will be one of the main themes of the Africa-France summit to be held in 2020.

On Thursday, President Macron and President Kenyatta co-chaired the One Planet Summit discussing climate change and related issues at the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and part of the 4th session of the United Nations Environmental Assembly. **(See below).**

Ethiopia at the United Nations Environment Assembly and Summit in Nairobi

Kenya has been hosting the fourth Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly, this week gathering heads of state, ministers, business leaders and civil society representatives to work on ways to cut pollution and build a greener global economy. The Assembly, being held all this week in Nairobi, is the world's highest-level decision-making body on the environment. It meets biennially to address critical environmental challenges facing the world, providing leadership and catalyzing intergovernmental action on the environment through its decisions and resolutions. It opened on Monday (March 11) with delegates gathered under UN flags flying at half-mast in memory of the 157 people who had died in the plane crash the previous day. Many of those who lost their lives were UN staff, youth delegates travelling to the Assembly, scientists, members of academia and other members of the environmental community. The President of the Assembly dedicated the assembly to the honor of the victims of the accident.

The President of the Session, Siim Kiisler, Estonia's Minister of the Environment, noted the Assembly provided the framework for shifting global economic systems towards more sustainable trajectories to tackle environmental challenges and bring closer the 'future that we want'. He underlined that the findings of the latest global environmental assessments indicated the planet was "increasingly polluted, rapidly warming and quickly losing its biodiversity". It was deeply concerning. The 2019 Assembly brought people together to build policies, partnerships and a culture of innovation to support solutions and the systemic change needed for sustainability to thrive. It was time to invest in education for the green-collared jobs of the future, to channel sustainable finance towards green investments to

accelerate innovation. He also spoke of three areas of focus: “tackling the environmental challenges related to poverty and natural resources management, including sustainable food systems, food security and halting biodiversity loss; introducing life-cycle approaches to resource efficiency, energy, chemicals and waste management; and ensuring sustainable business development at a time of rapid technological change.” The world must scale-up its efforts to tackle common environmental challenges through fostering sustainable and efficient resource management; ensuring access and use of environmental data; engage civil society, citizens, private sector and academia.

The theme of the Assembly was: “Innovative Solutions to Environmental Challenges and Sustainable Consumption and Production.” An innovative culture requires creativity, openness and participation, and several conditions are required to stimulate and strengthen a culture of innovation. They include leadership and governance instruments that reward innovation and circularity while stimulating openness and collaboration; education and continuous capacity building that facilitate transition to a knowledge society; and the dedication of finance and technology to sustainability. A critical element in this is unleashing the creativity and entrepreneurship of women. Women's empowerment, particularly in the sustainable development sectors, makes social, business and economic sense. This week's Assembly will certainly contribute towards a holistic, inclusive, and participatory approach to development, underpinned by human rights and recognizing the interlinkages and integrated nature of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. It concluded on Friday (March 15) adopting a total of 27 resolutions and 3 decisions.

During the Assembly, the first regional edition of the One Planet Summit was held on Thursday (March 14). The One Planet coalition is a forum for mobilization and action that brings together State and non-State stakeholders from all continents on a platform for commitments and projects in the service of the international community. The Summit aims to be a showcase for innovative projects and initiatives to enable redirection of finance towards objectives of sustainability and inclusiveness, helping bring about the advent of the low-carbon economy of the future, and emphasizing the immediate steps that need to be taken now for the most vulnerable populations. Co-chaired by French President Emmanuel Macron, and attended, among others, by President Kenyatta of Kenya, UN Secretary-General Guterres and Interim President Georgieva of the World Bank Group, and bringing together high-level officials, CEOs and youth, as well as civil society, academics and stakeholders, the Summit focused on initiatives and accelerated solutions for renewable energy, fostering resilience and adaptation to climate change, and protecting biodiversity in Africa.

It underlined that Africa was “a vibrant place for climate innovation, green investment and new business models, all paving the way for low-carbon and sustainable development, “Africa, of course, is responsible for only 4% of global greenhouse-gas emissions, though an estimated 65% of its population is directly impacted by climate change. It highlighted the unique role of Africa as a global partner facing both challenges and opportunities and offered the opportunities to build new coalitions and encourage new commitments to build on the vision set out in “The future we want”, the outcome document of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. It affirmed that “poverty eradication, changing unsustainable and promoting sustainable patterns of consumption and production and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development are the overarching objectives of, and essential requirements for, sustainable development.”

Ethiopia, demonstrating its commitment to the Environment and to the African cause, led the African Group in formulating, conceptualizing and championing the highlight of the Assembly: ‘innovative solutions’, “business unusual” approaches and creative ways, aiming at addressing environmental challenges. Innovative solutions are expected to increase technical capacities, attract new investments, open new markets and enhance productivity and sustainability in the developing world, especially in Africa. The Open-Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives met between last week (March 4-8) to finalize negotiations over the twenty-seven resolutions presented by Member States and Regional Groups. Ethiopia, as designated facilitator and lead negotiator for the African Group, sponsored six Africa Group resolutions covering environmental challenges that impact society, economy and environment: Poverty-Environment Nexus; Innovation in Biodiversity and Land Degradation; Addressing Environmental Challenges through Green Business; Innovation in Sustainable Rangelands and Pastoralism; and Implementation and Follow-up of UNEA Resolutions. These were successfully discussed and adopted by consensus by the Assembly. A resolution on ‘the Blue Economy’ was withdrawn following disagreement over definition of the term. Ethiopia’s role in spearheading the African resolutions was hailed by the African Union Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, Mrs. Josefa Leonel Correa Sacko.

The Ethiopian delegation to the Fourth UN Environmental Assembly was led by the Commissioner for Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Professor Fekadu Beyene and included Ambassador Meles Alem, Ethiopia’s Ambassador to Kenya, Ambassador Siraj Rashid, Director-General of Middle East Affairs, and experts from the Ethiopian Embassy in Nairobi and the Environment, Forest and Climate Change Commission. Professor Fekadu Beyene delivered an opening statement on behalf of the African Group, stressing that poverty eradication remained a priority not only for Africa but also for the whole world. Innovative solutions that did not support poverty eradication could not provide the people of Africa with the much-needed transformation to realization of sustainable development goals. He also chaired the African Group consultation meetings during the Assembly, successfully delivering the mandate provided by the 7th Special Session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment held last year in Nairobi.

President Sahle-Work: “Africa’s women are rising; it is time the world took note.”

President Sahle-Work Zewde, on the occasion of International Women’s Day on Friday (March 8) has stressed that Africa’s women were rising to challenge gender discrimination. Across the continent, she said, women were claiming positions of power and influence in public arenas. Writing in the UK’s Financial Times, she pointed out systemic barriers to gender equity were falling and a growing number of women leaders were reshaping the continent. Rwanda, Seychelles and Ethiopia now had cabinets split evenly along gender lines, with some of the most powerful posts occupied by women. Equally, a new generation of African leaders was investing in social and human capital, universal health coverage, education and gender equality.

President Sahle-Work noted that globally the proportion of seats held in parliament by women had slowly risen from just 12% in 1997 to 24% in 2018, but a few African countries stood out; Rwanda, over 60% of MPs were women, in Namibia, South Africa, Senegal and Mozambique, at least 40% were women. This, she said, “represented a dramatic shift in representation, inclusion and democratization of opportunity.” This offered examples for

young women and allowed institutions and governments to tap the full potential of their talent pools and bring diversity of perspectives and experience.

Of course, to enable more women to serve as leaders, it was necessary to redistribute power and ensure equal pay at work. President Sahle-Work noted the International Labor Organization has estimated that the gender pay gap is higher in sub-Saharan Africa than in any other region in the world; and the Economic Commission for Africa has shown that gender equality in the workplace is still a long way away. The Global Health 50/50 report: Equality Works, looking at the policies and practices of nearly 200 organizations in global health, found seven out of 10 of such organizations were headed by men, and the women employed by these organizations receive 15% less pay than men. Only 22 countries meet or exceed the International Labor Organization standard of 14 weeks of paid maternity leave.

At the last African Union Heads of States summit in Addis Ababa, AU Chairperson Moussa Faki launched the AU's new strategy for gender equality and women's empowerment. He said: "patriarchal norms result in economic, legal, political, and social discrimination against women and girls, reflected at individual, household, community and organizational levels; and in the public arena". President Sahle-Work noted Africa's leaders were taking concrete steps to challenge these patriarchal norms. A recent World Bank report highlighted that Africa is seeing more reforms promoting gender equality than anywhere else in the world. In Ethiopia, in addition to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed naming a gender-equal cabinet, he selected women for powerful posts, including the presidency of the Supreme Court.

In fact, as economic growth continues to expand in Ethiopia and across Africa, President Sahle-Work highlighted the growing recognition that investment in gender equality was both the right and the smart approach. Indeed, she said, "Africa's women are rising; it is time the world took note."

Ethiopia calls on EC to remove it from a high-risk list of money-laundering states

Ethiopia has called on the European Commission to consider removing the country from the list of "high-risk third countries" with weak anti-money laundering and terrorist financing regimes. This follows the updating of an EC report on what it describes as high-risk third countries with strategic deficiencies in their national anti-money laundering and counter financing of terrorism regimes. Among these, it included Ethiopia.

A statement from the Prime Minister's office on Wednesday (March 12) said the Government of Ethiopia had been taking important steps to effectively prevent money laundering and terrorist financing since 2018. The statement said the Government had introduced sweeping changes to the financial and judicial systems to respond to strategic deficiencies, especially evident due to Ethiopia's geopolitical position in the Horn. It said the new administration had strictly controlled and monitored informal value transfer networks and activity and had implemented stringent financial sanctions against perpetrators. It had enhanced international cooperation with the European Union to strengthen the competence of relevant authorities, including the Financial Intelligence Center, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation and the Attorney-General's Office.

Bearing all this in mind, and taking into account the corrective measures that have been implemented, as well as Ethiopia's proven commitment to combat terrorism and money laundering, the statement urged the European Commission "to consider removing Ethiopia from the list of 'high-risk third countries.'"

The statement also noted that while Ethiopia understood the seriousness of the European Commission report, it would like to challenge the report's failure to name jurisdictions that were directly and indirectly in fostering illegal trends by creating a safe haven for perpetrators. Africa loses billions annually due to corruption and money laundering. Most of this money does not stay within the continent; it is deposited in offshore accounts or illegally invested in properties all over the world. Locating and recovering these funds is near to impossible for most African states. This would be a crucial and timely task for the European Commission. Holding all wrongdoers equally accountable would set an example for other international institutions and increase the credibility of the European Commission report.

Ethiopia calls upon the European Commission to take the lead in organizing efforts to combat corruption, money laundering, and terrorism financing by taking a stand on unfair practices used by financial institutions globally. Many Western financial centers and governments are yet to join the efforts to assist African countries to recover and return stolen funds and transactions that support terrorism. The Ethiopian Government is committed to fighting against money laundering and terrorist financing. It is equally committed to work with the European Commission to uphold the integrity of its financial systems. It would now like to see the European Commission hold accountable the various jurisdictions that have significant economic ties with the Commission and which also have potentially negative systemic effects on the global financial systems.

Joint AU-UN team in Somalia to review transition plan progress

A joint delegation from the African Union and the United Nations arrived in Mogadishu on Wednesday last week (March 6) to assess progress made in implementing the Somalia Transition Plan which lays out the process of the transfer of security responsibility from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to the Somali National Security Forces. The delegation, in its week-long visit, also evaluated the steps being taken by AMISOM to implement the tasks laid down in the transition plan as mandated by the UN Security Council Resolution 2431 (2018) and the African Union Peace and Security Council Communique 782 (2018).

The UN Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council issued various instructions for the Joint Mission. UN Security Council, in resolution 2431 (2018), authorized another 1,000-strong reduction of uniformed AMISOM personnel, by the end of February, this year; this follows a previous drawdown of 1,000 troops in October last year. The UN resolution also mandated AMISOM to maintain a minimum of 1040 police personnel including five formed police units.

The AU Peace and Security Council wanted an assessment of the state and effectiveness of AMISOM's reconfiguration following the drawdown of the troops, and of its support to the transition process. AMISOM has recently developed a new Concept of Operations

(CONOPS) aligned with the implementation of the transition plan and taking note of the changes in numbers of troops.

Major-General Francis Okello, the Chief, Plans and Operations Unit, in the AU's Peace Operations Support Division, leading the AU delegation, said the outcome of the review would inform decisions to be made by the UN Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council on the renewal of AMISOM's mandate. The UN team leader, Vincent Pasquini, Team Leader for Somalia in the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations, said the review would look at issues of transition planning, electoral preparations and the operating environment in Somalia. The delegation also looked at the challenges AMISOM faced, the implementation of the recommendations of last year's Operational Readiness Assessment and the preliminary impact of the reduction of AMISOM troops.

The delegation met with the AMISOM's senior leadership, officials from the Federal Government, the United Nations, representatives of international partners, diplomats from AMISOM Troop Contributing Countries and the European Union. It held discussions with relevant officials and others as it worked to analyse Somalia's political and security situation, as the country prepares for one-person, one-vote elections in 2020-2021. The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, Ambassador Madeira, and head of AMISOM, said the visit was an important opportunity for AMISOM to share issues on Somalia, "and also listen to you and get to know your views and your concerns". "Most importantly," he added, "your views should guide us on the way forward in our joint effort to help Somalia achieve peace and stability."

The 2nd Ethio-Greek Business Forum in Addis Ababa

The 2nd Ethio-Greek Business Forum was held in Addis Ababa on Thursday last week (March 7). State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Akililu Hailemichael welcoming the representatives of fourteen Greek anchor companies interested to invest in tourism, manufacturing, energy, infrastructure and other sectors, underlined the long-standing diplomatic relations between Greece and Ethiopia. These needed to be strengthened in areas of trade and investment, he said. The State Minister underlined the substantial investment opportunities in agriculture, tourism, energy and food-processing, and noted the government's readiness to support investors.

Mr. Nikolaos Quick, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic of Greece, commended the sound economic policy and conducive investment climate in Ethiopia. He said the 2nd Ethio-Greek Business Forum was "a testimony to my government's commitment to strengthen the investment, trade and business ties with Ethiopia". He said the Greek business community was committed to the establishment of long-term business projects in the country

Greek companies noted that there were several areas where new business ventures could be made in Ethiopia. The energy sector is open for all types of investment, particularly those geared towards green economy projects. The government has underlined its interest in the development of public-private partnerships for infrastructural projects and construction of new residential and commercial complexes in urban and rural areas. Additional areas of

potential investment include pharmaceutical, cosmetics and agriculture sectors. Greek business representatives also discussed the possibility of increasing export of olive oil and wine.

On the occasion, the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectorial Associations and the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises signed a Memorandum of Understanding to expand and advance cooperation in business and investment. They agreed to facilitate initiation of new business ventures in both countries and defined a framework of actions to be taken by involved stakeholders.