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News in Brief

Africa and the African Union

A statement from the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki, on Thursday (April 11) said the military takeover “was not the appropriate response to the challenges facing Sudan and the aspirations of its people.” He hoped the AU Peace and Security Council would meet urgently to consider their response to the military takeover in Sudan. **(See article)**

Rwanda launched a hundred days of mourning last weekend to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the genocide which left close to a million-people dead in 1994, the world’s worst genocide in recent history. Every year, Rwanda’s government urges its citizens to “Kwibuka”, to remember, the hundreds of thousands of lives lost. This year in Kigali, Ethiopia’s Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed and First Lady Zinash Tayachew joined President Paul Kagame of Rwanda and the leaders of Chad, Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Niger, Belgium, Canada, the African Union and the European Union in laying a wreath and lighting the Flame of Remembrance at the Kigali Genocide Memorial. **(See article)**

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has set up a “Taskforce on the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.” This was decided during the meeting of the IGAD Committee of Ambassadors held in Nairobi, Kenya on Thursday last week (April 4). The aim is to build a common position and strategy to respond to the challenges and opportunities in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. **(See article)**

Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania held a trilateral meeting in Dar es Salam last week (April 2-4) to discuss the situation of irregular migrants using the “Southern Route”, through which youths from East Africa regularly migrate to the Republic of South Africa crossing the borders of Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. They all-too-often face life-threatening challenges including death or serious violation of their rights during their journey. **(See article)**

Ethiopia

President Sahle-Work Zewde received Mr. Joe Kaeser, President and Chief Executive Officer of Siemens AG on Friday last week (April 5). Mr. Kaeser said Siemens was keen to provide energy and infrastructure solutions and engage in the development of renewable energy in Ethiopia. Earlier, the Ethiopian Investment Commission has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Siemens allowing the government and Siemens to jointly deliver on

stabilizing and expanding existing grid infrastructure, and outlining innovations for partnership between multi-nationals, public institutions and other key stakeholders, as well as fostering vocational training in engineering disciplines and strengthening small and medium sized local businesses, he added.

The 26th celebration of World Press Freedom Day, jointly organized by UNESCO, the African Union Commission and the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, will be taking place in Addis Ababa at the beginning of May. The theme is “Media for Democracy: Journalism and Elections in Times of Disinformation”. **(See article)**

Ethiopia’s Minister of Defense, Engineer Aisha Mohammed and Italian Minister of Defense, Elisabetta Trenta, signed Memorandum of Understanding to cooperate in the defense sector on Wednesday (April 10). The Italian Minister, who arrived in Addis Ababa on Tuesday, also met senior officers of the national defense force to discuss on bilateral issues.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene received Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga on Thursday (April 11). Mrs. Hirut stressed that Ethiopia has redoubled its efforts to ensure peace and stability in the Horn of Africa region, while also noting the instrumentality of UN support. The UN Special Envoy commended the vital role that Ethiopia is playing for the peace and prosperity of the region. He also assured Mrs. Hirut of UN commitment to support IGAD and Ethiopia’s efforts for peace, security and development of the Horn of Africa region.

State Minister Mrs. Hirut Zemene met Mr. Julian Reilly, UK Special Envoy for the Red Sea and Horn of Africa on Wednesday (April 10). Mrs. Hirut emphasized Ethiopia’s commitment to bolster the implementation of South Sudan’s revitalized peace deal under the IGAD framework as well as support to the Federal Government of Somalia. The Special Envoy expressed UK’s commitment to advance cooperation with Ethiopia both bilaterally and under the IGAD framework in a bid to ensure development and peace and security in the Red Sea and Horn of Africa region.

State Minister Mrs. Hirut Zemene met Norwegian Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ambassador Merete Lundemo on Wednesday (April 10). Mrs. Hirut said Ethiopia would work more closely with Norway in a bid to strengthen the cooperation on green economy and environmental protection. In connection, the State Minister briefed the Norwegian Ambassador on Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s vision of ensuring a greener and cleaner Addis Ababa, which she says, is vital to change the livelihoods of residents and revive the city’s economy as well as boost urban tourism.

State Minister Mrs. Hirut Zemene met Ms. Anick van Calster, Director General for Bilateral Affairs of Belgium on Thursday last week (April 4) to discuss bilateral and regional issues of mutual benefit. Ms. van Calster also met with State Minister, Dr. Markos Tekle and commended Ethiopia’s sweeping political and economic reforms addressing key issues of democracy, good governance, human rights and media freedom.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Markos Tekle met Mrs. Elisabetta Trenta, Defense Minister of Italy on Wednesday (April 10). They exchanged views on ways to deepen the long tradition of cooperation between Italy and Ethiopia. Dr. Markos emphasized the need to further strengthen cooperation on the maintenance of regional peace and security. Mrs. Trenta expressed her country’s commitment to work more closely with Ethiopia on aspects of

regional peace and security. They agreed their readiness to further heighten existing ties and chart out new areas of cooperation.

Permanent Secretary for Europe, the Americas, Asia and Multilateral Affairs, Ambassador Mahlet Hailu met the Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Canada, Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones, on Monday (April 8). Ms. Pamela Goldsmith-Jones expressed Canada's continued commitment to support Ethiopia's development efforts and said Canada was keen to continue cooperation in development assistance and climate change as well as share its experiences on federalism.

Ethiopia deposited the instrument of its ratification of the agreement on African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on Wednesday (April 10). Mamo E. Mihretu, Senior Advisor to the Prime Minister and Chief Trade Negotiator handed over the deposit of instruments on the ratification to Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the AU Commission.

An Ethiopian Investment Forum was held in the towns of Vecenza and Genoa in Italy this week under the theme: "Ethiopia is Open for Business". Representatives of over 40 Italian companies attended the Forum and heard Ambassador Dewano Kedir, Permanent Secretary of Economic Diplomacy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs underline the investment and trade opportunities available in Ethiopia. He called on Italian companies to seize these opportunities.

An Ethiopian Embassy delegation led by Ambassador Teshome Toga, Ethiopia's Ambassador to China, met with officials of the China Coffee Association (CCA) on Thursday last week (April 4) to exchange views on forging a joint partnership to enhance the development of Ethiopian coffee exports in China's markets. **(See article)**

The US Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ambassador Michael Raynor said the United States remains deeply inspired by Ethiopia's ongoing economic and political reform agendas and firmly committed to supporting these efforts. In an interview with The Ethiopian Herald, Ambassador Raynor said Ethiopia had been registering remarkable economic and political progress, noting the growth of foreign direct investment by over 10% in 2017- 2018 and the increasing interest of US companies to take advantage of the opportunities. He said, "The Ethiopian people enjoy greater freedoms to express their views than at any time in recent memory and for the first time in 15 years the Committee to Protect Journalism has found no journalists imprisoned in Ethiopia."

Djibouti

Mr. Moussa Ahmed Hassan, Djibouti's Minister of Equipment and Transport met with Ethiopia's Ambassador to Djibouti, Ambassador Abdulaziz Mohammed on Monday (April 8). The Minister underlined the need for the two governments to jointly fast track the economic integration plans. They also discussed progress on the planned Galafi-Dikil road construction and the linking of the ports to the Ethio-Djibouti railway, and agreed to work closely together to speed up these works, and ensure smooth and efficient transit of people and cargoes along the corridor.

Eritrea

Foreign Minister Osman Salah and Presidential Adviser Yemane Gebreab visited Saudi Arabia this week (April 7-11). They delivered a message from President Isaias to King Salman bin Abdelaziz thanking the Kingdom for its support to Eritrea and the peace with Ethiopia. President Isaias called for enhanced cooperation on bilateral and regional matters. King Salman noted the brotherly relations and shared interests binding the two countries and reaffirmed Saudi readiness to strengthen its partnership with Eritrea. He said the Kingdom would shoulder its responsibilities for regional peace and security.

During the visit to Saudi Arabia, the delegation met Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Assaf in Riyadh on Sunday (April 7). Talks focused on concrete measures to expand and consolidate mutually beneficial development, trade and investment ties. They also discussed developments in the Horn of Africa as well as the security of the Red Sea region. The Eritrean delegation met other Saudi officials, businessman and the Eritrean community during a four-day visit. It also met with members of the Eritrean Diaspora in Jeddah on Thursday (April 11).

Foreign Minister Salah, also headed a delegation on an official working visit to Mogadishu last weekend on April 6. The delegation met President Mohamed Abdullahi. The presidency announced that their talks covered economic integration and cooperation agreements, strengthening regional cooperation and Foreign Minister Salah's recent visit to Somaliland. Also attending the discussions were Somali Deputy Prime Minister Mahadi Guled, Foreign Minister Ahmed Isse Awad and Eritrean Presidential Adviser, Yemane Gebreab.

Somalia

Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre met with John Bolton, President Trump's National Security Adviser this week. Mr. Bolton said in a tweet that he had congratulated the Prime Minister on Somalia's economic reforms and urged sustained engagement on this. He said they also discussed ways to deepen "the strong U.S-Somalia partnership on critical issues, including counterterrorism and regional stability".

Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre started talks with World Bank officials over debt cancellation in Washington, this week. He held talks with WB Vice-President, Hafez Ghanem on fast tracking Somalia's reforms with a view to attaining debt relief and immense economic opportunities for the Horn of Africa nation. Mr. Khayre also held a series of spring meetings with officials of other international financial institutions, senior US government officials and other partners of Somalia.

The Prime Minister appointed three new cabinet ministers at the weekend - Salah Ahmed Jama as the new Minister of Constitutional Affairs to replace the former Minister Abdirahman Hosh Jibril who passed away last month in Dubai. New ministers were also appointed as Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs and of Energy and Water Resources.

The Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation held a one-day forum in Mogadishu on Tuesday (April 9) to encourage coordination between local professionals and counterparts from the Diaspora and a culture of sharing ideas and experiences. Deputy Prime Minister, Mahdi Ahmed Guled said: "It is imperative that we put our differences aside, unite for the sake of the country." Foreign Minister, Ahmed Isse Awad, said: "It is the

intention of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to enhance the engagement and conversation between locals and the Diaspora to rule out misunderstanding, attract the diaspora back to the country and inculcate a culture of sharing of ideas, and how to take advantage of existing opportunities to rebuild the country.”

South Sudan

President Salva Kiir and First Vice President-designate Riek Machar held a two-day retreat at the Vatican, in Rome this week to discuss implementation of the revitalized peace agreement and ways to overcome the problems the process is facing. In a dramatic gesture at the end of the retreat, Pope Francis kissed the feet of Salva Kiir and Riek Machar as he urged them to keep the peace.” (See article)

Former Ethiopian President. Dr. Mulatu Teshome participated in the third Great Run South Sudan, a 10km. marathon in Juba organized under the theme “Thanksgiving Race for Restoring Peace, Unity and Love”, and aimed at encouraging the revitalized Peace Agreement of September 12, 2018. Thousands of South Sudanese took part in the Run which was also attended by President Salva Kiir, Ministers, members of the diplomatic community and professional athletes.

Sudan

First Vice-president and Minister of Defense, Lt-General Awad ibn Auf announced on Thursday this week (April 11) that military had overthrown and arrested President al-Bashir and would be setting up a transitional military government for the next two years, suspending the constitution, the National Assembly and imposing a state of emergency for three months. (See article)

The army takes over in Sudan after months of protests

First Vice-president and Minister of Defense, Lt-General Awad ibn Auf went on state TV and radio on Thursday (April 11) to announce the military had overthrown and arrested President al-Bashir and taken charge of the country for the next two years. General Ibn Auf said a state of emergency had been imposed for the next three months. The military had suspended the Constitution and closed Sudan borders as well as the country's airspace. A night curfew was also imposed.

A statement over the radio and television said: “In the name of Allah the Merciful,” a Transitional Military Council had been formed to administer the country for a two-year Transitional Period; a three-month State of Emergency had been declared, and the Constitution suspended. Sudan’s airspace was closed for 24 hours and all border crossings throughout the Sudan were closed until further notice. The National Council of Ministers, the National Assembly and the Council of States were also dissolved. The State Governments and Legislative Councils would remain in place and the judiciary and its components, as well as the Constitutional Court and the Public Prosecution Service would continue to function normally.

The statement spoke of the need for strict enforcement of public order and prevention of crimes of all kinds. It declared a comprehensive ceasefire throughout Sudan and called on all armed movements to join the homeland and contribute to development. All political prisoners would be released immediately. It stressed the aim was to create a climate for the peaceful transfer of power and the building of political parties and the conduct of free and fair elections by the end of the Transitional Period and the establishment of a permanent constitution for the country.

The statement also promised commitment to all treaties and conventions, local, regional and international, and for the continuation of the work of embassies, missions, diplomatic bodies and other organizations. It referred to the maintenance and dignity of human rights, and a commitment to good-neighbourly relations and the need to ensuring balanced international relations, taking into account Sudan's national interests and its policy of non-interference in the affairs of other countries. It said that the Transitional Military Council, of which details would be given later, would take care of the safety of citizens and of the country.

A statement from the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki, on Thursday (April 11) said: "The military takeover is not the appropriate response to the challenges facing Sudan and the aspirations of its people." He recalled the 2000 Lomé Declaration on unconstitutional changes of Government and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance. These strongly condemn any unconstitutional change of Government and commit member states to the respect of the rule of law, democratic principles and human rights. In view of the ongoing developments, the Chairperson reiterated these provisions, and looked forward to a quick meeting of the AU Peace and Security Council to consider the situation and take appropriate decisions.

In the meantime, the Chairperson urged all concerned to exercise calm and the utmost restraint and to respect the rights of citizens, foreign nationals and private property in the interest of the country and its people. He also appealed to all stakeholders to engage in an inclusive dialogue to create conditions that would make it possible to meet the aspirations of Sudanese people for democracy, good governance and well-being and restore constitutional order as soon as possible. The Chairperson of the Commission also expressed the solidarity of the African Union with the people of Sudan, and pledged its commitment and readiness to support Sudan during this period, in line with the relevant AU instruments.

IGAD, in a statement issued on Friday (April 12), said it is closely following developments in the Sudan, adding "IGAD hopes the Sudanese stakeholders will navigate the current political situation and urge all involved to ensure a peaceful transition. IGAD stands ready to support the Sudan in this process." It also said it would continue to work for regional stability, development and integration.

In a statement issued on Thursday (April 11), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that "Ethiopia is closely following current developments in sisterly neighbouring country, the Sudan. Ethiopia expresses its confidence that the Sudanese people shall surmount this difficult moment. Ethiopia fully respects the sovereignty and political independence of the Sudan and sincerely hopes that all Sudanese political stakeholders will find a peaceful solution to the problem." The statement further said Ethiopia fully understands and respects the wishes of the Sudanese people and stands by them.

25th commemoration of the Rwandan Genocide: Prime Minister Dr. Abiy in Kigali

Rwanda launched a hundred days of mourning to commemorate the 25th anniversary of a genocide that tore the country apart and left close to a million-people dead last weekend in the world's worst genocide of recent history. A hundred days of slaughter began on April 6, 1994, after President Juvenal Habyarimana and President Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi were killed when their plane was shot down over Kigali. In villages across the country, neighbor turned on neighbor as men, women and children were hacked to death, burned alive, clubbed and shot. As many as 10,000 people were killed daily. Over 10 percent of the Rwandan population were wiped out. The fighting ended in July 1994 when the Rwandan Patriotic Front led by Kagame, swept in and seized control of the country.

Every year, beginning in April, Rwanda's government urges its citizens to "Kwibuka", "remember," - remember the hundreds of thousands of lives lost during the genocide. This year, on the 25th anniversary of the start of the genocide, President Paul Kagame and other leaders and heads of state laid wreaths and attended the lighting of the remembrance flame at the Kigali Genocide Memorial on Sunday (April 7) to signal the start of the mourning period. The memorial in the capital holds the remains of more than a quarter of a million people who lost their lives in the slaughter. During the ceremony, President Kagame said: "Fear and anger have been replaced by the energy and purpose that drives us forward, young and old," adding that Rwanda would never repeat past mistakes that led to the genocide. He said: "Our bodies and minds bear amputations and scars, but none of us is alone... We Rwandans have granted ourselves a new beginning. We exist in a state of permanent commemoration, every day, in all that we do ... Today, light radiates from this place." The president stressed: "Nothing has the power to turn Rwandans against each other, ever again. This history will not repeat. That is our firm commitment."

Later, President Kagame and other leaders joined thousands of people in a "walk to remember" from the Houses of Parliament through Kigali to the Amaharo Stadium, where they held an evening candlelight ceremony. Amaharo means "peace" in Kinyarwanda, and the stadium was used by the UN during the genocide to protect thousands of people.

In a message to commemorate the 25-year anniversary of the genocide, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said, "This year marks one of the darkest chapters in recent human history. More than 800,000 people-overwhelmingly Tutsi, but also moderate Hutu and others who opposed the genocide- were systematically killed in less than three months. On this Day, we honour those who were murdered and reflect on the suffering and resilience of those who survived." The Secretary General, who further warned of dangerous trends of xenophobia, racism and intolerance in many parts of the world, said that while the capacity for evil resides in all our societies, so, too, do the qualities of understanding, kindness, justice and reconciliation. He said: "Let us work together to build a harmonious future for all. This is the best way to honour those who lost their lives so tragically in Rwanda 25 years ago." The United Nations commemorates the "International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda" with a series of events around the world, including a memorial

ceremony at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, and a memorial commemoration at the General Assembly Hall at UN Headquarters in New York, organized in collaboration with the Permanent Mission of Rwanda to the United Nations.

Leaders of Ethiopia, Chad, Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Niger, Belgium, Canada, the African Union and the European Union were among the many attending the commemoration in Kigali. "I am moved beyond words at this memorial to tragedy," said Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission; "Time can never erase the darkest hours in our history. But it is at the heart of our darkest moments that begins our ascent to the light. It is our duty to remember." Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel said "the duty of remembrance must be a sacred requirement."

Ethiopia's Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed and First Lady Zinash Tayachew joined President Paul Kagame of Rwanda and other world leaders in laying a wreath and lighting the Flame of Remembrance at the Kigali Genocide Memorial where more than 250,000 victims of the Genocide rest. The Prime Minister noted "the importance of seeing others as reflections of ourselves in remembering past grievances and building unity of purpose." Emphasizing that as a global community we should not experience such devastation to honour each other's lives, he commended the Government and people of Rwanda for recognizing unity, forgiveness and reconciliation as key pillars for their remarkable growth. "The mistakes of yesterday has propelled your country to greater height," Abiy said, "Acknowledging the dark past of history but choosing to move into the light is a courageous act of perseverance," he added.

The 25th commemoration of the Genocide in Rwanda provides a critical moment for the global community to reflect on the need for mutual understanding and tolerance across all divisions, disagreements and divides. We can, and must, build peaceful communities through nurturing open dialogue and mutual understanding.

Ethiopia is hosting World Press Freedom Day on May 3

This year, the 26th celebration of World Press Freedom Day, jointly organized by UNESCO, the African Union Commission and the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, is taking place in Addis Ababa. The theme is "Media for Democracy: Journalism and Elections in Times of Disinformation", covering current challenges faced by the media in elections along with the media's potential in supporting peace and reconciliation processes. The occasion will also examine concerns such as the safety of journalists and how it is possible to push back against a growing climate of disinformation more effectively, as well as reminding governments of the need to respect their commitment to press freedom.

World Press Freedom Day serves as an occasion to inform citizens on all violations of press freedom, a reminder that in dozens of countries around the world, publications are censored, fined, suspended and closed down, while journalists, editors and publishers are harassed, attacked, detained and even murdered. It is a day to encourage and develop initiatives in favour of press freedom, and to assess the state of press freedom worldwide. It is a day of reflection among media professionals about issues of press freedom and professional ethics, as well as a day of support for members of the media, so often targets of the efforts to restrain

or control the press. It is also a day of remembrance for those journalists who have lost their lives in the pursuit of a story.

Since 1993, when the UN General Assembly declared May 3 as World Press Freedom, it has provided an opportunity to celebrate the fundamental principles of press freedom and develop joint initiatives. It is a day to defend the media from attacks on their independence and to pay tribute to journalists who have lost their lives in the exercise of their profession. World Press Freedom Day was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in 1993 following a recommendation adopted by UNESCO in response to a call by African journalists who in 1991 produced the landmark Windhoek Declaration on media pluralism and independence.

This week on the side-lines of the UNESCO Executive Board meeting taking place in Paris, Ghana handed over the hosting of World Press Freedom Day to Ethiopia. Ghana organized last year's event and on Tuesday, Ghana's Deputy Minister of Communication and Information, Asiamah-Agyei, passed on the baton to Ethiopia's Ambassador to France, Ambassador Henok Teferra. The ceremony was by attended Ethiopia's Minister of Education, Dr. Tilaye Gete, as well, the Assistant Director-General of UNESCO, Permanent Delegates and Representatives of Member States, officials and staff of UNESCO, and journalists.

Dr. Tilaye Gete, speaking at the UNESCO Board meeting, briefed the meeting on the government's preparations for the World Press Freedom Day. He also detailed the process of democratization in progress in Ethiopia and the implementation of the policy of gender parity in decision-making positions, as well as underlining the need for more resources to be provided for UNESCO programs in Africa. UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information, Moez Chakchouk, welcoming Ethiopia's decision to host the event, said this illustrated "the Ethiopian government's commitment to democratic reforms, especially in the media sector, which has opened up the space for media freedoms and for strengthening the respect for human rights in the country including online freedom of expression".

During World Press Freedom Day, over one thousand journalists and artists from all over the world are expected in Addis Ababa. They will be most welcome.

IGAD establishes a "Taskforce on the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden"

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has set up a "Taskforce on the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden" The decision was taken during the meeting of the IGAD Committee of Ambassadors held in Nairobi, Kenya on Thursday last week (April 4). The aim is to build a common position and strategy to respond to the challenges and opportunities in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. And the inauguration of the Taskforce was a follow-up implementing a decision taken during the 46th Ordinary Session of the IGAD Council of Ministers held in Djibouti at the end of February.

Opening the session, Ambassador Abdulaziz Mohammed, Ethiopia's Ambassador to Djibouti and Chairperson of the IGAD Committee of Ambassadors, commended the IGAD Secretariat and particularly IGAD Executive Secretary Ambassador Mahboub Maalim for organizing what he described as a "very important and timely meeting" of the IGAD Committee of

Ambassadors and experts drawn from different fields. Recalling the number of important milestones IGAD had achieved since its establishment several decades ago, Ambassador Abdulaziz noted the region was undergoing profound changes. He stressed that notable progresses had been made in the region in resolving differences and conflicts through dialogue, and emphasized that IGAD's roles and responsibilities were widening, expanding and strengthening in political, economic and social areas. So, the Ambassador underlined: "we are here today to discuss the establishment of an IGAD task force, with further duties and responsibilities."

Shedding light on some details of the rationale behind establishing the Task Force, the Ambassador mentioned the current security challenges in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. These have also been compounded by the continuing illegal exploitation of natural resources in these areas: illegal fishing, illegal dumping of waste material and illegal trade in arms, as well as money laundering. All of these, he said, further hamper efforts to yield the full potential of regional integration. He stressed: "these issues require our sustained attention and greater regional cooperation in order to effectively transform our regional resources into vehicles of shared prosperity." The Task Force will also be used to promote credible and inclusive dialogue on the regional matters, covering the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, and help to formulate shared norms as well as common strategic goals for greater partnership in order to stand together and effectively promote common regional objectives.

The Executive Secretary of IGAD, Ambassador Mahboub noted IGAD would now devote manpower and financial resources towards programs aimed at boosting security in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. He said protecting these areas from natural and man-made threats was the key to boost economic growth, security and peace in the greater Horn of Africa region.

The establishment of the Task Force, in line with the decision of the 46th Ordinary Session of the IGAD Council of Ministers, will allow it to study, review and advise on the conclusions and recommendations of the Council. It will also provide for the opportunity to urgently chart a regional plan of action with clear timelines. Indeed, the meeting of the IGAD Committee of Ambassadors, in its two-day session, demonstrating that there were shared issues on which member states of the IGAD were able to see eye-to-eye in a changing world, also noted that the Task Force would coordinate its efforts with the African Union Commission in line with the decisions of the IGAD Council of Ministers.

Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania: trilateral workshop on irregular migration

Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania held a trilateral meeting in Dar es Salam last week (April 2-4) to discuss and resolve the situation of irregular migrants using the "Southern Route". A significant number of youths from East Africa and the Horn regularly migrate to the Republic of South Africa crossing the borders of Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe en route. While these migrants aim to improve their lives through the opportunities they expect to find in South Africa, they all-too-often face life-threatening challenges including death or serious violation of their rights during their journey. Migrants travelling this route often fall foul of immigration authorities for failing to have the necessary documents.

There are visa exemption arrangements between Ethiopia and Kenya, but not between Ethiopia and Tanzania. Once migrating Ethiopians without visas arrive in Tanzania after passing through Kenya they lose any legal status, and Tanzanian law prescribes 3 years imprisonment for illegal migrants. Many Ethiopians have ended up stranded in Tanzania or in Tanzania's prisons. In addition to the possible loss of life during illegal migration activity and the suffering of migrants, irregular migration also leads to transnational crime including illicit trade, trafficking of weapons and of drugs as well as other crimes threatening the security of the countries.

Last week's meeting was a culmination of previous efforts aimed at addressing migration issues. It was attended by Kangi Lugola, Minister of Home Affairs of Tanzania, Zeynu Jemal, State Minister of Peace of Ethiopia, and Ambassador Michael Oyugi, Director for Diaspora and Consular Affairs of Kenya's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as representatives for the EU Delegation, donor embassies and UN agencies in Dar es Salaam. The meeting was financed under a European Union-International Organization for Migration Joint Initiative in the Horn of Africa, as part of the wider EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration which facilitates orderly, safe, regular and responsible migration management through the development of rights-based and development-focused policies and processes on protection and sustainable reintegration.

The meeting opened with a two-day technical meeting followed by the high-level official meeting with the specific objective of evaluating the outcome and recommendations of previous meetings, considering ways to strike a balance between managing irregular migration flows to southern Africa while ensuring that the human rights of migrants are respected and protected, and to set directions for future action. There has been some progress already made: Ethiopia has opened an embassy in Dar es Salam; the government of Ethiopia negotiated the repatriation of more than 500 Ethiopians over the last year; and there has been continuing trilateral cooperation among the three countries and with international organizations. Equally, the continuing flow of irregular migrants and the increase in the number of detainees in Tanzanian prisons underlines the continuing need for additional serious remedial measures.

Participants shared best practice and developed holistic approaches for addressing irregular migration. They explored coordination mechanisms to protect vulnerable migrants, strategies for improving existing voluntary return and reintegration processes and policies, and adopted a roadmap for activities and actions of the three countries to address the problem. Facilitating consular assistance and access to irregular migrants in prison, was one of the 27 recommendations for addressing detention conditions and alternatives to detention; others covered preventing irregular and dangerous migration, and sustainable approaches to repatriate illegal migrants and their reintegration as well as harmonization of anti-human trafficking and smuggling laws within the three countries, and sensitization of the Diaspora of the countries of origin to the risks and dangers of irregular migration. The recommendations were in line with the objectives of the Global Compact for Migration which calls for stronger cooperation and comprehensive responses to migration challenges.

The meeting concluded with the three countries signing a road map outlining the specific actions now expected from the governments to prevent irregular migration, repatriate irregular migrants, and put in place effective reintegration measures for repatriated migrants. They agreed to improve their treatment of irregular migrants in detention and to simplify

procedures for consular access. They also agreed to work to cooperate in combatting human trafficking and smuggling.

South Sudan's spiritual retreat for peace

South Sudan President Salva Kiir and First Vice President-designate Riek Machar held a two-day retreat in the Vatican this week to discuss implementation of the revitalized peace agreement and ways to overcome the problems the process is facing.

The idea to hold the retreat April 10-11 was proposed by Pope Francis and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, who also took part in the retreat together with ecclesiastical authorities from South Sudan. The global heads of the Roman Catholic and Anglican Protestant churches invited South Sudan's political leaders to Rome in an effort to consolidate the peace agreement, signed last September. Also attending was the Rev John Chalmers, former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland. Archbishop John Baptist Odama, Archbishop of Gulu (Uganda), and the Reverend Father Agbonkhanmeghe Orobator, S.J., President of the Conference of Major Superiors of Africa and Madagascar, provided preaching during the retreat.

In a statement issued about the retreat, the Vatican said the purpose is to offer an ecumenical and diplomatic occasion for encounter and reconciliation. The event, it said, was organized with the goal of offering "a propitious occasion for reflection and prayer, as well as an occasion for encounter and reconciliation, in a spirit of respect and trust, to those who in this moment have the mission and the responsibility to work for a future of peace and prosperity for the South Sudanese people."

The retreat took place in Santa Marta, the Vatican guesthouse where Pope Francis lives. The schedule for the politicians is built around informal conversation and prayer. All parties ate together on Wednesday evening during a communal dinner that took place in what one official described as "reflective silence". The Archbishop of Canterbury preached on Thursday afternoon before Pope Francis delivered an exhortation for peace. The participants were given a Bible, signed by the religious leaders, with the message: "Seek that which unites. Overcome that which divides." The Vatican described the retreat which ended Thursday as "a propitious occasion for reflection and prayer... to those who in this moment have the mission and responsibility to work for a future of peace and prosperity for the South Sudanese people".

Ethiopia's Ambassador Teshome Toga talks with China's Coffee Association

An Ethiopian Embassy delegation led by Ambassador Teshome Toga, Ethiopia's Ambassador to China, paid a visit to China Coffee Association (CCA) on Thursday last week (April 4). The Ambassador held discussions with the leadership of CCA in Beijing and exchanged views on forging a joint partnership to enhance the development of Ethiopian coffee exports in China's markets.

Ambassador Teshome highlighted the prominence of Ethiopia's globally-known top-echelon specialty coffees in terms of aroma, organic nature and variety. He pointed out that Ethiopia, as the original home of coffee, was currently more than ever ready to provide the burgeoning coffee market in China. Ethiopia, he said, offered ample opportunities for Chinese coffee importers and consumers on mutually beneficial levels. He pointed out that a new paradigm and impetus could be injected by two sides towards working to elevate their coffee trading relations further. He stressed Chinese companies could be engaged in value-adding to the coffee trade, becoming involved in coffee-processing investments in Ethiopia. He emphasized the Government of Ethiopia would facilitate this with the seriousness and determination to ensure investments would pay the necessary dividends. He also underlined that Ethiopia was undertaking substantial improvements in coffee production and productivity throughout its coffee growing regions.

Economic relations between China and Ethiopia is one of the cardinal elements of the partnership, and Ambassador Teshome also emphasized that he saw the political will from the Chinese government to augment the spectrum of imports from Africa demonstrated through the recently launched Trade Facilitation Initiative under the auspices of the Forum on China Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). Ambassador Teshome expressed his conviction that the China Coffee Association was well-positioned to play a vital role in translating such commitments into a more robust coffee partnership between Ethiopia and China, allowing more concerted efforts, improved communications and the establishment of a joint working mechanism with Ethiopian coffee producers.

Mr. Zhang Jincheng, Chairman of the China Coffee Association, noted there had been a remarkable growth in coffee consumption in China, particularly among the young population. It offered huge market momentum for Ethiopian premium specialty coffees, he said. He added that, even though China was still largely a tea-drinking nation, it was rapidly developing a taste for coffee. There had been double-digit growth rates for coffee drinking for over a decade. This increase held immense potential, given the large size of Chinese population. The Chairman said the CCA would work closely with the Ethiopian authorities, chambers of commerce and coffee exporters associations to mutually promote Ethiopian coffee in China. This could be done through organizing coffee exhibitions, trade facilitations and bringing sellers and buyers together.

Ambassador Teshome invited the CCA Chairman to lead another delegation of its management and members to pay a visit to Ethiopia, and explore trade and investment opportunities. In December last year, Ms. Lucy Fu Jingya, the CCA Secretary-General led a coffee business delegation to the "International Coffee Event in Ethiopia". She spoke then on Ethio-China coffee trade relations and the potential opportunities available for both countries in expanding the trade.