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Africa and the African Union

Huawei Technologies, represented by its CEO of the Ethiopia Office has donated 10,000 surgical masks to the African Union Commission to support its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. KilengaNaftal, Ag. Director of the African Union Medical and Health Services thanked Zhou Tianbing, and its Director of Public Affairs and Communication of Northern Africa, Mr. Wang Xinwei, who handed over the materials at the headquarters of the African Union on Tuesday (May 12). “We appreciate the quick response of Huawei as a reliable partner of the African Union at this difficult period, we can truly understand that a friend in need is a friend indeed”, said Dr. Naftal.

African Energy Ministers have agreed on a common strategy to fight the COVID-19 pandemic and to position the sector to power the recovery plan after the pandemic. The agreement was reached at an extraordinary meeting of the Bureau of the Sub-Committee on Energy of the Specialized Technical Committee meeting on Transport, Transcontinental and Interregional Infrastructure, Energy, and Tourism (STC-TTIET) held on Tuesday (May 12) by video conference.

To ensure young Africans are taking personal responsibility to stay safe and are included in decision-making, the African Union Youth Envoy, Ms.

AyaChebbi on Monday (May 11) joined hands with the AU Commissioner of Social Affairs, AmiraElfadil, and AU Commissioner for Human Resources, Science, and Technology, Prof. Sarah MbiEnow Anyang (HRST) to launch the African Youth Front on Coronavirus that aims to create a platform for youth to contribute to the implementation of African Continental Strategic Plan for COVID-19 Pandemic. Commissioner Amira, applauded the Office of the Youth Envoy for this initiative, citing the critical role of youth in the fight against COVID-19 in the continent. The African Youth Front on Coronavirus is a youth-led multi-stakeholders advocacy group designed to bring Africa youth to the decision-making table to ensure youth solutions are incorporated in Africa's response to the pandemic.

The Bureau of the STC on Communication and ICT held a meeting by video conference last week on Tuesday (May 05) at the invitation of Dr. AmaniAbou-Zeid, Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy at the African Union Commission. The main objective of this meeting was to discuss urgent actions to support the continental strategy on the COVID-19 pandemic as a way to implement the recommendations of the AU Heads of State and Government held on 3rd April 2020. In this regard, the meeting considered recommendations and adopted an action plan, as the ICT and Communication sector's response to the pandemic. **(See article)**

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges, significant gains have been made against Desert Locust encroachment in East Africa and Yemen, with an estimated 720,000 tonnes of cereal saved from the swarms of migratory pests across 10 countries: enough to feed five million people a year, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said on Monday. However, agency chief QuDongyu stressed that more action is still needed to avert a food security crisis as the ongoing rainy season, which benefits farmers and pastoralists, also provides favorable conditions for locusts to breed. **(See article)**

The African Union has inaugurated the African Union COVID-19 Diagnostic Laboratory at its Pan African Veterinary Vaccine Centre, AU-PANVAC, office in Debre-Zeit, Ethiopia. The laboratory was inaugurated by the AU Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture JosefaSacko and the Commissioner for Social Affairs AmiraElfadil. Dr. Nick Nwankpa the Director PANVAC took the group on a tour of PANVAC laboratories which though designed to test the quality of vaccines and produce diagnostic reagents, was recently mandated to test COVID19 as well as to research into

developing a new vaccine to fight the deadly pandemic. This is the first African Union specialized laboratory to be given such a mandate. (**See article**)

Ethiopia

The COVID-19 Ministerial Committee formed to prevent the spread of the virus on Thursday (May 14) held a discussion with the State of Emergency Inquiry Board. During the meeting that focused on the implementation of the emergency decree, the board briefed the committee on the findings of its field visit and tip-off it received from members of the public. The meeting evaluated the activities carried out so far as effective. The two sides also agreed to cooperate and scale up efforts towards issues that need consideration in the future. The discussion also underscored the need for awareness-raising to fill the gaps observed in exercising the scientific guidelines recommended to curb the spread of the virus.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) on Thursday (May 14) has donated medical supplies worth 800,000 birr to the Ethiopian Ministry of Health to support its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Girum Hailu, Senior Advisor to the Health and Social Development Division of IGAD, handed over the medical equipment to Dr. Lia Tadesse, Minister of Health. Dr. Lia on the occasion said the equipment will be used to support COVID-19 containment efforts at border areas as well as displaced-person and refugee camps. The medical supplies donated by the east African bloc include gloves, facemasks; hand sanitizers and other materials need to prevent the virus. Last month, IGAD also donated \$100,000 to help Ethiopia in its fight against the pandemic.

Ethiopia and the United States, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), signed a new development partnership agreement this week worth more than \$230 million. The agreement underscores the American people's continued commitment to investing in improving health, education, agriculture, economic growth, good governance, and strengthened resilience of Ethiopians, said a statement the US embassy in Addis Ababa issued on Thursday (May 14). Ethiopia's State Minister of Finance, Admasu Nebebe, and USAID Mission Director Sean Jones signed the agreement to formalize the most recent American investment in Ethiopia's long-term development.

Amhara Regional State Revenue Bureau on Wednesday (May 13) has announced a cancellation of income tax debt amounting 1 Billion Birr. The tax debt cancellation is aimed to back the business community hit by the

coronavirus pandemic fallout thereby ensure quick economic recovery in the region.

Ethiopian Airlines on Tuesday (May 12) announced that it has transported 10,000 Kg of medical supplies to Mogadishu, Somalia and Khartoum, Sudan in response to COVID 19. The airlines stated that out of the total medical supplies, 7,000 Kg is delivered to Khartoum while the remaining 3,000 Kg is conveyed to Mogadishu, the airlines indicated. It is to be recalled that the airlines has so far delivered medical supplies and COVID 19 protective equipment donated by Chinese billionaire Jack Ma to 46 African countries so far.

Ministry of Agriculture on Monday (May 11) stated that Ethiopia has managed to secure close to 400 Million US Dollars from the export of horticultural products over the last nine months. A Horticulture Investment Director at Ministry of Agriculture, Mekonnen Solomon said the horticulture export income has shown an increment compared to the same fiscal period of the previous year, which was 318 US Dollars. The flower bouquet export has also started again as some countries are easing coronavirus restrictions, Mekonnen Solomon stated. The Director noted that almost 50 to 60 percent of flower companies have re-started exporting their products.

Minister of the Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Gedu Andargachew handed over a message from Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed to the President of South Sudan Salva Kiir on Saturday (May 09) in Juba. The two sides exchanged views to further bolster relations between Ethiopia and South Sudan. State Minister Ambassador Redwan Hussien and Ethiopia's Ambassador to South Sudan, Terferi Tadesse were part of the Ethiopian delegation. South Sudan's Minister of Presidential Affairs, Mayiik Ayii Deng and Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Minister Beatrice Kamisa Wani attended the meeting.

The trust fund committee of the Clean Technology Fund (CTF), has extended a \$10 million concessional senior loan for the development of the 50mw Tulu Moyo geothermal power plant project in Ethiopia. CTF is one of two trust funds within the Climate Investment Funds (CIFs) that promotes scaled-up financing for demonstration, deployment, and transfer of low-carbon technologies with significant potential for long-term greenhouse gas emissions savings. In a press release issued last week on Friday (May 08), the African Development Bank (AfDB) welcomed a decision by CTF to diversify Ethiopia's energy mix.

South Korea has donated medical supplies to Ethiopia to help the country in its battle against the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The medical equipment includes over 28,000 testing kits, 150,400 face masks, and a disinfectant solution. It also provided 1.8 million birr aid in cash. Ambassador of South Korea to Ethiopia, Lim Hoon Min, handed over the medical supplies to Ethiopia's Minister of Health, Dr Lia Tadesse. The Ambassador on the occasion said his country will cooperate with Ethiopia in the fight against the pandemic. South Korea will also share its experience in COVID-19 battle with Ethiopia. Dr Lia said the donation will further strengthen Ethiopia's on-going COVID-19 containment efforts.

Ethiopia's Immigration Nationality and Vital Events Agency on Wednesday (May 13) said five more border checkpoints will be opened within a month. The new checkpoints will be established in Afar, Somali and Amhara regional states as well as in Dire Dawa city administration, said Desalegn Terresa, public relations and communication director at the agency. The opening of the new checkpoints will bring Ethiopia's total number of checkpoints at border areas to 17, according to the director. The establishment of the checkpoints would have a significant role in reducing the virus from spreading by preventing illegal border crossers, Desalegn stated.

Ethiopia on Thursday (May 14) has reported nine new cases of COVID-19, out of the 3,580 samples tested over 24 hours. This brings the total number of confirmed cases in the country to 272. Of the new confirmed cases, five are from Addis Ababa and four from Jigjiga quarantine facility in the Somali regional state. All the confirmed cases are Ethiopian nationals aged between 17-66 years, according to the Ministry of Health.

The International Organization for Migration last week on Friday (May 08) said that the number of internally displaced people in the Horn of Africa has dropped in the past six months. This is largely due to 1.3 million Ethiopians who were uprooted by communal violence in 2019 having returned home.

Minister of the Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Gedu Andargachew, has held a series of bilateral phone conversations with Foreign Affairs Ministers of Estonia (May 08), China (May 11) and Ireland (May 13). The discussions focused on further strengthening Ethiopia's bilateral relations with the stated countries and underlined the need to join in hands in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. **(See article)**

Eritrea

The Eritrean Ministry of Health on Monday (May 11) announced that one patient has recovered fully after standard tests at the National Laboratory and was released from the hospital on the same day. This brings the number of recovered patients to-date to thirty-eight (38). The number of confirmed cases in the country to-date is 39. “As underlined last week,” the Ministry said, “the positive and preliminary achievements obtained so far reflect the effectiveness of the medical and other crucial measures and guidelines that have been pursued within the overall GOE strategy of prevention.” The announcement further said that this important milestone should not induce complacency and the grave threat of the pandemic has not been eradicated.

Kenya

237 people have lost their lives due to floods as rains cause havoc across the country, according to official statistics. The worst affected areas are around Lake Victoria, Lake Naivasha, Tana River, Nzoia River, and parts of Central Kenya along tributaries that flow into Tana River from The Aberdares. “As of Wednesday (May 13) morning, Kenyans who have lost their lives due to floods are 237,” said Eugene Wamalwa, the Devolution Cabinet Secretary, “That is a very high number compared to those Kenyans who have lost their lives to COVID-19 who are about 33.” He said 161,000 households are also affected or displaced.

Thirty Kenyans have succumbed to coronavirus out of 193 infected among the diaspora population, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Wednesday (May 13). Speaking during a virtual meeting with the Senate Ad hoc Committee on COVID-19, Foreign Affairs Cabinet Secretary Raychelle Omamo further said four of those infected are in critical condition and admitted to Intensive Care Units. “I would like to caution that the information we are giving is based on what we are getting from our missions abroad, and not a reflection of what could be happening on the ground because registration is voluntary. The people who have lost their lives are from various countries and the list will continue to evolve as we get more information from our missions,” Omamo said. Countries, where deaths have been reported, include the United States of America, the United Kingdom, South Africa, Sweden Switzerland, South Africa, and France.

Somalia

In Somalia, the UN said that more than half a million people have been affected by flooding following the rise in the level of the Shabelle River due to heavy

rains in both Somalia and the Ethiopian highlands. In addition to COVID and water-borne diseases risks, the country is also facing the worst desert locust infestation in 25 years, with new swarms reported in Somaliland, Puntland and Galmudug States. Despite these threats, funding for humanitarian operations in Somalia remains very low. As of today, the revised 2020 Somalia Humanitarian Response Plan calling for more than \$1 billion is only 16 percent funded. Aid organizations and authorities are scaling up their efforts and have reached nearly 160,000 people with life-saving assistance across the country.

The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) last week on Friday (May 08) warned that the safety and welfare of Somalia's 2.6 million internally displaced people are being threatened by heavy flooding, conflict, a crippled economy, impending desert locust swarms and the spread of the COVID-19 virus. (**See article**)

King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSrelief) provided on Tuesday (May 12) urgent response and relief assistance for the people affected by the floods that hit an area in Galmudug, Somalia. The assistance includes the distribution of 700 food baskets weighing 63 tons, benefiting 4,200 individuals. Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief in Galmudug extended thanks and appreciation to KSrelief for supporting the Somali people in all circumstances.

South Sudan

United Nations on Wednesday (May 13) said that two coronavirus cases have been confirmed in the Protection of Civilians (PoC) sites in Juba. "In South Sudan, our peacekeeping colleagues tell us that the Ministry of Health has confirmed two COVID-19 cases in Protection of Civilians sites in Juba," said Stéphane Dujarric UN spokesman on Wednesday. Dujarric further said that UNMISS personnel were expecting this development, "given the rising number of cases confirmed within communities across the city". The number of confirmed cases in South Sudan hit 203, according to the health ministry.

South Sudan announced the resumption of domestic and international flights from Juba airport seven weeks after its closure, despite the continued spread of coronavirus in the country. David Subek Dada, the head of the South Sudan civil aviation ordered to the airport starting from Tuesday (May 12) in line with a presidential directive to ease coronavirus lockdown rules. In a letter to all airline companies operating in the country, Dada said his country will abide by all the rules for the safe reopening of air travel, including social distancing in airports.

Sudan

In a statement released on Wednesday (May 13), the collegial presidency said Yassin Ibrahim Yassin was nominated to replace late minister Jamal Omer who died in Juba last March. Under the transitional constitution, the defense and interior ministers are nominated by the military component and appointed by the prime minister. Ibrahim who is from North Kordofan worked in eastern and southern Sudan before independence. He also worked as a teacher at the Joint Command and Staff College in Khartoum.

The Sudanese Prime Minister, Abdallah Hamdok, has launched fresh consultations with political and civil forces to discuss the challenges of the transition process in the country. The delay in the implementation of the transitional agenda, particularly the formation of the parliament, the appointment of state governors, and the peace process among others remain the main concerns of the political forces that brought him to power last year. “Hamdok started a series of meetings with the political and civil forces of the revolution, as part of his efforts to broaden consultations on the transitional period and the challenges facing the transition process in the country,” said a statement, issued by the Council of Ministers on Monday (May 11).

The Sudanese finance minister Ibrahim al-Badawi on Sunday (May 10) praised the European Union (EU) for its “continuous support” to Khartoum following this weekend’s Friends of Sudan meeting hosted virtually by France. “We thank you—the Friends of Sudan in the European Union—for your continuous support to the Sudanese people, this time in the form of a €460 million package, and for your encouragement of our government’s ambitious reform program to rescue the Sudanese economy,” al-Badawi said in his Twitter post. The Sudanese official was responding to a tweet by the managing director for Africa at the European External Action Service Koen Vervaeke in which he noted the €460 million package.

About 10 people were killed and dozens were wounded in intercommunal clashes in Kassala state between the Nuba and the Beni Amer on Sunday. “The number of victims of the armed clashes between the two parties rose to 10, and dozens were wounded,” medical sources in Kassala told the media. The conflict started on Tuesday, after a fight between two people in a bakery, before it developed into a tribal conflict on Thursday evening and Saturday morning. Kassala Governor, Major General Mahmoud Mohamed Hamed, said that The security forces contained the first frictions that took place Thursday

between the Nuba and BeniAmer,” but they hostilities resumed on Friday morning where some houses were burnt.

Peace talks between Sudan’s government and the Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF) have been extended with no time limit said South Sudanese Chief Mediator in a statement released on Saturday (May 09). Tut Gatluak said the government and the SRF, during the previous rounds, have demonstrated their seriousness to achieving true peace in Sudan. “Given the urgent need for a comprehensive and lasting peace agreement in Sudan, the mediation decided that the negotiations between the two parties should continue until the resolution of outstanding issues and comprehensive and durable peace is reached.

FM Gedu holds bilateral phone conversations with Estonian, Chinese and Irish Counterparts

Minister of the Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Gedu Andargachew, has held a series of bilateral phone conversations with Foreign Affairs Ministers of Estonia (May 08), China (May 11) and Ireland (May 13). The discussions focused on further strengthening Ethiopia’s bilateral relations with the stated countries and underlined the need to join in hands in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

In his conversation with UrmasReinsalu, Foreign Affairs Minister of Estonia and President of the Month of the United Nations Security Council, Geducongratulated Estonia and the Minister for assuming the Presidency of the UN Security Council for the month of May 2020 and assure him the full support and cooperation of Ethiopia. The Ministers noted the grave danger COVID-19 poses on the well being of humanity and emphasized cooperation among nations is crucial to neutralize the effects of the common threat. The two sides underscored that the contentious issues among Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt regarding the filling and operation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam should be resolved judiciously. Last month on April 17, President SahleworkZewdie had held a telephone conversation with her Estonian counterpart, President KerstiKaljulaid on ways of containing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Talking with Wang Yi, State Counselor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China on Monday (May 11), Gedu appreciated the

Chinese people and Government on their successful battle against COVID-19. He also expressed his profound appreciation for the efforts being made by the Chinese Government and private companies to provide medical supplies and protective gear to African countries including Ethiopia. Recalling the long-standing relations between the two countries, Gedu also expressed that he has an unshakable belief that China would consider Ethiopia's request for debt relief.

The Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs reiterated his Government's appreciation and gratitude to Ethiopia for standing shoulder to shoulder with China in this difficult moment. According to a statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, "Wang noted Ethiopia's strong support for China's fight against COVID-19 and the fact that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali was the first among African leaders to call President Xi Jinping to express support and sympathies. As the virus continues to spread in Africa, China has readily stepped forward to send multiple batches of supplies in support of African countries' fight against the disease. Ethiopia's substantial assistance for the transfer and distribution of Chinese supplies has demonstrated the country's great sense of responsibility as a leading African country. It is also a vivid testament to the solidarity, coordination, and cooperation between China and Africa in our joint fight against COVID-19."

Wang underlined that as Ethiopia's longtime friend and trustworthy partner, China has provided a large amount of urgently needed supplies through various channels to fully support Ethiopia's response efforts. The medical team sent by the Chinese government has successfully completed its mission in Ethiopia and their work has been applauded by people from all walks of life. The Chinese Minister also said that China would take the 50th anniversary of its diplomatic relations with Ethiopia as an opportunity to elevate the all-round bilateral cooperation to new levels.

In the conversation between Gedu Andargachew, and Ireland's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Simon Coveney on Wednesday (May 13) Gedu expressed his gratitude for the development assistance received from Ireland which is in line with Ethiopia's development strategy. He also expressed gratitude for the solidarity and high-level commitment shown by Ireland to working together during this pandemic. The Irish Foreign Minister thanked Gedu for expressing condolences for the COVID-19 victims in Ireland. Raising concerns on the spread of the pandemic and loss of life in Ethiopia and Africa, Simon Coveney stressed the need to work in unison to face the challenges posed by the virus.

Bureau of STC Meets to Support Continental Strategy on the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Bureau of the Specialized Technical Committees (the STC) on Communication and ICT held a meeting by video conference last week on Tuesday (May 05) at the invitation of Dr. AmaniAbou-Zeid, Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy at the African Union Commission. The main objective of this meeting, according to the African Union Statement, “was to discuss urgent actions to support the continental strategy on the COVID-19 pandemic as a way to implement the recommendations of the AU Heads of State and Government held on 3rd April 2020.” “In this regard, the meeting considered recommendations and adopted an action plan, as the ICT and Communication sector’s response to the pandemic.”

According to Dr. Abou-Zeid, “the crisis of COVID-19 has become the biggest catalyst for large scale digital transformation in Africa, as electronic services have now become more essential for relations between the government and citizens.” She thanked African Information Ministers and all workers in the sector as well as telecommunications companies and digital applications for the great effort, procedures, and exceptional services that were made available in light of this great challenge. She further called on all African states to take advantage of the current valuable opportunity to accelerate the process of digital transformation on the continent and allow rapid economic recovery and resilience by building a new reality based on technology and digitization.

The STC Bureau Chair, Dr. Amr S. Talaat, Minister of Communications and Information Technology of the Arab Republic of Egypt applauded the efforts by African countries and the African Union Commission to promote digital solutions and services and for the work done by the African Union Commission towards the adoption of the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa 2020-2030 by the Heads of State and Government in February of this year. The Minister stressed the importance of utilizing the technologies of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), particularly artificial intelligence (AI) in providing applications to address the crisis, through coordination with the African Union’s AI Working Group, which was formed by a decision of the Ministerial Meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee for Communications and Information Technology, with the aim of formulating a unified African position on artificial intelligence through the guidance of Egypt’s proposal in this regard.

Minister Talaat further underscored that the current crisis reflects the importance of formulating national strategies to build a digital society that will serve as the backbone of development, noting the importance of having a strong information and communication technology infrastructure to enable citizens to access all basic services while taking into account social divergence. On their final declaration, the Ministers called upon “All multilateral financial institutions and partners, including the African Development Bank (AfDB), the World Bank, and others to support the rapid implementation of the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (DTS) and contribute to the AU Digital Fund”.

FAO calls for Investments in Preparedness and Anticipatory Actions against Locust Swarm

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) on Wednesday (May 13) announced that the current situation created by the new wave of swarm invasion due to newly bred locusts remains extremely alarming in East Africa where it is an unprecedented threat to food security and livelihoods since. FAO, in a statement issued on Wednesday, said that the swarm breeding coincides with the current growing season. “New swarms from current breeding will form from mid-June onwards, coinciding with the start of the harvest. At this time, there is a risk that swarms will migrate to the summer breeding areas along both sides of the Indo-Pakistan border as well as to Sudan and perhaps with West Africa,” the statement related.

The statement further said: “During the past week, mature swarms in Kenya moved further north in the northwestern counties of Marsabit and Turkana to lay eggs. So far, only some of the hatching and a few hopper bands have been detected. In Ethiopia, swarms declined in the south due to control and breeding while mature swarms moved into the northeast (Afar) and eastern (Somali) regions. Hopper bands continued to mature near Dire Dawa as well as in adjacent areas of northwest Somalia. In central Somalia, mature adults are present near the Ethiopia border in Galguduud region. Control operations continue in all three countries. In South Sudan, limited breeding is underway in the southeast near Torit where a few hopper bands have formed.”

The statement described “worrisome” and “threatening” situations created by the swarm in the Arabian Peninsula, in Iran, Pakistan, and India while assuring that the situation remains calm in West Africa. It said: “There is a risk that a few swarms from spring breeding areas in Arabia and East Africa (Kenya and Ethiopia) could reach the eastern part of the Sahel in eastern Chad starting in about a month if they migrate before the summer rains commence.” “While the current threat is assessed as low,” the statement continues, “it can change significantly in the coming weeks based on rainfall, winds, and the locust situation in Arabia and East Africa. Therefore, investments in preparedness and anticipatory actions should be immediately and quickly scaled up to face this potential threat.”

African Union Opens COVID-19 Diagnostic Laboratory in Ethiopia

The African Union last week on Friday (May 08) announced that it has inaugurated the African Union COVID-19 Diagnostic Laboratory at its Pan African Veterinary Vaccine Centre, AU-PANVAC, office in Debre-Zeit/Bishoftu, Ethiopia.

The laboratory was inaugurated by the AU Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, JosefaSacko, and the Commissioner for Social Affairs AmiraElfadil.

Dr. Nick Nwankpa the Director PANVAC took the group on a tour of PANVAC laboratories which though designed to test the quality of vaccines and produce diagnostic reagents, was recently mandated to test COVID19 as well as to research into developing a new vaccine to fight the deadly pandemic. According to a news release by the AU, this is the first African Union specialized laboratory to be given such a mandate.

AmiraElfadil cut the ribbons for the inauguration in the presence of Commissioner JosefaSacko; Dr. KelingaNafatal, Acting Director of the AU Medical Center; Dr. Benjamin Djoudalbaye representing the Director of the Africa CDC, Dr. John Nkengasong; Dr. DiopYahya, Head of AU Clinic laboratories and other senior members of the AU Commission.

During the visit, the Commissioners were also given a presentation on the establishment of PANVAC and the role it played in the eradication of the deadly pandemic Rinderpest in the 1970s.

The African Union Pan African Veterinary Center of the (AU-PANVAC) is a specialized technical office of the African Union Commission under the Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture. The Union's news release said: "AU-PANVAC is the only AU Organization mandated to provide International Independent Quality Control of all Veterinary Vaccines either produced or imported into Africa and the production of Essential biological reagents for animal disease diagnosis and surveillance."

UNHCR calls for Massive Humanitarian Action in Somalia

The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) last week on Friday (May 08) warned that the safety and welfare of Somalia's 2.6 million internally displaced people are being threatened by heavy flooding, conflict, a crippled economy, impending desert locust swarms and the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

UNHCR calls for a strong and coordinated response from the international community, national and local Somali authorities as well as humanitarian actors to meet the massive humanitarian needs.

The United Nations said: "Earlier this week, UNHCR and the Government airlifted emergency supplies — including soap, blankets, sleeping mats, kitchen sets, and plastic sheets — to help more than 8,000 people in Baidoa, Bardheere and Qardho. A second airlift is set to take place as early as today, with UNHCR's assistance expected to reach a total of 37,000 people."

Continuing with Somalia, the International Organization on Migration (IOM) warned on Friday that hundreds of migrants are stranded in Bossaso in Puntland due to border and sea-crossing closures as a result of the pandemic. Every year, scores of migrants, mainly from landlocked Ethiopia, pass through Bossaso to cross the Gulf of Aden to Yemen, hoping to proceed onwards to Gulf countries.