

A Week in the Horn 04.09.2020

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Africa and the African Union

The Ministers for Internal Security and Ministers in charge of Migration Issues of the Member States of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) held a virtual ministerial meeting on the Impact of COVID-19 on People on the Move in the IGAD Region on Wednesday (September 2) with representatives from international organizations working on migration and displacement. The meeting pledged, among others, to promote equal and non-discriminatory treatment of all persons in line with international human rights principles and international law, irrespective of their immigration and citizenship status or the fact of their displacement.

Africa Amnesty Month has started on Tuesday (September 1). It is an initiative that has taken place every September since 2017. It is designed to reduce the flows of illicit small arms and light weapons on the continent. Throughout the month, anyone can hand in illicitly owned weapons, as part of this initiative that is also linked to Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020. This year, the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA) and the African Union Commission (AUC) are supporting a wide range of activities, including capacity building of law enforcement, weapons collection, safe storage and destruction.

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), in partnership with the International Health Regulations (IHR) Strengthening

Project of Public Health England (PHE), on Tuesday (September 1) launched a new web-based tool, AVoHC Net, to facilitate rapid deployment and better administration of a standby workforce for public health emergencies across Africa.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), in partnership with the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), on Monday (August 31) held a handover ceremony of supplies and equipment worth 14 million Euros within the framework of the broader 60 million Euros package of the EU Response to Health and Socio-economic Impact of COVID-19 in the IGAD Region at Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

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The special session of the IGAD business forum was held virtually last week on Thursday (August 27). Six (6) representatives of the respective National chambers of Commerce and Industry that form the apex of the IGAD Business Forum (IBF) were in attendance at the Special Session. The delegates of the IGAD Member States represented at the IBF unanimously pledged support and expressed their solidarity for the candidature of Amb (Dr.) Amina Mohamed for the position of Director-General, World Trade Organization.

Ethiopia

Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Ambassador Dina Mufti today (September 4) has presented the Ministry's bimonthly press briefing focusing on the annual meeting of ambassadors and mission leaders, the migrants in Beirut and Saudi Arabia, and various diplomatic activities carried out by the Ministry within the past two weeks.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has issued a statement on Thursday (September 3) regarding the situation of Ethiopian migrants in Saudi Arabia. The statement refuted media reports that claim the Ethiopian Government's refusal to receive immigrants from Saudi Arabia. It relates the latest measures that the government has been taking to handle the cases of irregular migrants in Saudi Arabia. (**See article**)

Ethiopia has seen a slight decline in new coronavirus cases for from three digit daily infections during the last weeks. Ministry of Health reported 804 new infections on Thursday (September 3). From 20, 778 laboratory tests

conducted over the last twenty four hours, 804 people in the country have diagnosed positive from coronavirus, the Ministry indicated. The new infections have increased the total number of confirmed cases in the country to 55,213. Moreover, 10 people have died from the virus taking the death toll in the country to 856, according to the Ministry. There are currently 34,072 active cases in Ethiopia of which 306 are in severe condition.

Center for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI) on Thursday (September 3) welcomed Ethiopia as its 50th member country where it will enjoy a range of benefits including input into CABI's global development agenda, links to its international network of partners as well as regular consultations to address members' needs. Dr Trevor Nicholls, CEO of CABI, confirmed signature of the UN-level Treaty on CABI International by the Government of Ethiopia to bring the country into membership of CABI. The application process of CABI Membership was led by Ethiopia's Ministry of Agriculture, with whom CABI has a long and beneficial partnership.

The World Bank (WB) has reaffirmed its commitment to continue to work closely with the Government of Ethiopia. In a twitter post, on Wednesday (September 2) the World Bank Ethiopia Country office said "The World Bank continues to work closely with the Government of Ethiopia and is in full support of the country's economic reform program and its financing." "Our overall financing program in support to Ethiopia development efforts is about US\$ 2.9 billion for the first year of IDA-19 cycle. The submission of different projects including the budget support to the World Bank Group's Board of Executive Directors for discussion and decision in following its normal course."

Ethiopia has received a \$14.85 million grant from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to boost its response to disruptions in education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, a statement issued by the World Bank on Wednesday (September 02) indicates. The World Bank will be the grant agent for Ethiopia: COVID-19 Education Response Project, which aims to maintain student learning while schools are closed, support safe reopening of schools, and strengthen the resilience of the education system.

Ethiopia and Denmark on Thursday (September 3) launched a webinar series entitled "How to achieve the energy transition from the Climate Action Submit to green recovery" in the presence of UN Deputy General Secretary. Ethiopian Minister of Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy, Dr. Sileshi Bekele Danish Development Cooperation Minister, Rasmus Prehn, Deputy

Secretary General of the United Nations Amina J. Mohammed, Danish Climate, Energy and Services Minister, Dan Jorgensen, among others have taken part in the Webinar Series. The discussion stressed a need to financing and partnership to address the gap for the electricity by reaching 840 Million people in world of which 60M people are in Ethiopia.

The Minister of Aviation of Nigeria, Senator Hadi Sirika, says there is no going back on the September 5, 2020 date for resumption of international flights as all preparations have been completed. Speaking at the daily briefing of the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19 in Abuja on Thursday (September 3), Sirika said all aviation preparations and COVID-19 protocols had been perfected and the airport was set for reopening. The minister also revealed that Air France, Lufthansa, Air Rwanda, Air Namibia, among others, were banned from coming into the country. He, however, said British Airways, Delta, Emirates, Qatar, Middle East, Turkish, Egypt Air, Ethiopian Airlines, Virgin Atlantic were among the airlines approved for operations with appropriate COVID-19 protocols.

IGAD Center for Pastoral Areas and Livestock Development (ICPALD) in collaboration with AU-IBAR with financial support from EU organized a bilateral two days (1-2 September) virtual meeting between Ethiopia and Sudan to finalize and endorse the implementation framework (IF) to operationalize the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and sign the MOU. The MOU was signed on Wednesday (September 2) virtually by the two ministers. Signing the MoU on crossborder coordination and cooperation on animal health and sanitary measures will benefit the efforts towards harmonized management of transboundary animal diseases between the two countries which will in turn enhance livestock trade.

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More than 92,000 people in Ethiopia's Afar and Oromia regional states have been displaced by floods as the Awash River flows out of its riverbank due to heavy rains. Head of the Afar Region's Disaster and Risk Management Commission Mahi Ali on Wednesday (September 02) told local media that 14 districts in the region are hit by the flood as the river runs out of its scheme. According to the head, the flood has affected at least 120,000 people and displaced more than 72,000 of them. The head, however, affirmed that human fatalities did not occur as a result of the ongoing flood, which was exacerbated by the torrential rains in the rivers' tributary areas.

Ethiopian Airlines on Wednesday (September 2) has announced that as Namibia reopens its borders, the airline plans to resume flights to Namibia, as part of the Tourism Revival Initiative. Namibia announced last week it would open its borders to visitors amid the country's Covid-19 stage of emergency lockdown. Travellers will only be allowed to enter the country via Hosea Kutako International Airport.

State Minister Ambassador Redwan Hussein on Tuesday (September 1) has exchanged a phone call with Mr. Heiko Nitzschke, Chargé d'affaires of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, to express disappointment about the lack of security to Ethiopian Embassies in Berlin and London where protestors took down the Ethiopian flag. Mr. Nitzschke said the actions of the protestors are unacceptable and reiterated that measures will be taken to rectify the impediments.

A ban on the import of beans from Ethiopia has been lifted while flights between Karachi and Addis Ababa will start soon, said Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to Ethiopia Shozab Abbas. Speaking at a meeting at the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FCCI) on Tuesday (September 1), he said bilateral trade between Pakistan and Ethiopia was only around \$50 million, out of which the share of exports from Ethiopia was \$49 million.

Gedu Andargachew, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, on Monday (August 31) has received at his office a South Sudanese delegation led by Nhial Deng Nhial, Minister of Presidential Affairs of the Republic of South Sudan. The two sides thoroughly discussed ways of jointly developing infrastructures, roads and electricity in particular, to link the two countries and further uplift relations.

The UN on Friday (August 28) announced that heavy rains continue to cause flooding in several parts of the country. Nearly 455,000 people have been impacted by the rains, forcing the displacement of 120,000 people. The UN stated that it is working in support of the Government-led response efforts, providing food, shelter and non-food items, water, sanitation and hygiene to the impacted population, working alongside partners. At least 67,000 people have received emergency assistance.

The Ministers of Water Affairs of Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan met on Friday (28 August 2020). The meeting was attended by the observers from the Republic of South Africa, EU, USA, and experts assigned by the AU Bureau

of the Assembly. The Ministers agreed to send their respective update letter to the Chairperson of the AU Executive Council Honorable Dr. Naledi Pandor, the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa. A statement issued by the Ministry of Water, Irrigation, and Energy of Ethiopia said the meeting is expected to reconvene on 14 September 2020 subject to confirmation of the date by Sudan. (**See article**)

State Minister Redwan Hussein last week on Tuesday (August 25) briefed African Ambassadors resident in Addis Ababa, on current affairs, particularly on events surrounding the recent disturbances in Oromia region and the measures taken by government as well as the status of the ongoing negotiations on the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, the GERD. (**See article**)

On Monday (August 24), Ethiopia deposited its instrument of accession to the 1958 Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards (known as the New York Convention). Under Article XII (2), the Convention will come into force for Ethiopia on 22 November 2020. The Convention, which is broadly recognized as a foundational instrument of international arbitration, safeguards international arbitration agreements and provides for the recognition and enforcement of foreign arbitral awards, subject to specific limited exceptions. Ethiopia's accession to the New York Convention is expected to reinforce, among others, the country's strategy to attract foreign investment and promote economic growth.

Eritrea

Eleven patients have been diagnosed positive for COVID-19 in tests carried out on Thursday (September 3) at the Quarantine Centers in Adibara (10) and Shilalo (1) in Gash Barka Region. All the patients are nationals who returned from Sudan recently. On the other hand, eleven patients who were receiving treatment in hospitals in Gash Barka Region have recovered fully and were released from these facilities today. The total number of recovered patients to-date accordingly stands at 295. The total number of confirmed cases in the country to-date has risen to 330.

Djibouti

Service members from the 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion (CA BN), in support of Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA), participated in

a veterinary exchange in the rural village of Ali Oune, Djibouti, August 30, 2020. In partnership with the Djiboutian Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Fisheries, the 443rd CA BA was able to assist the veterinarian for Damerjog, Djibouti, in providing livestock care for the people of the remote Djiboutian desert village, which is roughly 15 miles from Camp Lemonnier.

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Kenya

Kenya has frozen the assets of nine people it accuses of funding Somalia's militant group al-Shabab. The interior ministry said the move was part of its renewed counter-terrorism efforts aimed at tackling "domestic terrorists". Internal Security Minister Fred Matiang'i said the freezing of assets of the nine Kenyans would ensure they no longer financed al-Shabab group "within our borders". He also warned that the group was recruiting, radicalising and planting operatives among civilians "to advance their agenda of extremism and terrorism".

A member of the Al-Shabaab terrorist group who claimed he participated in the deadly El-Adde attack where more than 150 Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) troops died has surrendered to Kenyan authorities. Officials said they are holding Khalif Abdinoor Mohamed who joined the militia group which has links with the Al-Qaeda terror group and has been working with Somalia based Al-Shabaab group since 2013. The El-Adde attack took place in January 2016 when Al-Shabaab terrorists attacked a KDF camp at night killing dozens of troops.

Police in Mandera, were on Tuesday (September 1) interrogating the suspect because they are yet to establish his motive amid plans to transport him to Nairobi, where he will be further grilled on his role in the militant group's activities.

Somalia

The World Health Organization (WHO) has started a vaccination campaign in southeastern Somalia's Banadir administrative region to vaccinate some 400,000 children against polio and measles. "Vaccines help save lives! As we celebrate the eradication of wild polio, UNICEF Somalia continues to take action," James Elder, UNICEF Chief of Communications for Eastern

and Southern Africa, tweeted on Tuesday (September 1). Elder said the new polio and vaccination campaign aims to reach 400,000 children.

Qatar Airways on Tuesday (September 1) announced that it will resume three-weekly flights to Mogadishu, Somalia from September 6, 2020. Service to the capital city of Somalia will be operated by an Airbus A320 featuring 12 seats in business class and 120 seats in economy. The airline will operate this service as a tagged flight to its existing operations to Djibouti which resumed last month. Qatar Airways Group chief executive, Akbar Al Baker, said: “We are delighted to resume flights to the capital of Somalia.

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has completed an online human rights, gender and protection training for Somali women and girls from Southwest State to equip them with knowledge to promote human rights and address violations against women and children. The one-day online training took place on Tuesday (September 1) and attracted 18 participants mainly from Baidoa and was organized by the AMISOM Protection, Human Rights and Gender (PHRG) unit in collaboration with the Somali Youth Volunteers Association (SYVA).

The Security Council, in a videoconference meeting on Friday (August 28), announced its decision to renew the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) for one year, or until 31 August 2021. Unanimously adopting resolution 2540 (2020), the Council decided that UNSOM should continue to coordinate United Nations efforts, in full cooperation with the Federal Government of Somalia and its federal member states, with a particular focus on several tasks, including provision of support for the delivery of free, fair, timely, peaceful, transparent, credible and inclusive elections, incorporating a direct voting component enabling as many citizens as possible to vote in 2020/2021.

Mogadishu mayor Omar Mohamud on Friday (August 28) warned Mogadishu residents of the second wave of COVID-19 infections. The governor said there may be coronavirus come back in the country especially in the capital Mogadishu and they are planning to resume awareness campaign. “The risk is still there so we have to remain vigilant and follow the government set measure to contain the spread of the virus,” he said. “People should avoid movement unless it is necessary and also practice social distancing,” he added.

South Sudan

Deputy Chairman of Sudan's Sovereign Council Mohamed Hamdan Daglo "Hemetti" Thursday said that the first batch of the unified troops South Sudanese troops will be graduated soon. President Salva Kiir and his first deputy Riek Machar and Hemetti met at the State House on Thursday (September 3) to discuss the ongoing implementation of the revitalized peace agreement in South Sudan.

The UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) announced that it has established a temporary peacekeeping base at Lobonok, in the Central Equatorial region of South Sudan, to help deter violence after a surge in armed attacks on civilians and humanitarian convoys. On Tuesday (September 1), two civilians were killed and four injured when a vehicle was ambushed by heavily armed men reported to belong to the National Salvation Front on the road between Yei and Lasu. The incident follows similar road-side attacks in the past few days on humanitarian convoys travelling along the Juba-Yei road where people were shot, and trucks were looted and torched.

Sudan

The UN refugee agency said on Monday (September 2) that some 125,000 refugees and internally displaced people have been impacted by heavy seasonal rains that have caused flash floods and rivers to burst their banks. Homes and community buildings are badly damaged and destroyed, and this, obviously, has an impact and a danger that hygiene and sanitary levels will plummet due to flooded latrines and contaminated water supplies. This is even more dangerous in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The joint African Union-UN mission have recently held a workshop on preventing and mitigating the spread of the COVID-19 virus at the women's wing of the Nyala Central Prison. The training also sought to enhance safety in the delivery of justice services and to increase compliance with the guidelines of the WHO (World Health Organization) and Sudan's Ministry of Health.

The Sudanese government and the armed group in Darfur and the Two Areas on Monday (August 31) initialled a comprehensive agreement for peace in Sudan, amid a wide local and regional applause and great media coverage. The initial signing ceremony took place in Juba where the parties to the talks initialled eight protocols for each of the five tracks that included the Darfur

region, the Two Areas, Central Sudan, eastern Sudan, and North Sudan. The event was attended by representatives of IGAD countries, as well as ambassadors of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, envoys from Egypt, the United States and the European Union. (See article)

Press Release on the Tripartite Negotiation on the GERD

The Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy

28 AUGUST 2020 Addis Ababa

The Ministers of Water Affairs of Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan met on 28 August 2020. The meeting was attended by the observers from Republic of South Africa, EU, USA, and experts assigned by the AU Bureau of the Assembly.

The meeting considered the report of the technical teams on the progress of the week long negotiation on the guidelines and rules on the first filling and annual operation of the GERD. The technical teams of the three countries met virtually since 18 August 2020.

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On the way forward, the Ministers agreed to send their respective update letter to the Chairperson of the AU Executive Council Honorable Dr. Naledi Pandor the Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa.

The meeting is expected to reconvene on 14 September 2020 subject to confirmation of the date by Sudan.

Press Release on Ethiopian Migrants in Saudi Arabia

The Government of Ethiopia has repatriated over 400000 citizens from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from May 2017 to March 2020. Ethiopia has never refused to receive its citizens from any country but operates according to principle and the availability of resources and capacity. Unfortunately,

Ethiopia is the source, transit, and destination of migrants. And we have migrants in problem in Africa and the Middle East countries at a higher scale.

Sector coordination is a must when doing repatriation. The sectors involved are the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, including Ethiopian Embassies with the host government, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Peace, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Transport, Job Creation Commission and the corresponding bureaus in the regions. The process goes as identification, data sharing, background check and citizenship confirmation, repatriation, reintegration (psychosocial support, subsistence, and transportation to destination).

We have been successful in Beirut working with many stakeholders and we are working with the UN in Yemen and with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. With an increasing number of migrants crossing the border into Saudi Arabia, the Ethiopian government is closely working with the Kingdom in many areas and assisting migrants being one of the priorities. Since the number of migrants is enormous, following their cases has become a full-time engagement for many of the diplomats in our Embassy in Riyadh and the consulate office in Jeddah.

From April to July 2020, 3500 citizens were repatriated. Illegal migrants crossing the border of Saudi Arabia from Yemen experience a greater frustration because of a long traumatic journey through heinous condition caused by traffickers. They are held in a detention center waiting to be returned and discovering that the promises of traffickers and brokers are absolute lies. The number is escalating and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is accepting them despite their increasing number. The Government of Ethiopia is always thankful for that.

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Our mission in Saudi has assigned dedicated employees to be stationed and consistently visit the migrants at detention centers. The Ethiopian mission staff lends a hand when different problems arise and works with the Saudi authorities to resolve them. Reports are sent on incidents and periodic reports are evaluated by the missions. We all have to understand the enormity and complexity of the process of illegal migration and repatriation. Repatriation cannot be a goal by itself. It should be done in a safe and dignified manner up to the reintegration point.

The Government of Ethiopia would like to extend its sincere appreciation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the outstanding support extended to our citizens in general and Ethiopian irregular migrants in particular. The Kingdom has always been willing to collaboratively work with us at this difficult time and assisting our increasing number of migrants crossing the border despite the international pressure. Horrific stories are the center of trafficked migrants; these are things that we need to take into account in the process of detention, repatriation, and integration. This calls for a collaborative effort between countries, among international organizations, and the media. The Ethiopian government needs to exert higher effort in fighting human traffickers and brokers, making border controls more effective, and creating awareness for the youth. We are not doing enough.

Our government and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have noticed a vicious circle of many repatriated migrants trafficked back for 10 times and more. The processes of establishing a consultative body with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is imperative to take the task of controlling and monitoring the cyclic out-migration of irregular migrants and to protect migrant rights. Tangible cooperative ventures at the bilateral level are critical for dealing with migration issues and both countries are committed to make this a reality.

When COVID-19 hit in April 2020, with the unknown nature of the pandemic the repatriation process was impacted. Despite this difficulty, 3500 were returned, quarantined, and transported to their destination area. In the meantime, the Ethiopian government was working with Saudi officials who raised concerns about the increasing number of migrants crossing the Saudi border. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has always been collaborative in establishing a safe and dignified repatriation process. Accordingly, our mission prioritized about 2000 citizens and sent us their details. The Ministry of Peace, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs have finalized the review and we will be repatriating these migrants beginning September 8 through October 6. In the meantime, our missions in the Kingdom will continue to prioritize and work on the details of the detainees.

Ethiopia has increased the border checkpoints in establishing five more and planning to reach at least 27 of them. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs would like to take this opportunity to thank the Ethiopian community in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for all their support. With a generous offer by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry

of Labor and Social Affairs have prepared a proposal helping to support projects in source regions to integrate returnees.

Given the excellent relationship we hold, we have continued discussions showing our commitment to bring a lasting impact on the reintegration of returnees and to work hand in hand with stakeholders in the fight against human trafficking.

Press Release on Ethiopian Migrants in Beirut

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia would like to announce that among the 720 Ethiopian migrants registered at the Ethiopian consulate in Lebanon, 650 of them who volunteered to return are repatriated, quarantined, and started the reintegration process in June 2020 and the Ethiopian government fully covered their costs.

On the upcoming Monday, we are expecting 408 returnees from Lebanon. Among these, 243 migrants have self-financed their cost of return and for the remaining 165 citizens generous individuals and groups have covered costs of return while Ethiopian Airlines offered a substantial discount for its tickets. The Ministry would like to take this opportunity to thank Ethiopian Airlines and the contributors for purchasing tickets including “Egna Legna” that purchased 81 tickets, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church with 40 tickets, the Catholic Church in Lebanon 13 as well as Zekarias and Cherinet Group, 40 tickets.

The Ministry has sent its new Consul General in July 2020 who has been doing tremendous work in mobilizing resources and human capital as well as coordinating a three month plan to help our citizens there. One of the successes is the work that he has done with the Lebanese government in identifying employers of migrants who are left out at the Embassy and negotiate unpaid salary and purchase of return ticket. This is a good effort that brings closure to the pending cases that sometimes end with a favourable outcome and other times call for an expedite move to the next step.

The three-month plan includes involving volunteers and temporary local employees and securing funds for contingencies. We have a pilot project for reintegration which we will upscale once it is implemented. Various donors and organizations are interested in extending hands. We have witnessed that

the psychosocial assistance given in Beirut has a tremendous effect on the repatriation and integration process.

Participating in a meeting that was initiated by the African Union to discuss the situation of African Diaspora of low skilled workers in Lebanon on August 25, we both underscored the urgent need for resource mobilization. This meeting was a big success in advocating international resource mobilization.

The Government of Ethiopia would like to affirm that it is committed to doing its level best to assist its citizens in need.

Sudan's Peace Deal: a good example of home-grown African solutions to African problems

The Sudanese government and the armed group in Darfur and the Two Areas on Monday (August 31) initialled a comprehensive agreement for peace in Sudan, amid a wide local and regional applause and great media coverage. The initial signing ceremony took place in Juba where the parties to the talks initialled eight protocols for each of the five tracks that included the Darfur region, the Two Areas, Central Sudan, eastern Sudan, and North Sudan. The event was attended by representatives of IGAD countries, as well as ambassadors of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, envoys from Egypt, the United States and the European Union.

Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, the head of the Sovereign Council welcomed the conclusion of the peace agreement saying it comes in line with the constitutional document and the national efforts to end the war and restore security in the whole Sudan.

In his speech at the end of the ceremony, President Salva Kiir thanked the Sudanese government and the armed groups for accepting his offer for mediation. He also thanked Sudan's generous friends who supported the negotiations for peace in Darfur and the Blue Nile and South Kordofan states.

Josep Borrell, the European Union High Representative praised the Juba-brokered agreement for peace in Sudan "The peace agreement initialled today between the civilian-led Transitional Government of Sudan and the

Sudan Revolutionary Front signifies an important milestone for the ongoing democratic and economic transition of Sudan,” he said.

The Joint Special Representative for the African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), Jeremiah Mamabolo, attended the initialing of the peace agreement and said: “I would like to congratulate Sudanese people on this significant step and commend in particular the signatory parties for their determination, courage and commitment to lasting peace in Sudan.”

In a statement issued on Tuesday (September 1), the UN Secretary-General welcomed the initialing in Juba, in South Sudan, of a peace agreement between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) and Sudan Liberation Army led by Minni Minawi. The Secretary-General congratulated the people of the Sudan for this historic achievement. The High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, also welcomed this development.

In commending the initialing of the peace agreement in Juba, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) said: “It is IGAD’s sincere hope that the remaining armed actors and non-signatories to the peace agreement will soon join their brothers and sisters to put an end to the suffering. It is critical that all Sudanese people participate in their country’s future and contribute to the well-being of their country”. IGAD also recognizes and praises the mediation role played by the Government of South Sudan under the leadership of President Salva Kiir as a good example of home-grown African solutions to African problems.

In a telephone call on Wednesday, Qatari Prime Minister Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdulaziz Al Thani congratulated his Sudanese counterpart Abdallah Hamdok for the conclusion of a peace agreement with the armed groups. “During the call, they reviewed the cooperation relations between the two brotherly countries and means of supporting and strengthening them in various fields and raising them to wider levels,” reads a statement published in the state-owned daily, Al-Raya newspaper, in its website. In a speech delivered at the initial signing ceremony, President Salva Kiir thanked the leaders of the United Arab Emirates and the State of Qatar for the financial support provided to the peace process.

In a statement released on Monday, the United States, United Kingdom and Norway – known as the Troika countries – also welcomed on Monday the

conclusion of an agreement to end the war in Sudan. “The peace agreement lays a foundation for sustainable peace and stability in Darfur and other conflict-affected areas that is critical for Sudan’s democratic transition,” reads the statement released on Monday. The Troika also urged rebel leaders to join the ongoing efforts for peace and stability in Sudan and the region.

State Minister Redwan Hussien Briefs African Ambassadors on current situations in Ethiopia

State Minister Redwan Hussein briefed African Ambassadors resident in Addis Ababa, on current affairs, particularly on events surrounding the recent disturbances in Oromia region and the measures taken by government as well as the status of the ongoing negotiations on the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, the GERD.

Following incidents of political and communal violence in some parts of the country, state minister Redwan informed the ambassadors that the government decided to show restraint and concentrate instead on building national consensus around key issues. The tolerance however, was interpreted by some who sought to achieve their political goals through violence, as weakness on the part of the government.

He explained the disturbances were aimed at derailing the on-going reforms and seizing control of political power through violence. He indicated to them that some of those arrested are members and leaders of the ruling party as well as police commanders who failed to take appropriate measures to protect human life and property from an organized mob.

He underlined that the government strongly believes in the need to nurture democracy, basic rights and freedoms. However, since violence and property damages cannot be allowed to happen again, he explained the government took measures to ensure rule of law, hold accountable those involved in accordance with the constitution and the laws of the land.

Referring to recent statements issued by some international human rights organizations on the disturbances, State Minister Redwan relayed to the Ambassadors that these Organizations, who failed to understand the complex and volatile political and security situation, have once again failed to reflect facts as they appear on the ground. He referred to the recent apology made by

Amnesty International following a production and release of a short video by the organization that utterly misrepresented facts, disregarded the pain and suffering of victims and instead opted for false and dangerous narratives of some who are aiding and abetting wanton violence against innocent civilians.

African Ambassadors also received a briefing on the GERD. State Minister Redwan stated that in accordance with the Declaration of Principles (DoP) of 2015, the first phase/year of the first stage filling of the GERD is now complete and the Dam has now 4.9 billion meter cube of water, which makes it ready for a trial electricity generation.

He explained the three countries namely Ethiopia , Egypt and the Sudan reached understandings on a number of critical issues, that their leaders under the AU framework , so far met twice at the Extraordinary Bureau meeting of the Assembly of the AU. He further described the technical and legal groups of the three countries are working on narrowing the gap and continue the negotiation in order to compile and synthesis a zero draft text based on the submission of the three countries. He further noted a report to the Chairperson of the AU, H.E President Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa is awaited on 28 August 2020.

On the ongoing negotiation under the AU framework, he commended the role of the Republic of South Africa, the AU and members of the AU Bureau of the Assembly for their efforts in following up the negotiations and encouraging the three countries to reach at a win-win outcome. State Minister Redwan expressed his government satisfaction that the negotiations are now currently under the AU framework. He underlined that bringing the Trilateral negotiations on GERD to its rightful place, Africa, not only gave further emphasis on “African solutions to African problem”, but practically demonstrated Africa’s ability and capacity to resolve its own problems.

He informed the ambassadors that Ethiopia remains committed to finalize the negotiation with an agreement and address the outstanding issues in a way that does not compromise the optimal operation of the GERD as well as in a way that it does not restrict Ethiopia’s right to use the Blue Nile. He expressed his hope that African brothers and sisters will understand Ethiopia’s principles and firm position regarding the GERD, the management and utilization of the Nile which is based on equitable and reasonable utilization and the obligation not to cause significant harm