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AU Peace and Security Council Discusses Impact of COVID-19 on Peace and Security in Africa

Africa and the African Union

A 71st extraordinary session of the IGAD Council of Ministers was held on Thursday (April 23) via video link to follow up on the progress of the implementation of the South Sudan peace agreement and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. (**See article**)

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on Wednesday (April 22) participated in the virtual meeting of the African Union Extended Bureau of Heads of State convened by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, the Chair of the African Union for 2020, to discuss the role of the private sector in the AU-led continental fight against the COVID-19 scourge. The meeting brought together Heads of State and Government of DRC, Kenya, Mali, Rwanda, Senegal, Zimbabwe, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, and members of the African Business Leaders Coalition. (**See article**)

Wellcome and the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) on Tuesday (April 21) have awarded a grant of EUR 2.26 million to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) to support the COVID-19 response by African Union Member States. The grant was awarded as part of the DFID/Wellcome Epidemic Preparedness for Coronavirus grant and it is to support the implementation of the Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 Outbreak.

The Peace and Security Council of the African Union called on member States to further enhance their cross-border cooperation to deny terrorists and armed groups, criminal networks, and traffickers the opportunity to exploit the current COVID-19 situation to perpetuate their activities. The council related this in a communiqué issued following its virtual meeting held to discuss the impact of the Novel Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak on peace and security in Africa on April 14. (**See article**)

Ethiopia

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Gedu Andargachew stated that the peace process in South Sudan has reached an important milestone, and partners need to keep the momentum to achieve the desired result. The Minister made this remark in delivering a speech on an IGAD-led video conference held on Thursday (April 23) to consult the progress of the peace process in South Sudan. (**See article**)

Ethiopia has reported no new cases of Coronavirus (COVID-19) on Thursday (April 23), the first time since it began issuing daily data last month. Out of the 965 samples taken over the past 24 hours, none of them have tested positive for the virus, said the Ministry of Health in a statement. The Ministry warned that “zero positive results among 965 tested individuals do not indicate the decline of COVID-19 in Ethiopia.” Ethiopia has so far reported 116 confirmed cases of Coronavirus, with three deaths and 21 recoveries.

Ambassador of China to Ethiopia, Tan Jian, on Thursday (April 23) handed over medical supplies donated by the Chinese Government to African nations. The COVID-19 preventive medical equipment was transported from Beijing to Addis Ababa by Ethiopian Airlines. The equipment distributed to 12 African countries includes infrared thermometers, gloves, masks, gowns, face shields, and coveralls, among others. Speaking at a handover ceremony held at the Ethiopian Cargo and Logistics Services, ambassador Tan said China will continue to support African countries that stood by its side during testing times.

UNICEF Ethiopia on Thursday (April 23) handed over medical supplies to the Ministry of Health to support Ethiopia’s response to the Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic. Partially funded by the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID), the medical equipment for health workers arrived in Ethiopia last week. The medical supplies include masks, surgical gowns, face shields, coveralls, and other medical equipment.

Ethiopian Airlines has completed the flight and delivery of the second round shipments of life-saving medical supplies donated by Jack Ma to all African countries to help them fight COVID-19. In a statement issued on Wednesday (April 22), Ethiopian expressed its complements and appreciation to the Jack Ma Foundation, Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed, WFP and the African CDC for giving the airlines the opportunity to serve African brothers and sisters during this unprecedented global health and economic crisis.

The Ministry of Health on Tuesday (April 21) said 12 additional COVID 19 diagnostic laboratories have begun services during the weekend. This brings the total number of Coronavirus testing facilities in Ethiopia to 20. Five more laboratories will also go operational soon, said Dr. Lia Tadesse, Minister of Health. She said 11 of the laboratories are currently providing services in different regional towns and cities, while the other nine labs are located in Addis Ababa, including a lab owned by a private hospital.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed on Tuesday (April 21) has held phone discussions with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The discussion focused on ways to tackle the Coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis. Dr. Abiy appreciated Japan's fight against the virus and paid condolences to Japanese people who lost their lives battling with the virus.

The Chinese anti-pandemic medical expert team on Wednesday (April 22) has received a briefing on the situational update of COVID-19 response in Ethiopia. The 12-member team, dispatched by the government of China, arrived in Addis Ababa last Thursday, April 16, 2020. They are among the very first batch of anti-pandemic medical teams that China ever sends to Africa since the outbreak. During their two-week stay in the country, they will share experience and give advice on the prevention and control of COVID-19 with local hospitals and experts.

The National Task Force for Coronavirus (COVID 19) said close to 400 million birr has been raised till last Friday. Adanech Abiebie, Federal Attorney General and Coordinator of the Task Force told the media that the above-stated amount was contributed by 180 institutions to combat the COVID 19 pandemic. Among the fundraisers include 100 public institutions and 80 private organizations, she said.

The Jack Ma and Alibaba Foundations said on Monday (April 20) that they will make a third donation of medical equipment to the African Union (AU) and Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention to assist African nations

in the fight against COVID-19. The medical supplies include 4.6m masks, 500,000 swabs, and test kits, 300 ventilators, 200,000 clothing sets, 200,000 face shields, 2,000 thermal guns, 100 body temperature scanners, and 500,000 pairs of gloves.

Ethiopian Airlines (Ethiopian) announced on Monday (April 20) that it will fly three times a week to the Kilimanjaro International Airport (KIA) to pick fresh produce destined for the European Markets. The arrangement is the result of a joint initiative by the Tanzania Horticulture Association (Taha) and the Kilimanjaro Airports Development Company (Kadco), which manages the airport and one of the leading carriers in Africa.

Eritrea

Eritrean Ministry of Health on Thursday (April 2) announced that five COVID-19 patients have recovered fully after standard tests at the National Laboratory and were released from the hospital on the same day. This brings the total number of recovered patients to eleven. The total number of confirmed cases in the country to-date is 39.

Djibouti

With Djibouti's health system under enormous strain from the COVID-19 pandemic, young migrants in the country are using 3D-printers to make face shields, and ease the shortfall inside medical facilities. The shields are being produced in a training space called a 'fab lab' (digital fabrication space) funded by IOM, the UN's migration agency (IOM), which normally teaches digital fabrication skills and computer literacy to vulnerable youth. 'Fab labs', which use openly shared software and data, are gaining attention as a way to provide desperately needed equipment, as well as provide marketable skills to young people who do not have access to formal education.

Kenya

Kenya's Mandera County began a 21-day lockdown on Wednesday (April 22) night at the direction of Interior Minister Fred Mating'i because more citizens are becoming infected with the Coronavirus. Kenya's latest self-isolation measure bars road travel and flights in and out of the county. Additionally, Mating'i said Kenya's National Command Center on the Coronavirus

Pandemic is reviewing the enforcement of public health measures in Mombasa, Kwale and Kilifi counties. The results are expected by Friday.

Somalia

The presidents of Turkey and Somalia discussed the global fight against the Coronavirus pandemic in a phone call on Wednesday (April 23). Turkey's Directorate of Communications said Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Somali counterpart Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo also exchanged views on bilateral relations and regional developments. Farmajo thanked Erdogan for Turkey's generosity and support of Somalia's fight against the novel Coronavirus pandemic.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) said on Monday (April 20) it has enhanced its cooperation with Somalia to curb the spread of desert locust in the country. FAO said its collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation will help up local capacities, surveillance, and control operations to combat the desert locust upsurge even as the attention has been shifted to COVID-19. "Despite the current circumstances dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is crucial that we keep reinforcing our collaboration and continue the hard work to contain the desert locust upsurge, and to protect lives and livelihoods. Otherwise, we could end up in a serious food crisis by the end of the year," Etienne Peterschmitt, FAO Representative in Somalia said in a statement.

South Sudan

South Sudan President has ordered to lower the national flag at half-staff for three days to mark the death of Mansour Khalid, a veteran Sudanese politician and a former member of the historical SPLM who died on late on Wednesday (April 22). Khalid died in Khartoum late on Wednesday night at the age of 89 years old. His death sparked an outpouring of tributes from across the political spectrum in both South Sudan and Sudan. The former foreign minister was one of the few northern Sudanese politicians that joined the SPLM under the leadership of the late John Garang.

The IGAD leading body held a videoconference meeting on Thursday (April 23) chaired by the Sudanese Foreign Minister to discuss the implementation of the revitalized peace agreement signed on 12 September 2018. In his

briefing to the meeting, the head of the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC) Augustino Njoroge pointed to the delay in the reconstitution of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly (TNLA) and the Council of States, and the lack of agreement between the parties on appointment of state governors.

South Sudan's Defence Minister on Thursday (April 22) declined to appear before the lawmakers saying their term has ended and should be replaced by a new transitional parliament in line with the revitalized peace pact. Angeline had been summoned by the Transitional National Legislature Taskforce for COVID-19 to explain the army's role in the country's efforts to slow the spread of Coronavirus and prevent continuing cross-border movements from neighboring countries.

South Sudan's Deputy Interior Minister Mabior Garang de Mabior on Sunday (April 19) fustigated media coverage of the defection of some SPLM/A-IO senior members describing it as "propaganda". "What is being labeled as, "mass exodus from the SPLM/SPLA (IO)", by the intellectual mercenaries of the traditional elite, is nothing more than sensationalism and propaganda," said Mabior who is also the Chairman of the SPLM-IO national committee for information and public relations.

Sudan

The peace agreement to be signed between the Sudanese government and SPLM-N led by Malik Agar will include West Kordofan state, revealed Yasir Arman, the Movement's chief negotiator. On Tuesday (April 21), the two parties held their second teleconference meeting to discuss issues of peace in the Two Areas particularly the wealth-sharing, security arrangements, and the situation of the West Kordofan in this agreement. The West Kordofan state was abolished and merged into South Kordofan State in 2005 as per the provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), but it was re-established in April 2013.

The SPLM-N led by Abdel-Aziz al-Hilu voiced its support for the Sudanese government's efforts to replace the military state governors with civilian governors and criticized the Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF)'s opposition to the move. However, the alliance of the armed groups said the appointment of governors should be considered as part of the reshaping process of the Sudanese state after the signing of the peace agreement.

Armed groups have demanded to join the ongoing peace negotiations in Juba between the Sudanese government and the armed groups to end Darfur conflict. Recently, the head of the Sudan Liberation Movement, Minni Arko Minnawi welcomed the inclusion of groups not affiliated with the Sudanese Revolutionary Front in the negotiations for peace in Western Sudan. In separate letters addressed to the South Sudanese mediation, two factions of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) led by Mansour Arbab now called “New JEM” and another faction of JEM led by Abdallah Banda requested to join the talks.

Sudanese Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok decided, on Saturday (April 18), to postpone the appointment of state governors, which is supposed to be announced on the same day according to a timetable agreed by the transitional government partners. The country’s ruling partners – the Sovereign Council, the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC), and the government – last week endorsed a plan for carrying out several reforms including a timeframe. Among others, the state governors had to be appointed on April 18.

Sudanese government last week on Saturday (April 18) deplored that several mosques in Khartoum state ignored the risk of Coronavirus and held Friday prayer in spite of a ministerial decision banning it. Sudan has reported 32 confirmed cases of Coronavirus, including the death of five patients. All of the cases are in Khartoum state except one in the Nile River state. In line with the government efforts to contain the respiratory disease, the minister of religious affairs last week on Wednesday imposed a ban and called on worshippers to avoid mosques on Friday.

IGAD Council of Ministers Discuss the Situation in South Sudan

A 71st extraordinary session of the IGAD Council of Ministers was held on Thursday (April 23) via video link to follow up on the progress of the implementation of the South Sudan peace agreement and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Council opened the session listening to a statement delivered by Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of South Sudan, Ambassador Beatrice Khamisa Wani, and reports of IGAD Special Envoy for South Sudan, Ambassador Ismail Wais (PhD) and Interim Chair of The Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC), Ambassador Lt. Gen.

(Rtd) Augustino S.K. Njoroge on the Status of the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS).

The Council encouraged the implementation of outstanding Pre-Transitional Period tasks; such as responsibility-sharing at the State and Local Government levels, reconstitution of South Sudan's Transitional National Legislative Assembly (TNLA) and training and redeployment of necessary Unified Forces.

According to a communiqué issued on the meeting, the council expressed its concern with the impasse among the Parties in agreeing on responsibility-sharing at the State and Local Governments levels. Thus, “the council called on the Parties to immediately resume discussions and consultations and reach on an agreement within fifteen (15) days of the issuance of this Communique” (i.e., on May 08, 2020). Regarding the reconstitution of the TNLA, the Council “urged the President of the Republic to dissolve the incumbent TNLA before 30th April 2020, and called upon the Parties to reconstitute the TNLA in accordance with the R-ARCSS within ten (10) days of the dissolution of the incumbent TNLA,” the communiqué issued related.

The council also deliberated on some of the challenges and disagreements related to the implementation of the R-ARCSS: Constitutional Amendment, Public Political appointments, Inter and intra-party divisions, and Non-observance of the 35% women representation requirement. Regarding the Constitutional Amendment, the Council “Commended the R-TGoNU for recognizing substantive alterations made to the Constitutional Amendment Bill, as submitted by the NCAC, and passed as Constitutional Amendment Act by the TNLA contravene the provisions of the R-ARCSS and appreciated the commitment made by the RTGoNU during the Council meeting to take remedial measures to rectify the alterations made to the Constitutional Amendment Bill.” In making public political appointments in the future, the Council Urged the President of the Republic to undertake the necessary consultations with concerned officials and organs in accordance with the R-ARCSS or TCSS 2011 (as amended). The Council also encouraged all Parties to ensure that the 35% women representation is respected and adhered to in future nominations to various public offices

The council endorsed the Rome Resolution on Monitoring and Verification of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement of 2017, between the South Sudan

Opposition Movement Alliance (SSOMA) with “a view to creating a conducive environment for an all-inclusive peace process in South Sudan.”

The Council also discussed the Economic impact of COVID-19 on the implementation of the R-ARCSS. It echoed the call by the IGAD Heads of State and Government for Debt Cancellation for IGAD Member States to have sufficient resources to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the Desert Locust invasion and appealed to the international community to support the fight against COVID-19 by channeling financial resources IGAD emergency fund for the control and prevention of pandemic diseases.

The meeting was attended by Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Djibouti; Gedu Andargachew, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia; Ambassador Raychelle Omamo, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kenya; Ahmed Isse Awad, Minister for Affairs of the Federal Republic of Somalia; Ambassador Beatrice Khamisa Wani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of South Sudan; and Sam Kutesa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uganda.

Also, in attendance were Workneh Gebeyehu Negewo (PhD), the Executive Secretary of IGAD; Ambassador Dr. Ismail Wais, the IGAD Special Envoy for South Sudan; Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka, Kenya Special Envoy to South Sudan; Ambassador Jamal El-Shiekh, Sudan Special Envoy to South Sudan; H.E Ambassador Hamza El-Amin, Sudan Ambassador to Djibouti and Chair of the IGAD Committee of Ambassadors; Abdulaziz Mohammed, Ethiopia Ambassador to Djibouti; Ambassador John Mwangemi, Kenya Ambassador to Djibouti, James Morgan, South Sudan Ambassador to Ethiopia; Teferi Tadesse, Ethiopia Ambassador to South Sudan; Ambassador Adil Ibrahim Mustafa, Sudan Ambassador to South Sudan; Betty Bigombe, Senior Advisor to the President of Uganda on South Sudan; Ambassador Lt. Gen. Augustino Njoroge, Interim Chair of RJMEC; and Maj. Gen. Teshome Gemechu, Chair of CTSAMVM.

Pending Issues need to be solved for Sustainable Peace in South Sudan, FM Gedu Says

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Gedu Andargachew stated that the peace process in South Sudan has reached an important milestone, and partners need to keep the momentum to achieve the desired result.

The Minister made this remark in delivering a speech on an IGAD-led video conference held on Thursday (April 23) to consult the progress of the peace process in South Sudan.

In his speech, Gedu appreciated the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity and the appointment of the Council of Ministers.

The Minister underscored the need to finalize pending tasks to create a whole new government across the nation.

He emphasized the need to create consensus on sharing responsibilities on states and local governments not only to carry out proper local administration but also to properly address the COVID-19 pandemic and the desert locust outbreak.

He urged the parties that did not submit their list of nominees for the reconstituted Transitional National Legislative Assembly (TNLA) to do so in order to reconstitute the legislative arm of the government.

Mr. Gedu also expressed his hope that the South Sudan Government would enhance its commitment to financing the transitional security arrangement and post-conflict reconstruction efforts which should also be backed by partners.

Recognizing South Sudan's long-awaited hope for peace, Minister Gedu urged parties to build trust among themselves and fulfill the aspirations of the public.

The Minister finally called on IGAD and other stakeholders to facilitate the necessary support for the prevention and preparedness against the COVID-19 and post-conflict reconstruction of South Sudan.

African Leaders Urge Private Sector to Partake in Continental Fight against COVID-19

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on Wednesday (April 22) participated in the virtual meeting of the African Union Extended Bureau of Heads of State convened by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, the Chair of the African Union for 2020, to discuss the role of the private sector in the AU-led continental fight against the COVID-19 scourge.

The meeting brought together Heads of State and Government of DRC, Kenya, Mali, Rwanda, Senegal, Zimbabwe, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, and members of the African Business Leaders Coalition.

Prime Minister Abiy related on his Tweeter page the commendable commitment of the African Development Bank Group (AfDB_Group), African Export-Import Bank and other private stakeholders to contribute to Africa COVID-19 fund and the Africa Center for Disease Control (Africa CDC).

“Strengthening the Africa Center for Disease Control and enhancing our testing capacity as a continent is key,” Abiy added.

President Cyril Ramaphosa reiterated the Bureau’s previous calls to the lifting of sanctions on Zimbabwe and Sudan to help them get all available resources in their fight against the Coronavirus pandemic. According to Ramaphosa, “the Bureau agreed on the need for G20 countries to provide a comprehensive stimulus package for Africa, including deferred payments and the immediate suspension of interest payments on Africa’s external public and private debt to create fiscal space for COVID-19 response measures.”

Chairperson of the African Union Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat, in Tweeting about the teleconference, said: ”The enthusiasm by the African private sector to partner in the Partnership to Accelerate COVID19 Testing Initiative (PACT) was encouraging as we discussed how they could harness their logistics, private laboratories, manufacturing capacity to support the continental strategy.”

The African Union will facilitate a platform for the African private sector to share experiences of how they have been able to adapt in these trying times of the COVID19 pandemic, the Chairperson added.

AU Peace and Security Council Discusses Impact of COVID-19 on Peace and Security in Africa

The Peace and Security Council of the African Union called on member States to further enhance their cross-border cooperation to deny terrorists and armed groups, criminal networks, and traffickers the opportunity to exploit the current COVID-19 situation to perpetuate their activities.

The council related this in a communiqué issued following its virtual meeting held to discuss the impact of the Novel Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak on peace and security in Africa on April 14.

Given the nature of the virus and its negative impact on AU peace and security activities, the council underscored the urgent need to mobilize and deploy all necessary efforts, within the spirit of international solidarity, in order to effectively mitigate, contain the spread and defeat COVID-19.

Further emphasizing the importance of solidarity among Africans, the Council called on member states to draw lessons learned from the recent successful fight against the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak in parts of the Continent.

The Council also reiterated the call for all belligerents to fully embrace and uphold the Global Ceasefire in order to facilitate efforts being deployed against the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Council welcomed the establishment of the African Union COVID-19 Response Fund in order to mobilize the required financial resources for Africa's fight against the pandemic.

The Council also appealed to the bilateral and international development partners, to consider debt cancellation and relief to those African countries with fragile economies.

The Council paid special tribute to Prime Minister, Dr. Abiy Ahmed and Mr. Jack Ma, for their personal efforts and commitment in mobilizing material support for the fight against COVID-19 within the Continent.

The Council also commended the Ethiopian Airlines and the World Food Programme (WFP), for delivering donated medical equipment to all Member States.

The Council affirmed its unflinching support to the relentless efforts being deployed by WHO, particularly its Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, in providing timely information, technical guidance, and material assistance towards efforts to contain the spread and mitigate the impact of COVID-19.

The Peace and Security Council also commended the Africa CDC, member states, and all private sector entities, partner countries, international institutions, and philanthropist organizations for mobilizing resources and taking swift measures to mitigate the impact of the virus.