

A Week in the Horn 17.07.2020

*News in Brief*

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**Africa and the African Union**

The Director of Africa CDC, Dr. John Nkengasong, on Thursday (July 16) provided his weekly update on the coordinated efforts by African Union Member States to implement the joint continental strategy on COVID-19. The Director highlighted key steps taken to support the PACT initiative across countries and other countermeasures taken by Africa CDC and other partners in response to the pandemic and to minimize fatality due to the disease in Africa. Professor Lynn Morris, Interim Director, NICD South Africa also joined in the briefing.

The UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), on Wednesday (July 15) carried out a campaign to raise awareness in Western Equatoria province, delivering messages on the importance of frequent hand-washing and physical distancing in multiple languages to remote areas.

The African Union-UN joint mission in Darfur (UNAMID) on Wednesday (July 15) said it is working with local health authorities to organize workshops and sensitization sessions on COVID-19. Sessions focused on the social consequences of the lockdown on women, including domestic violence. The mission announced that it will expand this initiative to other parts of Darfur which are considered high risk for COVID-19.

The 36th Extraordinary Assembly of IGAD Heads of State and Government was held on Tuesday (July 14) via videoconference and deliberated upon

current situations regarding the peace process in South Sudan and the region's response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Assembly further discussed key socioeconomic, political and security-related issues affecting some of the member states with far-reaching regional implications. Dr. Abdalla Hamdok, Prime Minister of the Republic of Sudan chaired the conference where leaders of State and Governments of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Uganda were in attendance. **(See article)**

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The joint AU-UN mission in Darfur (UNAMID) on Tuesday (July 14) said that they are deeply concerned about violence in Kutum town on 12 July and the attack by unidentified armed men on the Fata Borno Camp for internally displaced people on Monday (July 13) morning. The attack on the Fata Borno Camp left 9 internally displaced people dead and 20 injured. The mission says it is regrettable that the latest violence took place while the transitional Government of Sudan and the armed movements are close to concluding negotiations expected to bring peace and stability, and the promise of prosperity to the Darfur region and to the whole of Sudan.

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) on Sunday (July 12) donated sewing machines and other related items to women's groups in Shallamboti in the Lower Shabelle region of Somalia, as part of efforts to economically empower women and enhance relations with the local communities. The items were handed over to the women by Ugandan soldiers serving under AMISOM, at a function presided over by the Battle Group XXVIII Commander, Col. Wilberforce Sserunkuma, and the District Commissioner of Marka district, Mr. Abdulahi Ali Wafow.

## **Ethiopia**

The Ministry of Peace has officially launched the Ethiopian alert system to deal with early warning on both man-made and natural disasters. Minister of Peace Muferihat Kamil on Thursday (July 16) said the system will play a vital role in protecting communities from weather, climate, and security impacts which relates to other risk factors including poverty, unplanned urbanization, deforestation, limited institutional capacity and lack of public awareness. According to the Ministry, the system has reached the final stages of the trial period and will go fully operational in a few days. Muferihat finally expressed her gratitude to Global Alerts and other developmental institutes for supporting the newly launched system.

Paleoanthropologists working at the Konso research area in Ethiopia have found a 1.4 million-year-old large bone fragment shaped into handaxe-like form. The newly-discovered handaxe is a bifacial flaked fragment of a hippopotamus femur (thigh bone). The ancient artifact was analyzed by the University of Tokyo paleoanthropologist Gen Suwa and his colleagues from Japan, Ethiopia, and Hong Kong. The researchers found that the handaxe bears at least 44 secondary flake scars range in size from 3 cm to less than 1 cm. “Both the distribution pattern of flake scars and the high frequency of cone fractures are strong indicators of deliberate flaking,” the researchers said on Monday (July 15).

The U.S. Department of Labor on Wednesday (July 15) announced its intent to award up to \$5 million in grant funding to reduce child labor in Ethiopia’s agricultural sector, with a focus on the informal sector, using a gender-focused approach. Made available through the Department’s Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB), the grant will focus on vulnerable women and adolescent girls, from ages 5 to 17, working in agriculture.

The African Union (AU) led negotiation between Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) has ended without agreement, the Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy of Ethiopia said in a statement issued on Tuesday (July 14). The three countries have been negotiating virtually on the first filling and annual operations of the dam for the last couple of weeks. However, the three countries concluded the African Union-sponsored talks, which lasted for 11 days without reaching an agreement on the outstanding points. **(See article)**

The Federal Attorney-General has announced the detention of two individuals suspected of killing artist Hachalu Hundessa. Attorney General Adanech Abiebie announced the arrest of the two suspects identified as Tilahun Yami and Abdi Alemayehu during a press conference held last week on Friday (July 10). In related news, the Federal Attorney-General office on Saturday (July 11) announced the arrest of Kebede Gemechu, the third suspect into the killing of artist Hachalu Hundessa. Artist Hachalu was shot dead in Addis Ababa last week around a place called Gelan condominium.

Discussion on the 10-year development plan of the country has continued for the second day last week on Friday (July 10) with a particular focus on the tourism industry. The trade and industry sector was the centre of discussion on Thursday. In his remarks, Minister of Trade and Industry, Melaku Alebel, said the 10-year plan eyes modernizing the country’s trade system and realizing

continental and global trade agreements. In Friday's session, participants are deliberating on the challenges the tourism industry has faced so far and ways to make the industry more effective in the next 10 years.

Police have detained more than 4,700 individuals suspected of having links with the violence that occurred in some parts of Oromia following the killing of artist Hachalu Hundessa. Nigusu Tilahun, Head of Press Secretariat at the Prime Minister office, last week on Friday (July 10) said the detainees were suspected of planning and inciting violence that resulted in the loss of many lives and properties. He urged the public not to be deceived by the fake information being circulated and to strengthen their cooperation with the government in the fight against those responsible for the recent violence.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed on Thursday (July 09) held phone talks with Germany Chancellor Angela Merkel. The discussion focused on how to curb the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The Prime Minister appreciated Germany's commitment and solidarity with Ethiopia in this difficult and testing time. He further thanked Germany for the medical supplies it has provided to help Ethiopia in the fight against the pandemic. Angela Merkel on her part said her country would support efforts to reach a consensus and bring a win-win solution regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD).

Ethiopia participated in a virtual "China-Africa Investment and Trade Fair 2020" that was opened on Wednesday (July 15) in the presence of government representatives and investors from Africa and China. The trade fair was organized by Zhejiang's Department of Commerce and Touchroad International Holdings Group. On the occasion, State Minister Tsion Teklu made opening remarks focusing on business opportunities that exist in Ethiopia for Foreign investors. Ethiopian Ambassador to China, Teshome Toga, delivered concluding remarks. The official fair is scheduled to be held in the upcoming August. (**See article**)

Ethiopia dismissed reports that it started filling its massive hydroelectric dam on the Blue Nile after satellite images showed higher water levels. Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy Dr. Sileshi Bekele said that higher water levels were due to recent heavy rainfall and not due to the conscious efforts to fill the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). "There is a lot of water going through. There is heavy rainfall and the inflow is much greater than the outflow," Seleshi told the media.

## **Eritrea**

Ministry of Information on Tuesday (July 14) announced that training on pests control in general and that of locust invasion was organized to over 50 staff members of the Ministry of Agriculture and members of the Defense Forces in Mai-Mine sub-zone, Southern region. The theoretical and practical training included characteristics and types of pests and means of controlling, application and maintenance of spray equipment as well as spraying system. Similar training was also provided to over 2,500 farmers and members of the Defense Forces in the Central region from 2 to 14 July.

## **Kenya**

President Uhuru Kenyatta has commended parties to the South Sudan peace process for the progress achieved in recent months despite the health and economic difficulties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The President underscored the setting up of the executive arm of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU), the agreement on responsibility sharing at state level as well as the appointments of state Governors as key success indicators in the peace process. The President however cautioned against an increase in communal violence saying the insecurity risks worsening the already dire humanitarian situation in the country. The President spoke on Tuesday (July 14) at State House, Nairobi during a virtual meeting of the 36th assembly of IGAD Heads of State and Government. On COVID-19, President Kenyatta commended joint response measures adopted by IGAD member states for helping slow down the spread of the virus in the region. The President also spoke about Kenya's election to the UN Security Council saying the country "will carry the aspirations of all (UN) member states and continue to prioritize regional and African issues during its tenure."

## **Somalia**

In a bid to eradicate sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), the National Union of Somali Journalists (NUSOJ) on Monday (July 13) announced that it has organised in Mogadishu a three-day training for 50 journalists to help them better report on this issue. The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) praises the union's initiative in raising public and media awareness over gender-based violence in Somalia.

Earlier this week, Shabaab, al Qaeda's branch in East Africa, attempted to assassinate Somalia's top general in Mogadishu in a suicide bombing. The attack is the latest in a series of strikes against Somali government officials across the country in recent months. On Monday (July 12), General Odowaa Yusef Rageh, Somalia's Chief of Defense Forces, was targeted in a suicide car bombing in Mogadishu. Rageh's convoy was targeted as it left Somalia's Ministry of Defense. While Rageh survived the assassination attempt unscathed, his driver and one member of his security team were injured.

## **South Sudan**

On Monday (July 13), a group of Nuba women in the Yida refugee camp in South Sudan, carried out a protest in front of the United Nations buildings in the camp, denouncing the suspension of humanitarian aid for the refugees. The protesting women held up banners calling for the resumption of food rations and medicines, as well as blankets, plastic sheets, and mosquito nets that have been suspended since September 14 last year.

South Sudanese President Salva Kiir on Wednesday (July 15) has appointed Gabriel Changson Chang as the new Minister of Higher Education. Chang who is also the chairman of the Federal Democratic Party (FDP) replaces Denay Jok Chagor who is appointed Governor of Jonglei State. The two politicians are members of the South Sudan Opposition Alliance. Also, the two-positions are allocated to the alliance. With Chagor's appointment as Jonglei governor, the Upper Nile State remains the only state without governor in South Sudan. President Kiir declined to appoint Johnson Olony as the Upper Nile State Governor. In a parallel development, President Kiir appointed Deng Alor Kuol minister for East African Community Affairs replacing the late John Luk Jok. The two men belong to the Former Political Detainees group.

The United Nations Security Council on Monday (July 13) urged the South Sudanese government to finalize the implementation of the security arrangements and voiced concern over the increased inter-communal violence in the country. In a statement released on Monday, the Council members also applauded the "encouraging developments" in South Sudan referring to the agreement on state governors. Also, they recognized the government's efforts to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Sudan**

Talks on the security arrangements in Darfur between the transitional government and the Sudan Liberation Movement led by Minni Minnawi (SLM-MM) have begun in Juba on Thursday (July 16). In a statement issued on Wednesday, the SLM-MM announced that it had received an official invitation from the South Sudanese mediation indicating the launch of the talks on Thursday. The government has already discussed the security arrangements with the Darfur groups under the banner of the Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF) via videoconference but Minnawi's movement declined to take part in the talks requesting direct meetings.

In a first comment on the recent bloody attacks on civilian protesters in North Darfur, the Prime Minister of Sudan said that such incidents show the need for peace and accountability in Darfur. "Incidents such as what occurred in Fata Borno and Kutum areas urgently require achieving peace and accountability within the framework of the rule of law," said Abdallah Hamdok in a tweet released on Tuesday (July 14). He further added that the continued brutal attacks are also a real obstacle to the country's democratic transformation.

Sudan on Tuesday (July 14) sent to the African Union presidency its final report on the filling and operation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and joined a draft agreement to resolve the dispute after the failure of the negotiations between Sudan, Egypt, and Ethiopia. Based on each of the tripartite countries' submission of its final report on the negotiations, President *Cyril Ramaphosa* is expected to convene a mini-African summit including heads of States and Government of the African Union Bureau and the three riparian countries to consider the next step towards a comprehensive agreement that satisfies the aspirations of the three countries.

The initialling of the peace agreement between the Sudanese government and the armed groups has been delayed until a later date, due to the killing of a number of civilians in North Darfur and the need to strike a deal on the security arrangements. "We decided to postpone the initialling of the agreement on the agreed issues because the peace process has not been completed. Actually, still, we have the security arrangements to be negotiated," the South Sudanese mediator, Dhieu Matouk, told a press conference in Khartoum on Tuesday. Matouk further said that the parties were expected to initial the agreement on the Key National Issues on Tuesday. However, the mediation found that it is not necessary to initial this deal.

An appropriations bill was introduced on Monday (July 13) at the U.S. House of Representatives that for the first time in many years did not include language

explicitly prohibiting assistance to the government of Sudan. The bill titled “Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2021” was tabled by Rep. Nita Lowey who sits on the appropriations committee. Previous versions of this bill in previous years included the recurring verbiage “Notwithstanding any other provision of law, none of the funds appropriated by this Act may be made available for assistance for the Government of Sudan”. However, the current bill submitted for the 2021 fiscal year which starts on October 1st replaced this paragraph with “Funds appropriated by this Act under title III should be made available to support the civilian-led transition in Sudan, including for assistance for health, democracy, economic growth, agriculture, and education”.

At least 9 people are killed and dozens injured in an armed attack on protesters in the Fata Borno area of the Kutum locality, in North Darfur, on Monday (July 13). The government, in reaction, decided to impose a state of emergency throughout the state. Eyewitnesses told the media that unidentified armed militiamen riding motorbikes, camels and horses, arrived in Fata Borno and opened fire to the sit-in area, killing nine protesters and wounded over 14 people. The witnesses further stated that the militias used light and heavy weapons and looted the town’s market, after the withdrawal of the police forces.

The Sudanese government and Darfur armed groups on Monday (July 13) have reached a power-sharing deal paving the way for negotiations on the security arrangements which are the last issue on the agenda of the talks. The government is expected to sign an agreement on the power-sharing with the Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF) and The Sudan Liberation Movement – Minni Minnawi (SLM-MM) on Tuesday, according to high-ranking officials from both sides.

The Sudanese Prime Minister has picked 13 of 18 civilian governors, as he has faced an array of challenges including women’s appointment, said the government on Sunday (July 12). “The consultations of the Prime Minister have resulted in the selection of civilian governors in 13 states. Consultations are underway to choose governors for the remaining states,” said the government spokesman Faisal Mohamed Saleh in a statement issued on Sunday. Saleh added that the security conditions and tribal disputes in some states complicated the choice of the governor and opened the door to “new alternatives”. “Also, the choice of some female governors faces severe difficulties including resistance from some local and political forces,” he stressed.

Sudanese Minister of Justice Nasr al-Din Abdel-Bari on Saturday (July 11) gave more details about the Miscellaneous Amendments Act as he confirmed that it abolishes apostasy and protects the non-Muslims' right to drink alcohol. The controversial criminal code article on the apostasy was contested by local and international human rights groups as it was in clear violation of the 2005 constitution which grants the freedom of religious creed and worship.

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### ***The 36th Extraordinary Assembly of IGAD Heads of State & Government deliberates Peace Process in South Sudan & Regional Response to COVID-19***

The 36th Extraordinary Assembly of IGAD Heads of State and Government was held on Tuesday (July 14) via videoconference and deliberated upon current situations regarding the peace process in South Sudan the region's response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Assembly further discussed key socioeconomic, political and security-related issues affecting some of the member states with far reaching regional implications. Dr. Abdalla Hamdok, Prime Minister of the Republic of the Sudan chaired the conference where leaders of State and Governments of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and Uganda were in attendance.

Regarding the peace process in South Sudan, the Assembly appreciated the leadership of South Sudan for its "visible determination to implement the provisions of the R-ARCSS towards the establishment of a peaceful environment in South Sudan and improved protection of civilians." In this regard, the assembly expressed its satisfaction over the continued holding of the ceasefire across South Sudan, the appointment and inauguration of the Executive arm of the R-TGoNU, the announcement of the disarmament of civilians and the formation of a National Taskforce to look into enduring intercommunal challenges and pastoralist conflict. The assembly further appreciated South Sudan's leadership for establishing an Investigative Committee on atrocities committed against civilians in Yei River State and for undertaking political and security initiatives to contain armed clashes and intercommunal violence. The assembly also thanked all stakeholders, including IGAD and the TROIKA, for their unyielding efforts for the success of the peace process in South Sudan.

The assembly also deliberated on issues that should be acted upon by the leadership of South Sudan and the parties to the peace process. In this regard,

the assembly, called upon the Parties to swiftly resolve the impasse over responsibility-sharing at the State and Local Governments level through an all-inclusive, transparent and collegial process of consultations and dialogue. It further called on the President of South Sudan “to dissolve the current TNLA before 26th July 2020” and the Parties “to reconstitute the TNLA in accordance with the R-ARCSS within seven (7) days of the dissolution of the incumbent TNLA.” The assembly urged the leadership of South Sudan “to take remedial measures to immediately rectify the alterations made to the Constitutional Amendment Bill, to provide the necessary funding and logistical support to expedite the implementation of the security arrangement plan particularly the completion of the training, graduation, and redeployment of the national unified forces, to provide adequate financial support to the Disarmament and Demobilization Commission (DDRC) to undertake a comprehensive reintegration process.”

The assembly also appealed to the IGAD Member States, the international community and friends of South Sudan to provide financial and technical support to enable CTSAMVM to effectively discharge its mandate. Appreciating IGAD, the AU and the UN fruitful contributions to the peace process in South Sudan, the assembly called upon friends of South Sudan in the international community to collaborate with these institutions to support mechanisms for a South Sudan Reconstruction and Recovery Fund. It urged the R-TGoNU to “prioritize the pre-transitional tasks that can be effectively accomplished within the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic including formation of the Council of States.” The assembly concluded its discussion over the peace process in South Sudan resolving that in the event that the Parties are not able to settle outstanding pre-transitional tasks on or before 13th August 2020, the IGAD Chair will intervene to directly engage with Parties with a view to assist in concluding the pending matters.

Deleberating upon the regional response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the assembly commended the formulation and implementation of the comprehensive, 5-pillar IGAD Regional Response Strategy to COVID-19 and directed the IGAD to produce a Monthly Regional Status Update Report on COVID-19 and corresponding responses in the region. The assembly further called for the adoption of Regional Guidelines on Harmonization and Facilitation of Cross Border Transport Operations across the Region in preparation for gradual and sequenced deconfinement and reopening of the air space between Member States. The assembly thanked various bodies for generous contributions to the IGAD Regional Response Strategy to the COVID-19 pandemic. It also expressed satisfaction over the establishment of

the IGAD Emergency Fund for the control and prevention of pandemic diseases and Kenya's generous contribution to the fund. Citing the triple threat that the region faces today- COVID-19, Locust invasions, Flooding- and recognising the unique vulnerabilities of refugees, migrants and IDPs to COVID-19, the assembly called upon the international community to support IGAD within the framework of the IGAD Regional Response Strategy.

Following deliberations on the main agendas of the meeting – the peace process in South Sudan and the regional response to COVID-19- the assembly discussed current events and major concerns in the region. In this regard, the assembly discussed the recent Djibouti and Ethiopia-led dialogue between Somalia and Somaliland, the fruitful talks between the Federal Government of Somalia and Regional States to achieve durable peace in Somalia and the positive impacts of the Federal Government's decision to conduct a one-to-one person vote in elections. The assembly also deliberated upon the encouraging role of the African Union on the ongoing GERD talks between the three parties and the benefits of Kenya's non-permanent seat in the Security Council to the advancement of peace in the region.

In addition to the heads of State and Government of IGAD member states, the meeting was attended by Executive Secretary of IGAD, Special Envoy for South Sudan, IGAD Special Envoy for the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Somalia, Kenya Special Envoy to South Sudan, Outgoing Interim Chair of RJMEC, African Union Commission Commissioner for Peace and Security; Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for the Horn of Africa, EU Special Representative for the Horn of Africa, Ambassador of Italy to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Djibouti and Co-Chair of the IGAD Partners Forum (IPF) and, United Kingdom Special Envoy to Sudan, South Sudan and Representative of the Troika.

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***Ministry of Water, Irrigation & Energy Press Release on the Tripartite Negotiation on the GERD***

Addis Ababa (14 July 2020)

The Ministers of Water Affairs of Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan concluded the eleven day long AU led tripartite negotiation on the Guidelines and Rules on the first filling and annual operation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on 13 July 2020. The meetings were attended by the observers from

the Republic of South Africa, EU, USA, and experts assigned by the chairperson of the AU.

The three countries have communicated the first progress report to the chairperson of the AU on 10 July 2020 and the second report on 14 July 2020.

Ethiopia appreciates the initiative taken by the AU and its current chairperson H. E. Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa. Ethiopia recognizes the AU-led process is at a very encouraging state. The countries have managed to reach understanding on their interests instead of reiterating their positions.

Ethiopia would like to stress negotiated agreement is the only way out. The most outstanding issue is the impact of the guidelines and the Rules on Ethiopia's future water use upstream of the GERD. In this respect, the absence of a comprehensive treaty governing the relations of Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan with regard to the Nile is the major factor that poses a challenge.

Unchanged stances and additional and excessive demands of Egypt and Sudan prohibited the conclusion of this round of negotiation by an agreement. Ethiopia is committed to show flexibility to reach at a win-win outcome on all outstanding issues. Ethiopia reiterates, the trilateral negotiation and commitment to reach a mutually beneficial outcome is the only avenue to reaching an outcome.

The negotiation is expected to continue after review of the outcome so far by the Chairperson of the AU Bureau Members and leaders of Ethiopia, the Sudan and Egypt. The AU led process is best suited to negotiate and resolve the differences.

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### ***2020 Africa-China Online Investment & Trade Fair Kicks Off***

Ethiopia participated in a virtual "China-Africa Investment and Trade Fair 2020" that was opened on Wednesday (July 15) in the presence of government representatives and investors from Africa and China. The trade fair was organized by Zhejiang's Department of Commerce and Touchroad International Holdings Group. On the occasion, State Minister Tsion Teklu made opening remarks focusing on business opportunities that exist in Ethiopia for foreign investors. Ethiopian Ambassador to China, Teshome

Toga, delivered concluding remarks. The official fair is scheduled to be held in the upcoming August.

In her speech, state minister Tsion noted Ethiopia and China have a strong political and economic relationship and reaffirmed that Ethiopia takes China as its comprehensive strategic partner. She said: “China’s assistance in this challenging time of COVID-19 is something that my government and its people are grateful for but most of all China’s support in the process of the negotiation of the construction of the Grand Renaissance Dam is an expression of China standing for what is fair and just.”

Stating some of the advantages of investing in Ethiopia, Tsion pointed out that the government is undergoing a multifaceted reform including a review of investment proclamation and improving ease of doing business in Ethiopia. According to the State Minister, since the reform considers privatizing state-owned enterprises and opening up its strategic economic sectors like the Airline, logistics, and telecommunication for partial privatization, investing in Ethiopia would, even more, be desirable nowadays. She said investors are welcome to engage in priority sectors that have been identified by the government that include agriculture, manufacturing, mining, tourism, and Information communication technology. Appreciating that the Chinese investors are engaged in the economic activities of Ethiopia, Tsion expressed her hope that the trend will further continue with an additional number and variety of sectors.

The State Minister also mentioned the current economic growth trend of her country, which is 7% GDP per year, coupled with the huge energy prospect of the GERD and the Government’s aggressive moves to develop industrial parks as inputs to draw a huge flow of investors to the country. “Ethiopia’s growing young and educated population size is a potential skilled labor and a market as well. In addition, when the recent Africa Free Trade Area (ACFTA) agreement becomes operational, the opportunity will excel,” she added. “One of our pride is our Airlines, Ethiopian Airlines connects more than 62 cities of Africa. In China it touches cities of Beijing, Guangzhou, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Chengdu; a favorable condition for tourists and trade of even perishables. Our pride Ethiopian Airlines is the “Aerial Silk Road” carrying our flag in the skies of Africa.”

The State Minister concluded her remarks by citing the cultural heritages that made Ethiopia unique and alluring to engaging in the tourism sector too. “It holds 8 world UNESCO registered heritages making it one of the best

destinations in the world to visit,” she said, “Come and visit you will be astonished by the wonders in my country.”

Speaking at the Forum, Ambassador Teshome Toga, Ethiopian Ambassador Extraordinary Plenipotentiary to the People’s Republic of China encouraged the Chinese investors and companies to strengthen their ties with the Ethiopian business community and the government. He also promoted Ethiopian Export commodities, tourism attractions and investment opportunities to the Chinese business community.

The online forum was attended by 27 representatives of companies and government, with the aim of encouraging Chinese investors and traders to revitalize online trade and investment promotion, which has stagnated in the coronavirus pandemic.

One of the organizers, the Touchroad International Holdings Group, is based in Shanghai China and aims at promoting investment and trade between China and Africa. The group works in Africa, Europe, and America, and with subsidiaries in the UK, the USA, Canada, Belgium, Djibouti, Nigeria South Africa, Botswana, and Zimbabwe, focusing on focal sectors as International Trade, Investment, Cultural exchanges, Tourism, Low-cost Housing and Special Economic Zone Development.