

# A Week in the Horn 16.10.2020

## News in Brief

### ***37th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union Meets Virtually***

### ***President Isaias Afwerki pays a three-day visit to Ethiopia***

## **Africa and the African Union**

The African Union Commission announced on Thursday (October 15) that the African Trade Observatory (ATO) – a mechanism being implemented by the International Trade Centre (ITC) to help the new African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) function when it goes live in 2021 – has begun testing the online dashboard to give real-time trade statistics to African users. Such information will include intra-continental trade flows (traded values, traded quantities, the use of tariff preferences, taxes and fees paid at the border), and information on market conditions (such as taxes applicable at the border and regulatory requirements).

The 37th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union (AU) kicked off on Tuesday (October 13). The two-day Ministerial meeting deliberated at length, the progress and intensification of actions aimed at peace, security, development and integration as articulated in Africa's Agenda 2063. The ministers also, among other key issues, reflected on the ongoing institutional reforms particularly with the ongoing transition to the new Departmental structure of the Commission, adopted by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in February 2020, as well as the Financing Strategy for the new structure. The meeting also considered the African Union Budget for the financial year 2021 and deliberated on the African Union theme for 2021. **(See article)**

A group of public, private and non-profit organizations, led by the African Union Commission through the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), launched on Monday (October 12) the Africa Pathogen Genomics Initiative (Africa PGI) in a US\$100 million, four-year partnership to expand access to next-generation genomic sequencing tools and expertise designed to strengthen public health surveillance and laboratory networks across Africa. Africa PGI will be part of the Institute of Pathogen Genomics, launched by Africa CDC in 2019, with a vision to integrate pathogen genomics and bioinformatics into public health surveillance, outbreak investigations, and improved disease control and prevention in Africa. The institute's capacity will be strengthened to manage and provide technical oversight for Africa PGI.

Last week on Friday (October 09), the UN Secretary-General spoke at the second High-Level event on “Mobilizing with Africa” as part of the annual meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The Secretary-General said that since the beginning of the crisis, African countries and the African Union have shown commendable leadership and unity in response to the pandemic. He stressed that the international community must continue to show commitment to Africa’s health and well-being. The Secretary-General said the pandemic has resulted in acute liquidity constraints for African countries that without bold measures could spiral into a solvency crisis. He called on development partners to broaden the eligibility of the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative so that it includes all highly indebted and vulnerable countries that have been adversely affected by the emergency and also urged developed countries to support the Liquidity and Sustainability Facility, and to support efforts to prioritize green growth and environmental conservation. He also reiterated the UN’s solidarity with the people and governments of Africa at this pivotal moment for the continent.

The International Organization for Migration on Friday (October 09) called for effective global cooperation to help the at least 2.75 [million] migrants who are stranded around the world due to COVID-19 restrictions, including border closures and nationwide lockdowns. IOM’s Director General, António Vitorino, said that, where governments have taken action, tens of thousands of migrants have been able to return home in a manner that takes into consideration the significant health challenges the pandemic poses.

## **Ethiopia**

Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Ambassador Dina Mufti said Ethiopia has repatriated 993 migrants within the last three weeks. Among these 953 are from Saudi Arabia, 5 from Tanzania and 35 from Djibouti. He said this today (October 16) while delivering the Ministry’s biweekly press briefing. Besides the situation of Ethiopian migrants in Saudi Arabia, the Ambassador also covered current issues in Ethiopia and the main diplomatic activities of the Ministry within the last three weeks.

The 37th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union was concluded on Thursday (October 15). It was held virtually and Minister H.E. Gedu Andargachew has participated in it. The Council has adopted the budget for the AU for the year 2021 and endorsed the theme of the year 2021: “Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers to building the Africa We Want”. At the occasion, Mr. Gedu has suggested the 2021 budget of the Commission to consider the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic potential of member states in appropriation.

Ethiopia and the World Bank on Thursday (October 14) signed a financing agreement amounting \$400 million for the urban productive safety nets and jobs project (UPSNJP). The agreement was signed here in Addis Ababa by Ahmed Shide, Ethiopia’s Minister of Finance, and Ousmane Dione, World Bank Country Director for Ethiopia, Eritrea, South Sudan and Sudan. The stated amount of funding from the International

Development Association (IDA) was approved on September 30, 2020 by the World Bank Group's Board of Executive Directors. The grant will support Ethiopia's efforts to improve the incomes of the urban poor and promote the inclusion of disadvantaged urban youth in the labor market under UPSNJP. The UPSNJP will provide social protection as well as jobs related services to 816,000 beneficiaries in around 83 cities across the country.

Ethiopia on Thursday (October 14) reported 739 new COVID19 cases out of 6, 985 laboratory tests conducted in 24 hours. This brings the total number of cases in the country to 87, 169. The country also reported 13 deaths from the virus, taking the death toll to 1,325. A total of 823 patients have recovered from the virus to bring the total recoveries to 40,988. The country has so far conducted 1,377,080 laboratory tests.

As a continuation of the political dialogue platform, political parties operating in Ethiopia discussed on Thursday (October 15) different national agendas. Heads of the parties, including Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed, attended the discussion focused on Ethiopia's constitution, political system and democracy. The participants reflected their views on research papers presented at the event assessing weaknesses and strengths of constitutions issued in Ethiopia from 1939-1991. The Prime Minister later on his Twitter page writes, "These discussions are key in enabling political parties to work closely together; jointly address issues that arise and co-create a vision of growth and prosperity in service to country and our people".

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on Thursday (October 15) has appointed Dr. Aregawi Berhe, a veteran opposition leader, as Director General of the Office of the National Council for the Coordination of Public Participation to the Construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). Dr. Aregawi Berhe is one of the opposition political party leaders who had spent years in exile and returned home two years ago following the reform being undertaken by the administration of Prime Minister Abiy. He is currently a chairperson of the opposition "Tigray Democratic Coalition Party." Dr. Aregawi was also one of the founders of TPLF. The Office of the National Council for the Coordination of Public Participation to the Construction of GERD was established right after the announcement of the construction of the dam to mobilize public support.

The Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority (EBA) announced on Thursday (October 15) a plan to establish a Media Center of Excellence to enhance the professional capacity of journalists and the media industry in the country by providing state-of-the-art training courses. Speaking to ENA, Wondwosen Andualem, EBA Deputy Director-General said the proposal to establish the media center of excellence is prepared in partnership with Ethiopian media professionals and experts from Aljazeera Media Network. The governments of Ethiopia and Qatar will fund the construction of the center, it was learned.

Environment, Forest and Climate Change Commission announced on Wednesday (October 14) that it has been working to establish the first environmental tribunal that will hear cases relating to environmental issues so as to mitigate environmental degradation. Ayele Hegena (PhD) Director General of Policy, Law, and Standards Research and Development with the Commission told the media that the

establishment of the tribunal will have immense role in providing emergency responses via entertaining flexible ways. He underscored that the tribunal will be established in especial way and it will have a mandate to observe only civil cases relating to environment.

The Ministry of Finance forecast Ethiopian economy to register 8.5 percent growth in the 2013 budget year. Following the implementation of home grown economy along with measures taken to lessen the impact of Coronavirus pandemic, the economy has shown a significant growth. Mentioning the pressure of inflation and foreign currency, Finance Minister Ahmed Shide in a press conference on Tuesday (October 13) stressed that the government will continue to implement the combined fiscal and monetary policy. The measures that were taken on fiscal, monetary and other administrative actions to minimize the negative impacts of COVID-19 pandemic have a significant contribution to maintain the economy.

Ministry of Finance disclosed the temporarily suspension of the planned partial privatization of Africa's biggest aviation and leading company, Ethiopian Airlines. The move comes on the heels of the same measures taken recently to roll back the planned privatization of Ethiopian Shipping and Logistics Service Enterprise. The plan is put on hold as the company continues to be profitable and competitive in the global aviation industry, Finance Minister Ahmed Shide told a press conference on Tuesday (October 13) as he presented the Ministry's three-month performance report. "We do not believe that this is the time to privatize the company while it appears robust."

The seventh meeting of the Statistical Commission for Africa (StatCom7) opened virtually on Tuesday (October 13) with a clarion call from Ethiopia's President Sahle-Work Zewde for Africa to urgently transform and modernize its national statistical systems, especially in light of the continuing novel coronavirus pandemic. In remarks to officially open the meeting, Ms. Zewde said African governments need to provide more support and budgets for modernizing national statistical offices for evidence-based planning and decision making. "The transformation of national statistical systems in Africa is more important now than ever before as we fight against the pandemic and as we look to build stronger and better systems. Therefore, access to technology by national statistical systems must be promoted in all African countries in view of accelerating the production and use of data and statistics as public good," she said.

The Addis Ababa Museum has been reopened to tourists after months of enclosure due to pandemic. The reopening of the Museum came on Wednesday (October 13) after Addis Ababa Culture, Arts and Tourism Bureau has disinfected its buildings and vicinity with in order to protect from pandemic. Addis Ababa Museum holds various invaluable heritages representing cultural and historical values of the city as well as the country at large. Currently, Ethiopia has been reopening tourist attraction sites following the decision made by the government to stimulate the industry hit by the pandemic.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has inaugurated Entoto Natural Park, a park expected to become one of the focal points of tourist attraction, last Saturday (October 10). Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed initiated the Entoto Project alongside the Sheger River side

projects in order to establish a world-class tourist destination. In less than one year, the inaugurated park has become a beautiful place fully with various indoor and outdoor facilities, including sport centers, library, restaurants and coffee shops. It has got also artificial lake, fountain, walkways, bicycle and scooter roads built mostly with local materials, it was learned. During the inauguration, Prime Minister Abiy said that Entoto Natural Park demonstrates the capacity of Ethiopians to achieve big things when united.

The National Bank of Ethiopia said that Ethiopian foreign missions will start changing old banknotes with the new ones to address the demands of citizens working overseas. Briefing journalists on Tuesday (October 13), NBE's Deputy Governor Solomon Desta said that the new notes change is being carried out efficiently; and so far, the Bank has distributed over 90 billion Birr. Currently, over five thousand ATM machines are functional and distributing the new banknotes. 131 more are ready to operate.

State Minister Tsion Teklu on Tuesday (October 13) has received at her office, Ambassador Stephan Auer, German Ambassador to Ethiopia and discuss to collaborate on migration, border security, job creation, voluntarism, capacity building, migration data management, and effective reintegration of migrants. They also discussed the upcoming continuation of the Ethio-German Joint Ministerial Commission.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia in cooperation with the House of Federation on Monday (October 12) gave a briefing to the diplomatic community residing in Ethiopia about current issues in the country. Worku Adamu from the House of Federation (HoF), and Dr. Bikila Hurissa and Ambassador Dina Mufti gave the briefing. They explained how the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the schedule for the 6th general election, the ruling of the HoF on the unconstitutional nature of the election that took place in the Tigray Regional State, and the modalities that the Ethiopian Federal Government crafted to reach the needs of the people in Tigray bypassing the unconstitutionally elected leaders.

## **Eritrea**

It was on Tuesday (October 13) that the Eritrean President, Isaias Afwerki arrived in Jimma, Oromia Regional state for a three-day working visit to Ethiopia upon invitation of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and high-level Government officials accorded a warm welcome to the Eritrean President and members of the delegation upon their arrival at Jimma AbaJifar Airport. Foreign Minister Osman Saleh and Presidential Adviser Yemane Ghebreamariam were part of the Eritrean delegation that accompanied President Isaias. (**See article**)

The Ministry of Health announced that eight patients have been diagnosed positive for COVID-19 in tests carried out on Thursday (October 15) at Quarantine Centers in Adibara (7) and Shambiqo (1) in Gash Barka Region. All the patients are nationals who returned from Sudan and Ethiopia recently. On the other hand, four patients who were receiving medical treatment in hospitals in Gash Barka Region have recovered fully and have been released from these facilities. The total number of recovered patients

to-date accordingly stands at 376. The total number of confirmed cases in the country to-date has risen to 422.

## **Djibouti**

Ethiopia and Djibouti have signed an agreement on Thursday (October 14) to revamp the 80 kilometres Dikhil Daguru road, a part of Galafi highway. Ethiopian Construction Works Corporation Chief Executive Officer, Engineer Yonas Ayalew and Djibouti Ports Corridor Roads Director General, Abdi Ebrahim Farah have signed the agreement on behalf of their respective countries.

## **Kenya**

Kenya is staring at another wave of desert locusts' invasion, as fresh swarms migrate to northern Kenya from Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea. United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization, FAO has warned that the swarms could be entering Kenya, just a few months after it had alluded that the country is almost winning the war against the plague. Kenya is just recovering from the worst infestation in 70 years and the worst outbreak in 25 years for neighbouring countries of Somalia and Ethiopia. But FAO's latest report dated October 5 says wind-blown swarm migration from Yemen could again plague Ethiopia, Somalia in October and extend to Kenya in November.

Defence Cabinet Secretary Monica Juma has praised the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) officers deployed in Somalia, telling them that their sacrifices have made Kenya a respected member of the international community. In a speech to commemorate KDF Day, celebrated on October 14 each year since 2011, Dr Juma told the soldiers their success on the battlefield each day is key to defeating the militant Al-Shabaab group. "I urge you not to drop your guard because your success is key in restoring peace and stability in our neighbourhood, the region and the continent of Africa," the CS said in a message.

## **Somalia**

The Somali army killed 61 Al-Shabaab militants in an ambush near the town of Afgoye, some 30 km west of the capital Mogadishu, police confirmed on Thursday (October 15). Dhame Sadik Adan, a police spokesman, said 18 soldiers died after the insurgents ambushed Somali National Army (SNA) troops on their routine patrol in an area near the town of Afgoye on Wednesday afternoon. The latest incident is one of the deadliest attacks this year by Al-Shabaab which has stepped up their assault against the government and African Union Mission in Somalia bases across south and central parts of the Horn of Africa nation, conducting ambushes and planting landmines.

The UN on Thursday (October 15) signed a cooperation agreement with Somalia on working together over the next five years for achieving "peace, stability and prosperity for all Somalis," according to a UN statement. The UN Sustainable Development

Cooperation Framework's (UNCF) agreement was signed in Somalia's capital Mogadishu in presence of senior officials from the two sides, including Somalia's Deputy Prime Minister Mahdi Mohamed Guled and the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia James Swan, the statement said. The UNCF will replace the UN Strategic Framework that will expire by the end of 2020.

The Prime Minister of the Federal Government of Somalia Mohamed Hussein Roble has on Thursday (October 15) laid the foundation stone for a national emergency operation centre to deal with emergencies caused by several types of disasters. The Emergency Center will be a liaison between all emergency services across the country, collect information on upcoming emergencies, and share them with stakeholders.

A Turkish company on Monday signed a 14-year contract in Somalia to operate and rehabilitate the port of its capital city, Mogadishu, local media reported on Monday (October 12). "Turkish ports operator Albayrak and the federal government of Somalia have signed an agreement that grants the company a new 14-year concession to manage the Port of Mogadishu," said Somalia National Television. The inking of the deal came after days of discussions between the Albayrak Group and the Somali government on revenue sharing, among other key issues surrounding the deal.

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Somali National Army (SNA) have committed to enhancing coordination on joint military operations to counter the threat posed by Al-Shabaab terrorists. The AMISOM Force Commander, Lt. Gen. Diomedede Ndegeya, the SNA Commander Land Forces, Brig Gen Abas Amin Ali, and AMISOM and SNA sector commanders, last week on Thursday (October 08), agreed as a matter of importance to establish a Joint Operations Coordination Cell.

Twenty-five military officers from the Ethiopian contingent of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) have completed a two-day online training on human rights. The training, which ended last week on Thursday (October 08), is part of AMISOM efforts to ensure that deployed personnel acquire knowledge and comply with international frameworks on human rights and humanitarian law. The Head of the Protection, Human Rights, and Gender Cluster for AMISOM, Kareem Adebayo, urged the officers to apply the acquired knowledge and skills to perform their duties.

## **South Sudan**

The UN said on Thursday (October 16) that 800,000 people in South Sudan have been affected by flooding since July. The UN's Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has allocated \$10 million to provide life-saving assistance to 360,000 of the most vulnerable people. These funds are in addition to the \$10 million released earlier by the Humanitarian Coordinator through the South Sudan Humanitarian Fund to kickstart the flood response. The UN further said an additional \$46 million is required to respond to the immediate needs due to the floods through the end of 2020.

The head of the African Union (AU) mission in South Sudan, Joram M. Biswaro has commended President Salva Kiir's effort in the recent signing of Sudan's peace deal.

Biswaro, accompanied by South Sudan's Foreign Affairs Minister, Beatrice Khamisa Wani, visited Kiir in his office in Juba on Thursday (October 15).

South Sudan's President Salva Kiir said the proposal to change the country's current currency is a long-term proposal, which has not yet been passed by the council of ministers. Speaking during an extraordinary meeting of the council of ministers on held on Wednesday (October 14), Kiir said the proposal is to be subjected to a study before a decision is made as part of efforts to control hyperinflation.

The European Union (EU) ambassador to South Sudan, Christian Bader met South Sudan's First Vice President, Riek Machar to discuss the status of the implementation of the peace agreement. Speaking to reporters after Tuesday's (October 13) meeting, Bader said they held very lengthy conversations with Machar on several issues, specifically citing the delays in the implementation of the security arrangements. "We mentioned a lot of issues that were preventing things from going as fast as we all wished to do, like the coronavirus that has brought some unnecessary delays, but things are going in the right way," he said.

The Chinese government has pledged \$300,000 for disaster response in South Sudan. Ning, China's ambassador to South Sudan made the announcement on Monday (October 12). He said the aid will help South Sudan respond to floods which have affected at least 800,000 people across the world's newest nation.

## **Sudan**

The Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, was in Khartoum on Thursday (October 15) to engage with Sudanese authorities in advance of next week's Security Council session on resolution 2046 (2012), and that is scheduled for Thursday, 22 October. So far, Mr. Onanga-Anyanga has met with the Prime Minister, the Chair of the Sovereign Council as well as other Ministers, including the Defence and Foreign Affairs. After meeting with members of the South Sudanese mediation team, Mr. Onanga-Anyanga will leave Khartoum today.

The state-owned company, Sudapet, will start crude oil production at the Rawat oil field in the White Nile State next November, a Sudanese official said on Thursday (October 15). Rawat is part of block 25, which is located at 140 km south of Kosti of the White Nile State, near the border with South Sudan.

UNAMID Joint Special Representative/Joint Chief Mediator (JSR/JCM), Mr. Jeremiah Mamabolo on Wednesday (October 14) met with the new Undersecretary of the Sudan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Mohamed Sherif Abdalla, at the latter's office in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum. During the meeting, they exchanged views on UNAMID's support to implementation of the Sudan's National Protection of Civilians Plan, the Tripartite Mechanism meeting on UNAMID and the Mission's envisaged exit from Darfur.

The UN last week on Friday (October 09) announce that the devastating rains that have left more than 875,000 people in need of aid and claimed more than 150 lives

since July have started to subside. However, it warned that the full extent of the unprecedented flooding will only become evident in the months ahead. More than 10 million people risk contracting waterborne diseases following extensive damage to hundreds of water sources and the collapse of several thousand latrines. Malaria and other vector-borne diseases are expected to rise, and Sudan's already fragile food security situation will likely worsen due to the destruction of thousands of hectares of crops just before the harvest. The humanitarian appeal in Sudan has received less than half of the \$1.6 billion requested.

Sudan's Sovereign Council and the Cabinet approved the Juba agreement for peace in Sudan, in a joint meeting held on Monday (October 12) evening. The meeting discussed the 3-October agreement and praised the great effort made by the negotiating delegations from both sides, including experts from ministries and various bodies. The joint meeting, which replaces the parliament, was chaired by Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan. According to a statement released after the meeting, the participant praised the role of the South Sudanese President Salva Kiir and the mediation team for their efforts to ensure the success of the peace process.

The Sudanese Ministry of Justice briefed on Sunday (October 11) the delegation of the peace signatory groups about an amended draft of the transitional constitutional document after harmonizing it with the Juba peace agreement. In line with the peace agreement signed between the government, and the Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF) and SLM of Minni Minnawi on October 3, the constitutional document should be amended to include the deal. Also, the peace deal takes primacy over the constitutional document in the event of a conflict between the two texts.

The World Bank approved \$400 million to fund the Sudanese government efforts to support poor families affected by the implementation of tough economic reforms during the transitional period. Last week on Thursday (October 08), the World Bank Group's Board of Executive Directors endorsed a new Country Engagement Note (CEN) for Sudan to support the transitional government plans to reform the economy and build an equitable social contract.

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### ***37th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union Meets Virtually***

The 37th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council was held virtually from 13- 14, October 2020. The Session was concluded by adopting the African Union budget for the year 2021, the theme of the Union for the year 2021, the implementation strategy for the AU reform, the realigned Rules of Procedures of the Assembly, Executive Council, and the PRC as well as the Statute of the Commission, and the scale of assessing member states for the AU Peace Fund. The Session was planned to be physically held in Ndjamena, Chad, from 3-4 July 2020, but eventually postponed and held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prior to the Executive Council session, the Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC) and its sub-committees, together with the AU Commission have thoroughly covered the items on the agenda and proposed recommendations to the Executive Council through the PRC report. The Session was chaired by H.E. Madam Naledi Pandor, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa. The Ethiopian delegation, led by H.E. Mr. Gedu Andargachew, Minister of Foreign Affairs, has participated in the meeting.

Another important item on the agenda was a discussion on the draft Transition Plan and Financing Strategy for the implementation of the new departmental structure of the Commission, which was initiated as part of the reform of the African Union. The plan has been developed as a special project that will be implemented over the medium term of three years starting from 2020, in a phased approach without disrupting the business of the Commission. During technical level negotiations, Ethiopia has significantly contributed to this outcome which is expected to be implemented transparently without compromising the cardinal objectives of the reform agenda of the Union which is extremely important to the value of Pan-Africanism. To add value and transparency to the process, it has been decided to conduct skills audit and competency assessment on all staff of the Commission by an independent HR firm before moving staff from the old to the new departmental structure.

As the Union is anchored on principles, the issue of equitable representation of Member States inclusive of Women and Youth, in all organs of the AU has been discussed. The Executive Council accordingly decided to revise the current quota system taking into account the new structure and reform agenda.

The other important item on the agenda of the Council was the adoption of the AU budget for the year 2021. The Executive Council in its 35th Session held in July 2019, in Niamey, Niger, has put a ceiling that the Member States assessed contributions for the 2021 budget should not exceed \$250 million to relieve the burden on the Member States. In line with this decision, the PRC sub-committees on administration and financial matters and sub-committee on Programs and Conferences together with the Commission have conducted intensive work on the draft budget and administrative issues and come up with an austerity budget proposal. Taking into account the impact of Covid-19 on the economies of member states, the Executive council has adopted the budget for 2021 with a significant reduction as compared to the previous financial year.

The Council has also adopted the theme of the African Union for the year 2021 together with its concept note and action plan to be the “**Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want**”. The Council has recognized the contribution of arts, culture, and heritage for the socio-economic development and integration of the African Continent. Ethiopia has proposed that restitution of looted cultural treasures to be accentuated during the period of the theme of the year stressing that it is a question of justice as well as a matter of rightfully reclaiming Africa's collective treasures.

The Council has also adopted the proposed draft Rules of Procedure of the Executive Council and the PRC which were aligned in accordance with the reform decisions. It

has also provisionally adopted the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly and the Statute of the AU Commission pending final endorsement by the Assembly as provided in the respective rules.

The Council has also received a progress report on the COVID-19 pandemic situation in Africa. Accordingly, the Council endorsed the report presented by the Commissioner for Social Affairs, H.E Amira Elfedil, and the Director of African Center for Disease Control (ACDC). The council has commended the efforts of Africa CDC and the Bureau of the AU Assembly chaired by H.E Cyril Ramaphosa, president of the Republic of South Africa, for their collective action to contain the transmission of the pandemic. It has also recognized the financial and in kind contribution of member states in the fight against COVID-19. The Council welcomed the initiatives of member states in fighting Covid-19, including the early initiative of H.E. Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in collaboration with the Jack Ma Foundation.

The Scale for assessing member states for the AU Peace fund has been under negotiation since 2017. However, a consensus was not reached on how to raise \$400 million in equal contribution of 80 million from each of the five AU regions. Extensive regional consultations were carried out with the assistance of the AU high representative on financing the Union. After lengthy deliberation the Executive Council has reached a consensus on the way forward, to apply the current scale of assessment as the only viable alternative. The Council underlined that ownership of our initiatives for peace and security in our continent is vital for silencing the Guns in Africa.

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### ***President Isaias Afwerki pays a three-day visit to Ethiopia***

It was on Tuesday (October 13) that the Eritrean President, Isaias Afwerki arrived in Jimma, Oromia Regional state for a three-day working visit to Ethiopia upon invitation of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and high-level Government officials accorded a warm welcome to the Eritrean President and members of the delegation upon their arrival at Jimma AbaJifar Airport. Foreign Minister Osman Saleh and Presidential Adviser Yemane Ghebreamariam were part of the Eritrean delegation that accompanied President Isaias.

The President's stay was marked by bilateral talks and visits to various projects in Ethiopia. The two Heads of State deliberated on further enhancement of bilateral ties as well as the consolidation of regional cooperation. President Isaias and Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed held extensive and frank consultations on bilateral cooperation and regional issues; and agreed to deepen their all-rounded cooperation.

During their stay in Ethiopia, the Eritrean delegation was invited to visit some of the national-level projects that are hoped to stimulate growth in the country and further facilitate economic integration in the region. The leaders jointly visited, among others, the Ethio-Engineering Group, Ethiopian Air Force, Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

(GERD), Koysha, and Gibe-III hydropower plants. During the visit to the GERD, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and engineers have explained the overall process of the construction and potential of the dam to President Isaias and his delegation. Following the visit, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed expressed his pleasure to visit the dam with President Isaias. He later tweeted his observation over the status of the construction of the dam and saying, “Much more awaits us. Success is inevitable. But marked progress is key.”

The leaders’ visit to the Koysha powerplant was also accompanied by explanations on the importance of the area to be one of the major tourist attraction sites in the country upon the completion of the hydroelectric project that stands at 36% of completion by now. Koysha is one of the three national-level projects of the Government that promised to replicate the successes of Addis Ababa city beautification projects.

Aside from industrial projects, the leaders also visited the Head Quarter of the Ethiopian Air Force in Bishoftu and natural parks in Addis Ababa and Konta. In Addis Ababa, they have jointly visited Entoto Natural Park which is one of the greenery and beautification mega-projects inaugurated recently in the capital. The leaders have also paid a visit to the National Park in Konta zone, Southern Region. The visit also included flower and coffee farming sites.

The Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki’s visit to Ethiopia was concluded on Thursday (October 15). President Isaias was seen off at the Bole International Airport by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed and several high-ranking officials as well as the Eritrean Ambassador to Ethiopia Mr. Semere Russom. “Following a successful three-day visit to Ethiopia and fruitful discussions on bilateral and regional issues, we say farewell to President Isaias and his delegation,” said Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed on Twitter.