

A Week in the Horn 09.10.2020

News in Brief

Triumphs, challenges, and the way forward: President Sahle-work's opening speech at joint Session of HPR, HoF

Total peace in Sudan is on the horizon, and it is achievable

Africa and the African Union

The Government of the Federal Republic of Germany in the framework of the European Union (EU) initiative 'Team Europe' donated on Thursday (October 08) 900.000 COVID-19 test kits to the African Union (AU) / Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC). An EU Humanitarian Air Bridge flight delivered the test kits in Bole International Airport at Addis Ababa. A press point following the handover ceremony highlighted the strong partnership between 'Team Europe' and the AU in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Human Resources, Science and Technology Department (HRST) of the African Union, in collaboration with CDC Africa and UNICEF, held a workshop on Tuesday (October 06) for AU member states on lifelong learning and the safe reopening of schools. This event responds to the recommendation by Ministers to the Commission to facilitate inter-country learning and the scaling up of good practices among Member States in the education sector. The workshop had in attendance, participants from, the African Union Commission (AUC – HRST), UNICEF, CDC Africa, and AU Member States. The workshop aimed, among other things, to take stock of recent evidence and practices on continuous learning and safe school reopening in Africa and elsewhere.

UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, issued new guidance on Thursday (October 08) on how to reduce stigma and discrimination in the context of the COVID-19. The guidance is based on the latest evidence on works to reduce HIV-related stigma and discrimination and applies it to COVID-19. UNAIDS notes that since the start of the pandemic, numerous forms of stigma and discrimination have been reported. These include xenophobia directed at people thought to be responsible for bringing COVID-19 into countries, attacks on health-care workers and verbal and physical abuse towards people who have recovered

from COVID-19. According to UNAIDS, as with the HIV epidemic, stigma and discrimination can significantly undermine the response.

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The UN announced on Thursday (October 08) that a joint report by UNICEF, World Health Organization (WHO), World Bank, and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs on stillbirths, indicated that nearly 2 million babies are stillborn every year, or one every second. And that is according to the first-ever stillbirth estimate that is included in the report. In 2019, 3 in 4 stillbirths occurred in sub-Saharan Africa or Southern Asia. The new report warns that the COVID-19 pandemic could worsen the global number of stillbirths. A 50 per cent reduction in health services due to the pandemic could cause nearly 200,000 additional stillbirths over a 12-month period in 117 low- and middle-income countries.

Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid, Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy addressed on Tuesday (October 06) the Launch event of the ‘Africa Data Leadership Initiative (ADLI)’, organized by the UN Economic Commission for Africa, Smart Africa and Future State. This initiative aimed at ensuring the data economy drives equitable growth and social progress across the Continent. The Commissioner said, “Data science in Africa, for Africa led by Africa-based scientists, can play a key role in addressing many of the Continent’s challenges.”

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) last week on Friday (October 02) called for urgent action to address the dire situation of migrants attempting to cross the central Mediterranean Sea in search of safety in Europe and to tackle the shocking conditions they face in Libya, at sea and frequently upon their reception in Europe. The call follows a week-long mission to Malta by a team of human rights [officers].

As part of the preventive diplomacy efforts of ECOWAS, AU and the UN geared towards ensuring the holding of a credible, transparent and peaceful presidential election on 18 October 2020 in the Republic of Guinea, a Joint High-Level Solidarity Mission was undertaken to the Republic of Guinea from 30th September to 4th October 2020. The mission was aimed at deepening engagement with various political actors and stakeholders in the electoral process, with a view to ensuring a credible, transparent, inclusive and violence-free election. In a communiqué issued on last week on Friday

(October 02), the joint Mission reiterated the need for dialogue among the candidates and political actors as well as the urgent signing of the code of good conduct before the election and urges the candidates to refrain from announcing the results before the organs legally mandated to do so.

U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Joel Tyler, director of operations, U.S. Africa Command, traveled to the African continent to engage with partners, visit key U.S. military operating locations, and deepen his understanding of security in the region, Sept. 27 to Oct. 1. During his engagement, Tyler visited Djibouti, Somalia, and Kenya. Tyler's trip highlighted AFRICOM's commitment to working with our East African partners and operating in a degraded pandemic environment. The U.S. continues to operate and train with our East African partners.

Ethiopia

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali together with his Ministerial delegation received on Thursday (October 08), the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy/Vice President and his delegation, to discuss bilateral and regional issues of mutual interest. The delegation also met with President Sahle-work Zewde and Foreign Minister Gedu Andargachew. Borrell reaffirmed EU's support for Ethiopia's reform agenda and the Union's attachment to its strategic partnership with Ethiopia. Josep Borrell also attended a handover ceremony of 1.4 million test kits to the Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC). The kits were delivered through EU Humanitarian Air Bridge flight as part of the EU's global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, worth over €26 million, with contributions from the EU, Germany, Austria, Spain, and Sweden.

Ethiopia has repatriated 297 migrants from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia on Thursday (October 08). Among the returnees, 25 are children. Officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other government agencies welcomed the returnees at Bole International Airport.

Ethiopia's Minister of Education, Dr Getahun Mekuria, held on Thursday (October 08) a video conference meeting with Baroness Sugg, UK's Minister for Foreign Dev't Affairs and Special Envoy for Girls' Education. During the meeting, Sugg pledged UK's continued support to inclusive education in Ethiopia, particularly for girls in rural areas and at refugee camps. The UK is the largest donor to Ethiopia's education sector.

Minister of the Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy, Dr. Seleshi Bekele along with Vice President of Somali Region Mustefa Mohammed inaugurated on Thursday (October 08) a solar power plant built at a cost of 467,000 USD in Korele town. The newly inaugurated solar micro-grid electric power plant, the first of its kind out of the 12 pilot projects in the country, is capable of generating 325 Kilowatt electric power.

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Ethiopian Diaspora Agency has planned to raise 50 million Birr from the Diaspora community this year as part of the ‘Dine for Nation’ initiative. ‘Dine for Ethiopia’ is a resource mobilization initiative aims at raising 3 billion Birr for development projects in Gorgora, Wonchi and Koysa located in Amhara, Oromia and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples’ regional states, respectively. The resource mobilization program, launched by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in August, is open to all Ethiopians including friends of Ethiopia. Ethiopian Diaspora Agency Director-General, Selamawit Dawit told ENA on Thursday (October 08) that the fund raising program will be carried out in collaboration with Ethiopian missions, ambassadors, diplomats around the world.

Ethiopian Embassy in New Delhi, India, and the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) co-organized on Monday (October 05) a webinar meeting to deepen trade and investment relations between the two countries. Held under the theme, “Building momentum in Ethiopia-India economic partnership through trade and investment opportunities,” the meeting brought more than 250 business people and government officials together. At the occasion, State Minister Tsion Teklu delivered a keynote speech inviting Indian Investors to participate in realizing Ethiopia’s dream of becoming the leading manufacturing hub in Africa. Tizita Mulugeta, Ambassador of Ethiopia to India, highlighted the enormous benefits the Indian investors may get partaking in the Ethiopian economy.

Ethiopia has developed a digital monitoring system that controls firearms movement in the country. The digital system is an implementation of the Firearms Administration and Controlling Proclamation that the government approved to control illegal firearms trafficking and related activities. Speaking at a ceremony prepared to celebrate “African Amnesty Month” on Wednesday (October 07), Peace Minister Muferiat Kamil said the digital firearms monitoring and controlling system will help to control illegal

circulation of firearms in the country by registering the serial number of the weapons in a digitized system.

The Ethiopian Diaspora has reportedly raised over 48 million Birr for the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) during the last three months. In an exclusive interview with ENA on Wednesday (October 07) Ethiopian Diaspora Agency Director-General Selamawit Dawit said the diaspora is encouraged more than ever to support the dam, especially after the first phase filling in July. Out of the total amount raised, over 20 million Birr was collected while 28 million Birr is pledged. According to the director-general, the agency has planned to raise 200 million Birr in total this Ethiopian Fiscal Year.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on Wednesday (October 07) officially inaugurated the Bahir Dar Industrial Park which is constructed with an outlay of more than 53 million USD. The first phase of the park development, constructed by the China Civil Engineering Construction Company (CCECC) in Bahir Dar city of Amhara region, lies on 75 hectares of land with 8 sheds in which investors are currently finalizing set up to become operational. When fully operational, the Bahir Dar Industrial Park is expected to create jobs to more than 10,000 Ethiopians and boost the nation's export trade.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs held a wide-ranging discussion on Wednesday (October 07) with Ethiopian media professionals reporting in the Arabic language on the GERD. The meeting aimed to discuss ongoing activities and signpost favorable agendas to better cover stories related to the dam. At the occasion, the Spokesperson of the Ministry, Ambassador Dina Mufti, commended the media professionals for communicating Ethiopia's stance over the GERD to the Arabic audience. The works of media professionals would even be more fruitful if they explore issues over the dam from various perspectives, he added. According to the Spokesperson, the Arabic reports of the dam should also focus on people-to-people engagements and activities related to trade, investment, and tourism between Ethiopia, the Middle East, and Arab countries.

The House of Federation has approved unanimously on Tuesday (October 06) the request to form a new regional state by joining five zonal administrations and one special Woreda (district) located in the southern part of Ethiopia. The new regional state named 'South West Ethiopia Nations Regional State' will be formed by joining Kaffa, Sheka, Bench Sheko, Dawuro, and West Omo zones as well as Konta special woreda, it was

indicated. The zonal administrations and special woreda have requested for a new regional state as they share similar language, culture, history, and geographical landscape that would make them beneficial.

Authorities in Addis Ababa on Monday (October 05) shut down a part of the country's airspace in the Benishangul-Gumuz region, where the massive Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is being built. "The ban was imposed after consultations with the Air Force and other relevant government and security bodies," Wosenyeleh Hunegnaw, the Director- General of the Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority, told the media. As a result, he said, commercial or passenger flights, or any other types of flights, will not be allowed to fly through the area near the vicinity of the dam.

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Ethiopia's tourism sector that has been interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic over the past seven months, will fully be reopened until the end of this October, Tourism Ethiopia announced. In an exclusive interview with ENA, Tourism Ethiopia Director-General, Sileshi Girma said most of tourism facilities including hotels, tour operators and tourist destinations in Ethiopia have stopped operations because of the pandemic over the past months and this has been hugely affecting the sector. According to Sileshi, the sector will be open for international tourists based on the National Travelers Safety Protocol developed by the country to help contain the spread of COVID-19 and protect the safety of tourists.

The German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) on Monday (October 05) handed over two field vehicles and various surveying equipment to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia. The donation is part of GIZ's initiative to supporting the implementation of the African Union Border Programme (AUBP) on behalf of the German Federal Foreign Office across the continent. Receiving the donations on behalf of the Ministry, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Woinshet Tadesse thanked GIZ and said the donation would improve the technical capabilities of Ethiopia to address the objectives of AUBP.

Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Tourism & Wildlife, Najib Balala said Kenya wants to work with Ethiopia in the tourism sector. He said this during a virtually held discussion on Monday (October 05) with Ambassador of Ethiopia to Kenya, Meles Alem. The meeting deliberated possibilities to

scale up the relations between the two countries with a particular emphasis to the tourism sector. Ambassador Meles noted the severe effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sectors in both countries. He underscored that Ethiopian and Kenyan stakeholders in the tourism sector should work together and secure a vibrant tourism in the post COVID-19 period.

Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Ambassador Woinshet Tadesse confers with the Personal Representative of the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Lutadil Yannick, and his delegation on Sunday (October 04) in Addis Ababa. The two sides exchanged views on issues of mutual interest and on how to enhance the bilateral relations of the two sisterly countries. The Permanent Secretary also briefed the delegation about the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and Ethiopia`s firm position for the equitable and reasonable utilization of the waters of the Nile. The delegation from the DRC further noted the need to reopening of Ethiopia`s embassy in Kinshasa.

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State Minister Ambassador Redwan Hussien received on Friday (October 02) copies of the credentials of the Ambassadors of the Kingdom of Spain, the Republic of Poland, and the French Republic to Ethiopia. State Minister Redwan held fruitful talks with the ambassadors to further strengthen relations with Ethiopia.

A delegation led by the President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, President Sahle-Work Zewde, arrived in Juba on Saturday (October 03) to attend the signing of a peace agreement between the Transitional Government and the rebel groups in Sudan, after a year of negotiations under the auspices of South Sudanese President H.E. President Salva Kiir.

President Sahle-Work Zewde bid farewell last week on Friday (October 02) to three Ambassadors who have finished their term in Ethiopia. The Ambassadors include Ambassador Mark Ramsaden of New Zealand, Ambassador Antoine Chevrier of Canada and Ambassador Sulayman Alieu Jack of the Gambia. The Ambassadors appreciated the cooperation and support that they received while in Ethiopia. On the same day Foreign Minister Gedu Andargachew has met the ambassadors of Nezealand and Canada thanked them for scaling up their countries` relations with Ethiopia.

Eritrea

Seven patients have been diagnosed positive for COVID-19 in tests carried out on Thursday (October 08) at Quarantine Centers in Shilao (5), Adibara (1) in Gash Barka Region; and, the Nyala Hotel (1) in Asmara in the Central Region. All the patients are nationals who returned from Sudan and Ethiopia recently. The patient in Asmara is one of those quarantined on arrival from Ethiopia with a Chartered Flight two weeks ago. On the other hand, six 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 364. The total number of confirmed cases in the country to-date has risen to 405.

President of the Federal Republic of Somalia, Mr. Mohammed Abdullahi Mohammed and his delegation flew back home in the afternoon hours of Monday (October 05) concluding a fruitful two-day working visit to Eritrea. During the two-day working visit, President Isais Afwerki and President Mohammed Abdullahi Mohammed held extensive talks aimed at further enhancement of bilateral ties and consolidation of a strong, independent, and sovereign Somalia. The two leaders further agreed to re-double ongoing efforts for regional integration on the basis of the Tri-Partite Agreement signed subsequently between Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia. Accompanied by President Isaias Afwerki, President Mohammed Abdullahi Mohammed and his delegation visited various development sites and projects in the Southern and Northern Red Sea Regions.

Djibouti

Staff from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on Monday (October 05) assisted Djiboutian authorities as they attended to the grim task of recovering and burying eight drowning victims whose remains washed ashore after a lethal journey from Yemen over the weekend. According to IOM, the victims, from a total of 34 mainly Ethiopian and Somali migrants seeking to return to Africa after attempting to find work in the Arabian Gulf make even more tragic a recent wave of Africans arriving in Djibouti.

Kenya

President Uhuru Kenyatta on Sunday (October 04) discussed the regional peace and security with his Egyptian counterpart Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi. While on his way from France, the President made a stopover in Egypt and paid a

courtesy call to Al-Sisi. The two leaders also discussed a number of subjects of mutual interest between Kenya and Egypt including trade and Africa's response to the novel coronavirus. "Through Kenya's non-permanent member seat at the United Nations Security Council, Kenya further aims to contribute to global peace and security, with the ultimate goal being the attainment of sustainable development for the year 2021-2022," the President said.

A Kenyan court on Wednesday (October 07) convicted two men for helping Al Qaeda-linked gunmen to storm Nairobi's Westgate shopping mall and kill at least 67 people in 2013. The attack proved Somali militants could strike at the heart of the capital. The assault on the upscale mall, a favourite with the growing middle class and foreign workers, came two years after Kenya sent troops into Somalia following kidnappings and raids on Kenyan soil. A third accused, also charged under a national terrorism act, was acquitted in the trial, which was the only prosecution conducted by Kenya over the assault by Somali Al Shabab militants.

The government of Somalia and Cuba have denied reports that two Cuban doctors who were kidnapped in Kenya in April 2019 have been released. The two governments have denied the reports that al-Shabab had released two Cuban doctors who had been held captive by al-Shabaab for a year and a half. The acting foreign minister of Somalia Ahmed Isse Awad denied saying that the information that has circulated and that has been replicated by various media and on digital social networks, about the alleged release of the two kidnapped Cuban doctors, Assel Herrera Correa and Landy Rodríguez Hernández was a fabricated one. Through a tweet by the Cuban Embassy in the United State, the Cuban Ministry of External Relationship said efforts to rescue the doctors was still ongoing.

Somalia

Former Somali Prime Minister Dr. Ali Khalif Galeyr has passed away in Jigjiga, the capital of the Somali regional state in Ethiopia on Thursday (October 08). He served as PM in 2000 and Khatumo state president in the latest years of his life. Besides an illustrious career as a politician, he was a noted scholar with teaching experience at universities in the US. Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo has sent his condolences over the sudden demise of the former PM.

The Force Commander of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMSIOM), Lt. Gen. Diomedede Ndegeya, on Wednesday (October 07) concluded his familiarization visit of all six AMISOM sectors, with a visit to sector two and sector six, in Dhobley and the coastal city of Kismayo, respectively, both located in Jubaland State of Somalia.

At least six Somali government soldiers were killed and four others wounded when a roadside bomb blast struck a military vehicle in the Middle Shabelle region on Wednesday (October 07), an official said. Ibrahim Adan, a police officer in the region told Anadolu Agency over phone that an “improvised explosive blast hit the military vehicle carrying soldiers traveling from Bal’ad district to a military observation post in the area.” Three soldiers escaped the attack and the wounded were transported to Mogadishu for treatment, he added.

South Sudan

The South Sudanese government said that the unification of the armed forces in the country will be effective in November of this year. The unification of the armed groups with the government army of South Sudan had to be achieved during the first six months of the pre-transitional period after the signing of the revitalized peace agreement. However, two years after the signing of the agreement, the matter is still pending due to the lack of resources and international support for the costly process. The deputy head of Sudan’s Sovereign Council Mohamed Hamdan Daglo “Hemetti” on Wednesday (October 07) met in Juba with First Vice-President Riek Machar, and the South Sudanese Presidential Advisor for Security Affairs Tut Gatluak to discuss the implementation the revitalized peace agreement.

The World Food Programme (WFP) in South Sudan on Wednesday (October 07) strongly condemned an attack on its boat convoy carrying food assistance. The river convoy had 13 crew people aboard when it was attacked near Shambe [North]. One person is missing and presumed killed, while three people suffered gunshot wounds. WFP stresses that humanitarian workers and contractors risk their lives delivering much-needed food assistance to the most vulnerable. The food aid was intended for people displaced after losing their homes and crops to floods. Over 800,000 people have been impacted by floods in South Sudan, on top of years of conflict that have caused widespread hunger and malnutrition.

A Tanzanian national has been appointed the new head of South Sudan National Revenue Authority (SSNRA). Dr. Patrick Mugoya, who was previously the deputy head of Tanzania Revenue Authority, replaces Dr. Olympio Attipoe, a Ghanaian national. Speaking to reporters in Juba on Tuesday (October 06), Mugoya vowed to put in place mechanisms for transparency and accountability in revenue collections as well as end all tax leakages and unnecessary waivers.

President Salva Kiir has been awarded a prize for his mediation of the Sudan peace agreement which was negotiated during one year in the South Sudanese capital. The peace prize that he received during the signing ceremony of the Sudan peace agreement in Juba on Saturday (October 03) was delivered by the Universal Peace Federation, an international and interreligious non-governmental organisation to support efforts for peace in the world.

Sudan

The Vice Chairman of the Sovereign Council, Mohamed Hamdan Daglo “Hemedti” met in Juba on Thursday (October 07) with the leader of the SPLM-N Abdel Aziz al-Hilu paving the way for the resumption of peace talks this month. In press statements after the meeting, Hemedti and al-Hilu declared that the purpose of the meeting between them is to break the deadlock and restore confidence between the two parties for the sake of peace in Sudan. They affirmed that they would resume talks after holding workshops in line with the Addis Ababa Agreement between Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok and al-Hilu to discuss all obstacles and enhance efforts to achieve just peace in all parts of Sudan.

The U.S. Envoy for Sudan, Donald Booth, discussed with the leaders of Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) the country’s removal from the terror list parties in separate meetings on Wednesday (October 07). Booth is currently in Khartoum after attending the signing of peace agreement with armed groups in Juba for talks with the government officials and the ruling coalition alliance. He met with the head of the executive office of the Unionist Alliance and Omer al-Digair of the Sudanese Congress Alliance.

Sudan’s transitional authority and armed groups on Saturday (October 3) signed the final peace agreement and vowed to work together for peace implementation and democratic reforms. The Sudanese government, Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF and Sudan Liberation Movement of

Minni Minnawi (SLM-MM) signed a comprehensive peace agreement in Juba after a year of negotiations. Sudanese Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok in his speech spoke about this communion saying that “This peace would not have been possible without (the role of) Juba”. For his part, al-Burhan sang a song for the Sudanese army saying “Sudan is our country and we are all brothers”. Immediately, he was accompanied by the South Sudan Army Music Band and the applause of the crowd. President Kiir in his speech expressed this happiness and pride for the signing of the Sudan peace agreement in Juba despite all the challenges that faced the process.

The Joint Special Representative for the African Union-United Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), Jeremiah Mamabolo, on Saturday (October 07) attended the formal signing of the peace agreement between the transitional Government of Sudan, the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF), the Sudan Liberation Movement–Minni Minnawi (SLM/MM) and Sudan People’s Liberation Movement–North (SPLM-N) of Malik Agar in Juba, South Sudan. On this occasion, Mr. Mamabolo echoed the key message expressed in the UN Secretary General’s remarks to the signing ceremony, in which Mr. António Guterres welcomed the peace agreement as a historic milestone for the people of Sudan on the road of achieving peace and sustainable development.

A spokesman for the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC) ruling coalition said that the Transitional Legislative Council will be formed as soon as the leaders of the Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF) return to Sudan. On 3 October, the Sudanese government and the SRF armed groups signed a final peace agreement and agreed to include the peace document in the constitutional document that governs the transitional period within two weeks. “The legislative council will be formed as soon as the leaders of the Revolutionary Front return to Sudan,” FFC Spokesman Ibrahim Al-Sheikh told the Sudan Tribune after his return from Juba.

The Sudanese government and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement will resume negotiations during the third week of October. The announcement was made at a press conference on Monday (October 05) in Juba by the Chief Mediator Tut Gatluak. But he did not specify the date for the resumption of negotiations.

The Sudanese government said that the implementation of peace agreements requires huge resources amounting to at least \$ 7.5 billion. In line with a peace agreement signed with the armed groups, the government is committed

to allocating a huge amount of money for the development of the war-affected regions. On Thursday (October 07), the Ministry of Finance organized a workshop to discuss “Peace Development Projects” where the Finance Minister Heba Mohamed Ali remarked, “The implementation of peace requirements need huge resources amounting to at least \$ 7.5 billion, which must be provided over the next ten years.”

Triumphs, challenges, and the way forward: President Sahle-work’s opening speech at joint Session of HPR, HoF

President Sahle-Work Zewde officially opened the new joint session of the House of People’s Representatives and the House of Federation of the F.D.R.E on Monday (October 05). In her remarks, the President recounted the successes and challenges of the previous year while charting a course for the new priorities and direction for the new session.

She hailed the historic peace deal between Ethiopia and Eritrea that unchained the countries’ from a decade-long diplomatic deadlock. Recognizing the immense significance of this peace deal, the President recalled that the international community has honored the efforts of the Prime Minister through awarding him the Nobel Peace Prize 2020. President Sahle-work said this was one of the moments that positively portrayed the image of the nation at the international level.

The bygone year has also witnessed one of the palpable milestones in the filling and construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. President Sahle-work reiterated that the Government of Ethiopia was successful in completing delayed projects, such as the GERD that have been sources of public grievances. She said the first phase of filling of the reservoir was a triumphant moment for Ethiopians. This year, we will complete the second phase of filling the dam, and two of the turbines of the dam would start generating electricity, she said.

The President also highlighted the diplomatic challenges Ethiopia has faced concerning the filling and operation of the GERD. She said that Ethiopia was able to withstand unnecessary pressures and hand twisting attempts against its unwavering commitment to utilizing the Nile water resources. She said Ethiopia’s position in the negotiations on the dam is always the same and based on the principle of mutual benefit. The President underlined that her

country would not entertain any undue pressure that does not recognize its dire need and right to utilize the Nile waters.

According to President Sahle-work, the year has also been historic for Ethiopians have planted 5 billion seedlings. This has paved the way to the success of the Green Initiative launched by the Government of Ethiopia, she said. The President said in the New Ethiopian Year, the government will make the Green initiative project more participatory and will share the experience with the region for more impressive and inclusive results.

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Some of the achievements registered last year in the tourism and technology sectors are also inspiring to do even more in these areas, she said. She said the city beautification projects and the latest national-level initiatives to establish and expand better tourist attraction sites would revitalize the tourism sector that has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Regarding advancement in technology, the President underscored that the launching of the first satellite was just the beginning of Ethiopia's ambition to build a strong economy that is supported by technology.

In the just-passed Ethiopian year, the Government has also shown its commitments to be truthful to its motto of citizen-centered diplomacy by encouraging Ethiopian nationals living abroad to participate in the affairs of the nation. In line with this, she said it was also a year where cooperation agreements were made with the Middle East countries to ensure the dignity, rights, and legal employment of Ethiopian citizens.

President Sahle-work also reiterated that the Government of Ethiopia has been taking various measures that positively impacted the economic lives of many Ethiopians. She said three million citizens were able to get jobs. The Cluster farming technique has also helped many to reap a lot from their farmlands, she said. The Government also took various monetary measures to lower the inflation rate, she added. The President said the Government is committed to implementing measures in the New Year to make sure that the youth are employed, farmers are successful in their harvest, and the inflation rate on consumer goods is lowered to a single digit.

Although "last year was a year of great determination and dedication and a milestone for our country to move forward," President Sahle-work said, "it was also a year of many challenges," numerating the hurdles from the COVID-19 pandemic and the desert locust invasion to violence and

extremism. She recalled that it was a year in which the economy was attacked, education was discontinued and elections were extended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The President also reiterated that the Government has been taking various measures to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The preventive measures will continue until the virus is neutralized, she said adding that the government is charting out measures to take in a post-COVID period to defuse long-lasting effects of the virus on the country's economy.

She said it was also a year where citizens were killed, injured, maimed, displaced, and their property destroyed because of extremism and violence. Had it not been for the cooperation of the public and security forces, the problem would have gotten out of control, she said. She highlighted how violence and extremism have been threatening the democratic sphere in the country. We were able to change the direction of "the arrow that was thrown at us" and made sure the rule of law is enforced and the way to building an inclusive democracy is paved, she added.

Total peace in Sudan is on the horizon, and it is achievable

Last week on 3 October 2020, the Government of Sudan and its group of opposition Sudan Revolutionary Forces (SRF) that comprised of nine parties have signed a peace agreement in the South Sudanese capital, Juba. So satisfying was that it is President Salva Kiir Mayardit who mediated the peace process for about a year. It was a fact that soon after the independence of South Sudan, Khartoum and Juba were not able to see eye to eye. However, after the Addis Ababa peace agreement of South Sudanese in 2018 and the peace deal of Sudan between the civilian and military forces and the formation of a unity government, relations between Juba and Khartoum turned into a new page.

We have found ourselves since then that the Government of South Sudan playing a crucial role in the mediation of the Sudanese parties. This is, therefore, a significant regional development in the positive to consolidating peace in the Horn of Africa.

The signing ceremony in Juba has to be looked at and appreciated, therefore, in light of its regional significance. It is because of this significance that Ethiopia was represented by its president Sahlework Zewde along with the

presidents of Djibouti, Chad, and Somalia. Egypt and Uganda were represented at their Prime Ministers level. The AU Commission chairperson was in attendance while the UN Secretary-General addressed the gathering via a video link. Many more East African, as well as the Gulf countries and representatives of the Western world, were in attendance too.

Looking at the substance of the peace agreement, one has to agree that it is a significant development that has put Sudan on the right track, a track that solidifies the fact that conflicts have to be resolved through dialogue under the African motto of “African Solutions to African problems”. The agreement will address power and resource sharing as well as political and human rights problems that would uphold all sorts of freedoms that a democratic state should have to fulfill. The entire international community has very much commended the agreement.

The most frequently raised issue was the absence of SPLM-N (Abdulaziz Al Hilu) and SLM (Abdul Al Wahid Al-Nur) groups. The Sudanese government negotiation with the two parties is on-going, and that Ethiopia calls up on all the stakeholders of Sudan to redouble efforts to get the parties to agree on an acceptable deal.

The agreement signed in Juba and the negotiations with the SPLM-N and SLM all need international support. One is support for the implementation of the already signed agreement, both diplomatically and financially, and the second support is for a successful outcome from the negotiations that would be held with SPLM-N and SLM. Conflict in Sudan took more than three decades in Darfur, Kordofan, Blue Nile, and other areas with less intensity. Now, total peace in Sudan is on the horizon, and it is achievable.

This would, in turn, enable Sudan the chance to address the economic challenges it has faced for a long that hindered it from exploring its full economic potential.