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News in Brief

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Africa and the African Union

The 13th and 14th Extraordinary Sessions of the Assembly of the African Union took place virtually on 5 and 6 December 2020 respectively. The 13th Extraordinary Session considered issues relating to the African Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and passed decisions and a declaration providing for, among others, the start of actual trading on the basis of the Agreement on 1 January 2021. This was a landmark decision as it is the true embodiment of the age-old dream of Pan-Africanism. Trading is now expected to commence soon progressively incorporating those countries that have not yet finalized their tariff offers.

The key points of the African Union's Agenda 2063 were discussed at an event hosted by the World Government Summit, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the African Union – African Peer Review Mechanism (AU-APRM) where a new exchange programme was announced to facilitate knowledge sharing between the UAE, UNDP and AU. High-level ministers from the centre of African governments discussed key themes of future preparedness, strategy and innovation, government excellence and capabilities, government services food security and economic transformation, as well as ways to collaborate moving forward. The forum marks the start of a broader partnership between participants.

Ethiopia

The Prime Minister office of Ethiopia issued a statement today (December 11) detailing the humanitarian assistance efforts in the Tigray region. The statement reads that the Federal government takes its responsibility to citizen safety and well-being seriously and is committed to ensuring that vulnerable communities in the Tigray region are provided the necessary humanitarian assistance. “Reports to the contrary are results of a misinformation campaign by those that are bent on undermining the Federal government,” it says. **(See statement)**

Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP) announced on Wednesday (December 09) that towns whose access to electricity was cut off by the damages caused by the extremist TPLF clique will receive power by Sunday. The towns in Tigray Region, which have been without power for a month following the TPLF extremist attack on power transmission infrastructure, are expected to get power within four days, it was learned. Ethiopian Electric Power Communication Director, Moges Mekonnen told ENA that Tekeze power plant and Ashegoda wind farm are located in Tigray Regional State. He added that they received 230 KV from the national grid.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed and President Uhuru Kenyatta inaugurated the one-stop border post in Moyale on Wednesday (December 09). The inauguration of the border post is expected to facilitate trade between the two countries by cutting down inefficiencies at the Moyale border. The two leaders also inaugurated the Hawassa – Moyale 500km asphalt road, which is the Ethiopia component of the Cape to Cairo Trans – Africa highway. Together with the one-stop border post infrastructural investment, both aim to boost Ethiopia-Kenya trade ties. **(See article)**

About 1,000 senior military officers and officers, who had been kidnapped by the TPLF junta on the 4th of November were freed by an operation conducted by the National Defense Force and the Federal Police. National Defense Force Indoctrination Director-General, Major General Mohammed Tessema told the media on Wednesday (December 09) that the TPLF junta had kidnaped some 1,000 senior military officers and officers of the Northern Command of the Ethiopian Defense Force after inviting them dinner on the 4th of November. The fugitive TPLF junta have been running with their hostages for about a month till they kept them at a place called Adet, which used to be a command base during the armed struggle, he added. However, in a joint military operation conducted by the National Defense Force and the

Federal Police, the senior officers and officers, including the Operation Deputy Head of the Northern Command, Brigadier General Adamneh Mengste were freed without any harm.

A delegation led by Ethiopian Ambassador to China, Teshome Toga, on Wednesday (December 09) held bilateral discussion with the Governor of China's Jiangxi Province, Yi Lianhong. According to a statement from the Ethiopian Embassy in Beijing, the delegation held successful bilateral talks in Nanchang city during a three-day working visit to the province. The two sides held "fruitful bilateral talks on economic, cultural and people-to-people cooperation," the statement added.

The United Nations said on Tuesday (December 08) it is "engaging at the highest level" with Ethiopia's government, following reports that a UN team was shot at and briefly detained while attempting to access a refugee camp over the weekend in the Tigray region. Redwan Hussein, the spokesperson for the Ethiopian government's task force in Tigray, told reporters that the UN staffers "broke" two checkpoints and were attempting to pass a third when they were fired upon and detained. No injuries were reported and the staffers have been released, he added.

Ethiopia and Algeria have agreed to enhance their bilateral cooperation, particularly in the industry sector. Ethiopian ambassador to Algeria, Nebiat Getachew and Algerian Minister of Industry, Ferhat Ait Ali Brahmi on Tuesday (December 08) held discussions on ways of strengthening cooperation between the two countries. During the discussion, both sides highlighted the need to establish a working mechanism to further enhance their bilateral cooperation in the industrial sector. Minister of Industry, Brahmi on his part noted that Ethiopia and Algeria enjoyed robust political relations both at bilateral and multilateral levels but need to work further to improve economic ties for the benefit of their people.

Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in collaboration with the International Labor Organization (ILO) has launched on Tuesday (December 08) a mobile application that provides vital information to Ethiopian migrants seeking job in the Middle East. The application named "Yeguzo Sinq" provides vital information to the job seekers in the Middle East countries in English, Amharic, Oromiffa, and Tigrinya languages. The application is expected to ease the challenges that Ethiopian migrants have been facing due to lack of sufficient information about their new job, their rights and responsibilities as well as the overall working environment of the country.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Demeke Mekonnen briefed on Monday (December 07) the ambassadors of Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, and South Africa on the current situation in the Tigray region. He appreciated the ambassadors and leaders of the countries that they represent for fully supporting the law enforcement operation in Tigray. Demeke said the operation was swiftly completed with minimum civilian casualties that enabled the federal government to carry out its plans to restore law and order in the region. Now the government is engaged with rebuilding infrastructure and telecommunication services, ensuring access to humanitarian assistance to the affected people, returning displaced people to their homes while apprehending the fugitives, he said.

Eritrea

As part of the regular, multi-faceted, consultations between Eritrea and Sudan, Eritrea's delegation composed of Foreign Minister Osman Saleh and Presidential Adviser Yemane Ghebreab met, in Khartoum on Tuesday (December 08), Sudan's President of the Sovereign Council, Gen. Abdul Fattah Al-Burhan. The delegation delivered a message from President Isaias Afwerki to President Al-Burhan. The message and ensuing discussions focused on current developments in Ethiopia and their ramifications for regional peace and stability. The two sides agreed to bolster their bilateral ties and advance regional cooperation.

Somalia

The Federal Government of Somalia, in partnership with the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM), conducted an airstrike on Thursday (December 08) against al-Shabaab's explosives factory and storage facility in the vicinity of Jilib, Somalia. Initial assessments indicate that the airstrike killed 10 al-Shabaab militants. These facilities have a history of producing explosives for al-Shabaab suicide attacks.

Somali Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble said on Monday (December 07) that his government is committed to delivering peaceful elections. "The Somali federal government is committed to delivering peaceful, credible elections that are as timely and inclusive as possible," Roble said after attending the Somali Partnership Forum, which kicked off in the capital Mogadishu. Somalia missed a deadline to hold parliamentary elections on Dec. 1 as agreed by the federal government and six regional states earlier this

year. The country's elections will still be held under the current clan-based system of indirect voting as one-person-one-vote elections are still not possible.

The president of the United States of America, Donald J. Trump, has ordered for the withdrawal of troops from Somalia. In a statement released by the US Department of Defense on Friday (December 04), the US President Donald Trump is said to have ordered the Pentagon and the U.S. Africa Command to "reposition the majority of personnel and assets out of Somalia by early 2021."

South Sudan

Government is working on an interconnection to export electricity to South Sudan, a Uganda Electricity Transmission Company Limited (UETCL) official disclosed. UETCL's Managing Director, Valentine Katabira told reporters in Kampala on Wednesday (December 09) that the interconnection is part of the agenda to create a regional electricity sharing platform through which the East African Community achieves stable power supply. "The interconnection with South Sudan is in line with the East African Community policy of connecting each country to have a power-sharing grid for better supply," he remarked.

Peace talks between the South Sudanese government and the opposition alliance have made significant progress even if there are still some outstanding issues, said the Sant'Edigio mediator on Sunday (December 06). Delegations from the South Sudanese government and the South Sudan Opposition Movements' Alliance (SSOMA) held a five-day meeting in Rome from Wednesday to Sunday to discuss a declaration of principles serving as a basis for negotiating a peace agreement. The government delegation was headed by Nhial Deng Nhial presidential Affairs Minister and Barnaba Marial Benjamin Presidential Advisor while SSOMA's delegation with headed by Thomas Cirillo.

South Sudan has reached a health cooperation agreement with China for the next five-year period. The deal, which was signed last week, allows China to deploy its medical teams in South Sudan over the period from 2021 to 2026. This move, Xinhua reported, paves way for strengthened cooperation between China's Anhui Medical University and South Sudan's Juba Teaching Hospital through knowledge sharing and capacity reinforcement. "We have always placed health care at the top of the agenda for cooperation

between South Sudan and China,” the Chinese ambassador to South Sudan, Hua Ning explained.

Sudan

UN senior official on Wednesday (December 09) called on the international community to support the fragile democratic transition in Sudan saying it can be derailed by the huge challenges the country has been facing. Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Rosemary DiCarlo briefed the Security Council on the situation in Sudan and the activities of UNITAMS which preparing to begin its activities to support the democratic transition on the 1st of January 2021.

The Security Council met on Tuesday (December 08) in a virtual platform on the UN Integrated [Transition] Assistance Mission in Sudan, or UNITAMS. The Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Rosemary DiCarlo, noted that Sudan is at a critical juncture, stressing that the country can move forward decisively in its transition, but that the process can still be derailed by the many challenges it faces. She said the new Mission began to deploy to Khartoum in October and is continuing its consultations with transitional authorities.

Senior Sudanese officials and the visiting Saudi Arabia’s foreign minister discussed the security of the countries bordering the Red Sea and the need for cooperation. Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud was in Khartoum on Tuesday (December 08) in the first visit to Sudan after the collapse of the former regime. During his one-day, he met with the head of the Sovereign Council and the Prime Minister to discuss bilateral relations and ways to activate bilateral cooperation agreements between the two countries. The Sovereign Council and the cabinet office issued separate statements following their meetings with the visiting Saudi top diplomat saying that he discussed the Red Sea security with them.

Sudan has been removed from the Special Watch List for alleged violations of religious freedom, announced Secretary of State Michael Pompeo on Monday (December 07). “I am pleased to announce that Sudan and Uzbekistan have been removed from the Special Watch List based on significant, concrete progress undertaken by their respective governments over the past year,” said Pompeo. “The courageous reforms of their laws and practices stand as models for other nations to follow,” he further said.

Humanitarian Assistance in Tigray Region

(Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Office of the Prime Minister
December 11. 2020)

At the beginning of the rule of law operations in the Tigray region, in response to the criminal clique's belligerent attacks on the Northern Command of the Ethiopian National Defence Forces, the Federal government formed a high-level committee to oversee humanitarian assistance in the region, led by the Ministry of Peace. This committee has been set up to coordinate all national and partner efforts in the mobilization and delivery of humanitarian assistance to vulnerable communities directly affected by measures to bring the belligerent clique to justice.

Following field technical assessments made by the committee, initial dispatch of food and non-food items were made to areas within the Tigray region that were under Federal command. In the areas where the criminal clique's militia were still active, considering the security threats that were prevalent at the time, delivery was delayed to ensure that humanitarian assistance reached the intended recipients. However, this situation has changed since Mekelle came under Federal command, concluding the active military intervention to apprehend the criminal clique.

By mid-November 2020, an initial round of humanitarian relief items, including medical items, were sent to Dansha, Welkait, Kafta/Humera and Debarq areas.

On December 8, 2020, 44 trucks carrying 18,200 quintals of food aid dispatched by the Federal Government reached the town of Shire for distribution to other parts of the region. The dispatch also includes 4 trucks carrying 5,500 quintals of food to Alamata. Similarly, 30 trucks carrying 12,500 quintals of food supplies have reached Mekelle, with an additional 7000 quintals of wheat flour dispatched to Mekelle. Three (3) trucks of medical supplies have almost reached the city of Mekelle and will be distributed by tomorrow. Seven (7) trucks of medical supplies to Shire and Adigrat towns have also been dispatched.

It is to be recalled that on November 29, 2020, the Federal Government signed an agreement with the United Nations that outlines collaboration for the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

The Agreement for an Enhanced Coordination Mechanism for Humanitarian Access in Ethiopia's Tigray Region, sets out the coordination mechanism's specific objectives and scope, its guiding principles, central commitments and coordination arrangements and its major stakeholders and their respective roles, responsibilities and accountabilities.

The agreement signed with the United Nations recognizes that the Government of Ethiopia at federal and regional levels has "primary responsibility for meeting assessed and potential humanitarian needs in the country" and that the delivery of assistance lies within a coordination framework under the Federal government's overall authority.

It also recognizes that "given the likelihood that UN and other humanitarian organizations will be delivering assistance in insecure environment, the Government of Ethiopia will be responsible for ensuring the safety and security of staff of UN agencies and humanitarian partners."

Suggestions that humanitarian assistance is impeded due to active military combat, in several cities and surrounding areas within the Tigray region, is untrue and undermines the critical work undertaken by the National Defence Forces to stabilize the region from the attacks waged by the belligerent clique. Sporadic gunfire exchanged with the retreating remnants of the militia and efforts to apprehend the criminal clique on the flee, need not be misconstrued as active conflict. However, as the Federal government is responsible for ensuring that humanitarian support and actors are protected while operating in an insecure environment, access will be coordinated in consultation with the Federal government as stipulated in the agreement.

The Federal government takes its responsibility to citizen safety and well-being seriously and is committed to ensuring that vulnerable communities in Tigray region are provided the necessary humanitarian assistance. Reports to the contrary are results of a misinformation campaign by those that are bent on undermining the Federal government.

Ethiopia, Kenya reiterate commitment to Cross-border Infrastructure Projects

From 09 to 10 December 2020, the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali embarked on a two-day official visit to the Republic of Kenya. Upon arrival in Moyale, Marsabit County, PM Dr. Abiy was warmly received by the President of the Republic of Kenya, Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta.

In Moyale, PM Dr. Abiy and President Uhuru toured and officially commissioned the Moyale One-Stop Border Post (OSBP). Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, PM Dr. Abiy stated that, the border post will serve as a key milestone to further enhance the trade, investment and tourism ties between the two peoples and countries. He noted, “we are one people, one family in two countries divided by an artificial border. We will prosper together.” The PM also reiterated the fact the OSBP will further accelerate the integration of the East African region and that the two countries need to work closely to combat the scourge of terrorism that is being perpetrated by groups such as Al Shabaab and the OLF and is threatening the peace and stability of the region.

President Uhuru, on his part, said “I believe that we are one country.” He noted, “what we want... is to see a deepening of the integration between our two countries.” Reiterating Kenya’s keen interest and commitment to increase the level of trade and investment, he said “we want to see Moyale become the Dubai of the Region.” He also reaffirmed Kenya’s readiness to jointly the security challenges that threaten the peace and security as well as the multifaceted economic interests of in the region.

Later on, PM Dr. Abiy Ahmed paid a visit to Lamu County where he, together with President Uhuru, inspected the ongoing construction of the new Lamu Port, an anchor project of the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor. During the tour, the two respective leaders reiterated their utmost commitment to the continued implementation of cross-border infrastructure projects that would serve as a springboard for the economic integration of the East African region.

In a joint address to the media briefly after inspecting the ongoing construction of the new 32-berth Lamu Port, the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Dr. Abiy Ahmed and the President of the Republic of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta said that Ethiopia and

Kenya are fast-tracking the development of the Mombasa-Nairobi-Addis Ababa Road Corridor Project to promote regional trade, investment and tourism. The corridor is part of the Trans-Africa Highway network.

In his statement PM Dr. Abiy said “visiting the Lamu Port, which is a key component of the Lamu, South Sudan, Ethiopia Transport Corridor, gave me hope that with such infrastructural investments, our regional economic integration aspirations are within reach.” He added, “[Today] we are witnessing the potential of Lamu Port not only for Ethiopia but also for South Sudan. This will help us realize our vision which we have already been discussing and working on for economic integration of our region and the transformation of the lives of our people.”

The Prime Minister also stated the fact that there is a lot of economic potential in Ethiopia but without ports and road connectivity it would be difficult to export products and import from abroad. “Without infrastructure, without economic integration, there is no way we can survive in the 21st century. We can transform the Horn of Africa as long as each government dedicates their time and resources to invest in infrastructure like my brother did in Kenya,” PM Abiy Ahmed said.

President Uhuru, on his part, said that Kenya and Ethiopia have embarked on the development of the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor, which is being developed to complement the Mombasa-Nairobi-Addis Ababa Road Corridor.

“The 1st Berth is complete and the other two berths are progressing well; indeed, they are 86% complete. Therefore, by end of October 2021, I hope to invite you and the President of South Sudan to join me in commissioning the First Three Berths of the Port of Lamu,” the President added.

President Kenyatta said following his tour of industrial parks in Hawassa in Ethiopia, the two countries have resolved to collaborate in establishing a Special Economic City in Moyale so that cross-border trade can thrive and improve the livelihoods of local communities.

He also stated,” “We must consider all transport corridor projects as regional projects, where Kenya, Ethiopia and our neighbouring countries, have a real stake.”

Historically, the umbilical cord that binds the sisterly countries first took root in London in the 1930s. When, two men of unequivocal passion, His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia and the “founding father of Kenya” first met. The Emperor was in exile and young Jomo Kenyatta was studying at the Quaker’s College.

The personal camaraderie they established necessitated a proper mutual understanding of respective countries, and helped them forge a symbiotic partnership which culminated in establishing an exemplary diplomatic relation between their countries in 1963. So close were the two that the physical location of the Ethiopian embassy in Nairobi is a testament to this.

Ethio-Kenyan diplomatic relations are chiefly characterized by a strong set of strategic partnerships, vibrant people-to-people ties, consistency irrespective of regime changes and ever-growing areas of cooperation, especially in the trade, investment, tourism and infrastructural linkages.

Since the coming of PM Dr. Abiy to office in April 2018, the leadership at the highest levels in both capitals has capitalized on revitalizing cross-border trade, investment and tourism in tandem with developing infrastructural and logistical interconnectivity. As such, both the inauguration of the OSBP and the inspection of the LAPSSET Corridor project are part of this holistic scheme geared towards benefitting not just countries that are the main stakeholders but also other countries in the region.

Efforts to deepen cross-border integration of economies, banks and trade markets are taking shape. Before long, Kenyan banks such as Equity and Kenya Commercial Bank will have presence in Ethiopia.

Following on this projection, businessmen from both countries have exchanged visits, with the hope to actualize liberalization of our markets. The granting of a second frequency line for Ethiopia Airlines to fly to Mombasa will squarely compliment the above.

On challenges; Ethiopia and Kenya face similar human insecurities. Chief of which are poverty, and food insecurity. Kenya’s solution, as encapsulated in the big four agenda is akin to Ethiopia’s strategy. For both countries, these challenges have often cluttered development agendas. In hindsight, they have brought us closer than before.

A calm assessment of these threats requires us to further enhance and develop common strategies; against poverty or hunger, and to continue to strengthen partnerships in finding solutions. The threats do not recognise boundaries whether legal or ethical. For Ethiopia, our foreign policy outlook places specific concern on countries in the region. This is on the belief that prosperity and stability for our neighbours is also our stability.

AU holds 13th & 14th Extraordinary Assembly Sessions

The 13th and 14th Extraordinary Sessions of the Assembly of the African Union took place virtually on 5 and 6 December 2020 respectively. The 13th Extraordinary Session considered issues relating to the African Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and passed decisions and a declaration providing for, among others, the start of actual trading on the basis of the Agreement on 1 January 2021. This was a landmark decision as it is the true embodiment of the age-old dream of Pan-Africanism. Trading is now expected to commence soon progressively incorporating those countries that have not yet finalized their tariff offers.

At the outset of the meeting, the 13th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly received the reports presented by the AfCFTA Champion as well as the Secretary-General of AfCFTA with a sense of optimism. Both of them reported that negotiations on all tracks are moving forward with reasonable speed. Once trading starts, the momentum is expected to accelerate even better. Many member states have made tariff offers either individually or through their respective regional Customs Unions. Ratification stands at 34 for now and is expected to pick up. The Ethiopian Delegation, which was led by H.E Sahle-Work Zewde, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, has conveyed to the session that Ethiopia would continue to remain loyal and committed to the Pan African ideals of African integration, and is engaging in the negotiations in good faith and constructive spirit. Currently, Ethiopia is in the process of actively preparing its Tariff offer for stakeholders' consultation.

The 14th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly, on its part, discussed the current status of the flagship project of Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020. It should be recalled that this flagship project was adopted in 2013 during the Golden Jubilee Anniversary of the establishment of the OAU/AU. It should also be recalled that Silencing the Guns: creating conducive conditions for

Africa's Development was adopted as the theme for the year 2020. Therefore, the Assembly received reports on both from the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security and the Special envoy for Silencing the Guns presented the reports. The Africa Amnesty month which is also linked to Silencing the Guns project has also been reviewed.

The 14th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly has expressed Satisfaction on the progress thus far made with regard to the engagement of some conflict situations and underlined that more work is needed on some others.

The Ethiopia delegation which was led by H.E Sahle-Work Zewde, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, apart from sharing its view and comments on the reports, has briefed the Assembly on the genesis and development of the current situation in the North of the country.

The President explained how Ethiopia has embarked on drastic political and economic reforms since mid-2018, and how these efforts were challenged, right from the beginning, by hardliners who engaged in subverting the reforms and frustrating the democratization processes, explaining how the government has handled the provocations and destabilization attempts with great patience.

The President informed the Assembly that those destructive forces have carried out the massacre of unarmed soldiers, many of whom were asleep, and illegally attempted to take possession of the entire depot of the Northern Command of the country that was there since the times of the conflict with Eritrea. They admitted and called their heinous crime a "lightning pre-emptive strike-attack" on the National Defense Force. The objective was clear: create chaos in the country.

The government of Ethiopia had no choice other than enforcing the rule of law operations from the day the Northern Command was attacked. The objectives were the following: to defend and preserve the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country, to protect the constitutional order, to restore law and order throughout the territory and to bring the perpetrators to justice. During the operations, all necessary precautions were taken for the protection of the civilian population.

In the meantime, adding fuel to the fire, more than 600 innocent civilians- the number keeps growing- were massacred in the town of Mai Kadra by this hardliner junta group. An initial Amnesty International report on the

horrendous crime has been validated further by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, which describes the massacre as amounting to crimes against humanity and war crimes perpetrated by the local subversive security forces, in collaboration with a TPLF youth group.

The President stressed that Ethiopia was forced to take these law enforcement measures in order to protect the constitutional order which was threatened by a group in one of its regions taking up arms. It has endangered the federal system, ultimately risking the disintegration of the country. Painful as it can be, there was no other option when the stability and the very existence of a country is jeopardized. Any country, worthy of the name, would have done the same in our position since it is an issue of responsibility and obligation.

The President indicated Ethiopia's understanding of the legitimate concerns of our African brothers and sisters, all the more so since Ethiopia is the seat of our continental organization, and conveyed Ethiopia's gratitude to the Chairperson of the African Union, President Cyril Ramaphosa, for receiving her in Pretoria and for dispatching three eminent former Presidents as his Special Envoys. She said that the Ethiopian government is very grateful for their wisdom, insight and understanding, and their readiness to support in any way they may be needed.

The President further stated that as the main operation has ended, the major task ahead of us is to provide the much needed humanitarian assistance with the support of our partners, to provide basic services, to rehabilitate affected communities, to proceed with the repatriation of compatriots who have fled their homes and country, and rebuild the Tigray region and the destroyed infrastructure.

Finally, President Sahle-Work announced Ethiopia's support to the extension of the time line up to the year 2030, for both the Silencing the Guns flagship project, and the Africa Amnesty Month. She also noted the critical role of women in peace and security, to be taken as an imperative in the course of implementing the flagship project.

Updates on the humanitarian situation in Tigray

As the Federal Government has repeatedly made clear, the protection and security of all our citizens remains an essential priority. In this regard, it is working closely with the relevant humanitarian agencies and UN partners to extend protection and humanitarian assistance to those who are impacted by the current operations. This also extends to non-Ethiopians who are hosted in refugee camps and host communities in Tigray.

It should be noted that Ethiopia has had longstanding experience in facilitating humanitarian assistance. It is a country, which unfortunately went through so many challenges and emergencies in the past. Therefore, the access issue is not new, and Ethiopia is in fact in a better position to share its best practices in this regard. It is in this relation that agreement was signed with the UN to facilitate humanitarian access that will enable partners to assist affected population effectively and impartially.

It is important to emphasize the lead role of the Federal Government in the humanitarian response efforts. There is a coordination mechanism under the Ministry of Peace, that has been clearly laid out in the above-mentioned MoU, to facilitate the safe, effective, and efficient delivery of assistance to those in need. Hence, what humanitarian partners are expected to do is strictly follow and abide by the letter and spirit of the MoU in carrying out their activities.

The Federal Government is fully committed to addressing the humanitarian issues in the region by extending the necessary protection and assistance not only to our citizens who sought refuge in neighboring Sudan or internally displaced but also the Eritrean refugees that are being hosted in Ethiopia. In this relation, notable progress has already been made over the last couple of weeks.

According to the Office of the Prime Minister, “an initial round of humanitarian relief items, including medical items, were sent to Dansha, Welkait, Kaftia/Humera and Debareq areas” in mid-November. Over the last couple of days, “44 trucks carrying 18,200 Quintals of food aid dispatched by the Federal Government reached the town of Shire for distribution to other parts of the region. The dispatch includes 4 trucks carrying 5500 Quintals of food to Alamata.

Similarly, 30 trucks carrying 12,500 Quintals of food supplies have reached Mekelle, with an additional 7000 Quintals of wheat dispatched to Mekelle and will be distributed tomorrow. 7 truck of medical supplies to Shire and Adigrat towns have also been dispatched”. The maintenance work in restoring telecom and electricity services to the region is being expedited and, for instance, the maintenance of the electricity line between Mekelle and Alamata is 70% complete.

Therefore, the situation is expected to significantly improve in the coming two weeks with the stabilization of the peace and security situation, the confidence building measures being undertaken, the restoration of damaged infrastructure, the resumption of basic services and the revival of the local economy, the delivery of food and non-food items, including medical equipment and supplies to most of the region.