

A Week in the Horn of Africa

1st February 2013

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The 20th Ordinary Assembly of the African Union opened on Sunday...

The 20th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of African Heads of State and Government of the African Union was held here in Addis Ababa from 27th to 28th January under the theme "Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance". The Summit was preceded by the 22nd ordinary session of the Executive Council and the 25th ordinary session of the Permanent Representative's Committee (PRC), which took place from 24th to 25th January and 21st to 22nd January respectively. The Summit was attended by 33 Presidents, 20 First Ladies, 3 Vice Presidents, 3 Prime Ministers and 2 Deputy Prime Ministers. The President of Palestine, the United Nations Secretary-General and the President of the United Nations General Assembly were also in attendance at the opening ceremony.

At the opening ceremony, the Summit paid tribute to the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and the late President John Atta Mills of Ghana. Since it is the turn of the Eastern Africa region to assume the rotating Chairmanship of the Union for the year 2013, the Summit unanimously elected Prime Minister Hailemariam to serve as Chairperson of the Union for the next year. This is the year in which the Golden Jubilee of the OAU/AU will be celebrated. The Chairperson of the AU Commission, Mme Dlamini-Zuma, said at the opening ceremony that Africa was at a point where it must seize the opportunity to fast track its economic development. Africa, she said, was well endowed with the natural resources which are the critical components for fast tracking industrialization on the continent: "Africa's time has arrived and we can achieve our dream within fifty years, or even less," she emphasized, reiterating that Africa must remain united if it is to achieve its goals and pull millions of people out of poverty. UN Secretary General Ban ki-Moon told the Assembly that "Africa has the experience to forge solutions to its own challenges and to contribute to our global goals of inclusive growth, social justice and protecting our

environment.” He said African countries should make more effort to empower youth and women and give them more responsibilities for driving economic growth and peace. He also spoke of the conflicts and crises in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, Mali, South Sudan, Sudan, Guinea-Bissau and Somalia, saying that Mali was under threat from extremist armed insurgence; he welcomed the timely bilateral assistance of Africa to the Malian army.

Prime Minister Hailemariam elected as Chairperson

Ethiopia’s Prime Minister Hailemariam was elected Chairperson of the African Union for the coming year, 2013, in a ceremony held at the opening session of the 20th Assembly, taking over chairmanship from Dr. Boni Yayi, the President of the Republic of Benin. In his acceptance speech Prime Minister Hailemariam thanked the outgoing chairman for his outstanding leadership during his tenure of office. He stressed his own determination “to do my utmost in discharging the heavy responsibilities bestowed upon me as Chairperson of the Union.” He thanked the Assembly for paying tribute to the late Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles, and the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee (HSGOC) for endorsing the proposal made by the NEPAD Agency to establish the **Meles Zenawi Centre for Sustainable Development** in recognition of the late prime minister’s great contributions to the African Union and to the cause of Africa.

Outlining his priorities as Chairperson, Prime Minister Hailemariam emphasized the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Organization of African Unity, the precursor of the African Union. This, he said, would give Africa the opportunity to take stock of its achievements and of the challenges of the last 50 years and chart the way forward to realize its vision of creating a peaceful, democratic, prosperous and united Africa capable of taking its rightful place in the world. In the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Organization of African Unity, he said that special tribute should be paid to the generations of Pan-Africanists and the Founding Fathers of the OAU who had striven to promote unity, solidarity, cohesion and cooperation among the peoples of Africa and African States. Prime Minister Hailemariam reminded the Assembly that the Organization of African Unity had successfully discharged its primary mandate of contributing in a significant way to the liberation of the African continent from the shackles of colonialism and apartheid. The Organization had also served as a common platform for Africa's collective efforts in its interaction with the rest of the world. He recommended its history should be studied and the lessons passed on to future generations.

Stressing the successes that Africa had begun to register in the economic sphere, Prime Minister Hailemariam noted that Africa had managed to register robust economic growth despite the global economic crises of the last decade. As a result, “our continent has emerged as a new pole of global growth and has attracted a growing interest as a new frontier for business and investment,” he said. Realizing this fact, many developed and emerging economies as well as other regions had started to look at Africa as a continent of hope and of opportunities. However, he warned, in order to sustain the growth momentum that Africa has been able to achieve over the last decade, the continent needed to [bring about] structural transformation.

To achieve this he wanted to underline the importance of encouraging the implementation of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) and the Action Plan for the Acceleration of Industrial Development in Africa (AIDA). It was necessary to keep up the momentum of these programmes in order to move towards realizing the desired structural transformation of the continent.

The Chairperson said that many countries in Africa as well as elsewhere had made progress in achieving some of the targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) but much remained to be done. He also emphasized that the formulation of the proposed new international development goals should be based on a thorough assessment of the MDGs, taking stock of achievements and gaps. This is vital because for Africa the implementation of MDGs should still be considered as unfinished business, he said. In formulation of the Post-2015 development agenda, therefore “we should ensure that the progress achieved thus far is sustained and that Africa’s development priorities beyond 2015 are fully taken into account.” To that end, he added, Africa must continue to speak with one voice in advocating a common African position on the post-2015 development agenda currently being crafted with the participation of all relevant stakeholders.

On matters of peace and security, the Chairperson said that over the last decade, Africa had made significant headway in its collective resolve to find peaceful solutions to various conflict situations on the continent. As hope for peace and stability in Somalia has been restored for the first time in two decades, he said, these gains should be further consolidated. He underscored the importance of assisting “Sudan and South Sudan to achieve [the aim of] two viable states living side by side in peace and harmony” and to “do everything possible to help restore constitutional order in Mali, to safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country and address the humanitarian crisis in collaboration with ECOWAS, the United Nations and other international partners.” The Prime Minister stressed that the efforts of the different parties in the region to bring about peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic should be fully assisted in order to address the complex security situation there as well as to put an end to the fighting and resolve the situation through political dialogue.

In conclusion, Prime Minister Hailemariam expressed Ethiopia’s pride in having been host of the Headquarters of the OAU and of the African Union for the last 50 years. He told the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government that the preparations to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the OAU/AU in collaboration with the Commission, as decided by the 16th Ordinary Session of the Assembly, had begun. The celebration of the Golden Jubilee was therefore officially launched following the opening of the Assembly.

The Assembly conclusions

The Chairperson of the AU Commission, Mme Dlamini-Zuma, said at the opening ceremony that Africa was at a point where it must seize the opportunity to fast track its economic development. Africa, she said, was well endowed with the natural resources which are the critical components for fast tracking industrialization on the continent: “Africa time has arrived and we can achieve our dream within fifty years, or even less,” she emphasized, reiterating that Africa must remain united if it is to achieve its goals and pull millions of people out of poverty. UN Secretary General Ban ki-Moon told the Assembly that “Africa has the experience to forge solutions to its own challenges and contribute to our global goals of inclusive growth, social justice and protecting our environment.” He said African countries should make more effort to empower youth and women and give them more responsibilities for driving economic growth and peace. He also spoke of the conflicts and crises in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, the Central African Republic, Mali, South Sudan, Sudan, Guinea-Bissau and Somalia, saying that Mali was under threat from extremist armed insurgency; he welcomed the timely bilateral assistance of Africa to the Malian army.

The Summit deliberated on a range of issues of interest and concern. On issues of peace and security, the Summit extensively discussed the resurgence of conflicts in some member States including in Mali, Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Summit adopted a declaration reaffirming its solidarity with Mali and expressing its determination to

coordinate the efforts of member States to assist this sisterly country. It made a financial contribution to support the deployment of AFISMA and the Malian Defence and Security Forces. It underscored the need to enhance the AU's capacity to rapidly respond to the emergence of conflicts including the full operationalization of the African Standby Force within the framework of the African Peace and Security Architecture.

In terms of fast-tracking the integration process and accelerating Africa's socio-economic development, the Summit reaffirmed its commitment to working towards speeding up the process of implementing the Abuja Treaty. The Summit also emphasized the importance of redoubling efforts at implementing NEPAD priorities with a view to accelerating Africa's transformation agenda. On the post-2015 global development agenda, the Assembly endorsed the proposal made by Prime Minister Hailemariam to set up a Committee of African Heads of State and Government under the leadership of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to enable Africa to speak with one voice.

The Heads of States urged the Secretary-General of the United Nations to provide the necessary support to the Economic Commission for Africa to enhance its work in accordance with Africa's priorities. This would allow the Commission to refocus its support for the transformation agenda of the African Union. The Assembly endorsed the creation of an African Observatory on Science, Technology and Innovation (AOSTI) to be hosted by the Republic of Equatorial Guinea. The Summit called on Member States and development partners to provide the necessary technical and financial support for sustaining AOSTI and its programmes. The Heads of State and Government also decided to create the Pan-African Intellectual Property Organization (PAIPO). They requested that the AU Commission convene a meeting of all stakeholders dealing with intellectual property to provide for implementation of the decision by the next summit in May.

The Assembly acknowledged the need to further refine and streamline the coordination mechanisms of the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC) and for Africa's preparation for COP 19/CMP 9. The Assembly endorsed the membership of CAHOSCC for the two Conferences of the Parties (COPs) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It agreed that the country of the host of the Presidency of the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN) should serve as Coordinator at Summit level to enhance linkages between the AMCEN processes and CAHOSCC in addition to providing necessary support. It said that the President of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) should serve as Coordinator at the Ministerial level, while the Chair of the African Group of Negotiators on Climate Change Experts, elected at the UNFCCC forum, should serve as Coordinator at the Experts' level.

It requested that the African Union Commission on International Law examine the proposed establishment of an International Constitutional Court and make recommendations to the 22nd Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in January 2014. On the issue of reform of the United Nations, the Assembly reiterated that the Committee of Ten would remain seized of this matter until Africa achieves its objectives on the reform of the UN Security Council. It requested that the Committee present a report to the Twenty-first Ordinary Session of the Assembly in July.

The Assembly also elected two members of the African Union Commission namely Dr. Martial Ikonga and Dr. Anthony Maruping as Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology and Commissioner for Economic Affairs, respectively. The Summit also appointed five members of the Peace and Security Council, one judge of the African Court on Human and People's Rights, five members of the African Commission on International Law as well as eleven members of the Advisory Board on Corruption. Accordingly, the Commissioner of Ethiopia's

Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission, Mr. Ali Suleiman, has been elected to serve as a member of the Advisory Board on Corruption for the next two years.

In his closing remarks, the newly elected Chairperson of the African Union, Prime Minister Hailemariam, expressed satisfaction at the active participation of all the Heads of States and Government in the discussions on various issues of interest to the continent. "Your valuable comments and contributions have enriched our debate and informed the decisions that we have adopted on a myriad of issues", he said. And referring to the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Union, the Chairperson urged all member countries to organize a series of activities and engage all sections of their society to popularize the Union and mobilize the people of the continent in support of attainment of the ideals of Pan Africanism and the African Renaissance.

The meeting of the AU Peace and Security Council...

On 25th January, the AU Peace and Security Council met at Summit level, under the Chairmanship of President Kibaki of Kenya to discuss the status of the peace process between Sudan and South Sudan. The Summit was attended by President Omer Al-Bashir of the Republic of the Sudan and General Salva Kiir Mayardit, President of the Republic of South Sudan. Dr. Tedros, Minister of Foreign Affairs, attended the meeting in Ethiopia's capacity as the Chair of IGAD.

Prior to its closed meeting, the Council was briefed by the Chairperson of the Commission, Dr. Dlamini Zuma, on the status of the negotiations between the two parties. Dr. Zuma indicated that the situation posed a particular set of challenges to Africa. She said the situation needed to address how to manage diversity while pursuing the goal of a united Africa, how to promote good neighbourliness and mutual viability between two states whose people are closely linked, how to manage natural resources for the benefit of ordinary people, and how to build state capacity, institutions and infrastructure in situations where very little existed. She further explained that the implementation of the signed Agreements was facing difficulties and called on unconditional implementation of all aspects of the agreements which, she pointed out, were mutually acceptable compromises for both sides. She also expressed her gratitude to the tireless efforts of Presidents Thabo Mbeki, Abdulsalami Abubakar and Pierre Buyoya, as well as Prime Minister Hailemariam, to bring peace between the two parties.

Speaking on behalf of IGAD, Dr. Tedros, while noting the progress achieved so far, underlined the fact that the outstanding issues were not matters that could be treated lightly. He said in both procedure and substance they related significantly to a lack of confidence and trust, and were extremely worrying. He said this required the Council to treat the situation with all the seriousness it deserved.

In its final communiqué, the Council reaffirmed the Proposal submitted by AUHIP, on 21st September 2012, on the Final Status of the Abyei Area which represented a fair, equitable and workable solution to the dispute, which takes into account existing agreements and antecedents, as well as the needs and interests of the communities on the ground. The Council welcomed the joint commitment by the two Presidents as expressed at the end of their Summit meeting, on 5th January 2013, to continue their engagement on the Final Status of the Abyei Area. The Council strongly urged the two leaders to resume their negotiations, including on the key issue of formation of the Abyei Area Referendum Commission, on the basis of AUHIP's 21st September 2012 Proposal. It requested that AUHIP, with the support of the IGAD Chair, continue to assist the two Presidents to urgently resolve this issue, and requested that the Panel report to Council on the Parties' progress in March. It further decided to extend the mandate of AUHIP until 31st July.

The other item that occupied much of the attention of the Peace and Security Council was Mali on which the Council approved a declaration calling for an increase in the number of troops for the

African-led Support Mission in Mali [AFISMA]. The Peace and Security Commissioner, Ambassador Lamamra, speaking after the meeting, said the force size would have to be significantly augmented, but he did not put an exact figure on the number of new soldiers needed. The original size of AFISMA to assist the Malian army was put at 3,300 troops. Commissioner Lamamra said that in fact 6,000 had already been pledged and the Peace and Security Council was requesting help from the United Nations to fund deployment of additional troops. Commissioner Lamamra said the political message from the council was that this was an emergency situation and must be dealt with urgently.

The Chairperson of the AU Commission, Dr. Dlamini Zuma described the situation in Mali as “a stark reminder of the dangers faced by the Malian state and the region as a whole in the continued activities of armed, terrorist and criminal groups in the region.” She noted that the AU was very grateful to France, which had so far deployed 2,300 troops, and to the international community that had stood by Mali. This had helped arrest the southward advance of these armed groups.

On Tuesday this week (29th January) after the Summit, a donors’ meeting was held to solicit funds and logistics for AFISMA and for Mali’s army. The meeting included representatives from the European Union and the UN Security Council and other bodies, and international donors pledged over US\$450 million to support the fight against Islamist militants in northern Mali. Prior to the meeting, the AU Assembly pledged to help stabilize Mali, adopting a declaration reaffirming its solidarity with Mali and expressing the determination to coordinate the efforts of member states. The African Union promised to provide US\$50 million, and Japan US\$120 million; the United States offered US\$96 million, and Germany and the UK US\$20 million apiece. Other donors who pledged support included the West African bloc ECOWAS, South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. Ethiopia pledged US\$5 million. India and China each pledged US\$1 million each, and China said it would also contribute further. ECOWAS communications director, Sonny Ugoh, said that the planned 3,300 strong AFISMA force could now expand to between 5,000 and 6,000 troops capable of combat and of helping to secure the gains made by the operations of French and Malian troops. Mr. Ugoh said deployment should be expeditious to provide meaningful support for the French and Malian forces. Some AFISMA troops have already arrived in Mali but have yet to play any major role in combat.

...and of NEPAD’s Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee

NEPAD Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee (HSGOC) held its 28th session in Addis Ababa on Saturday (27th January). HSGOC is made up of twenty African leaders to provide leadership and policy guidance to the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). HSGOC meets twice a year on the side-lines of the African Union Summit and sets the priorities and the programmes of action for NEPAD. Priority areas for NEPAD include agriculture and infrastructure, and speeding up the aspect of domestic resource mobilization to encourage less dependence on external funding. This latest session was attended by several heads of state, as well as representatives of regional economic communities and international organizations. A moment of silence in memory of Meles Zenawi, former Prime Minister of Ethiopia and NEPAD Chairman, was observed at the opening session. Senegal’s President Macky Sall was elected Chairperson the Committee in succession to Meles who had served as Chairperson of HSGOC for four years.

In his opening remarks at the meeting, Ethiopia’s Prime Minister and newly elected Chairperson of the AU Assembly, Hailemariam Desalegn, urged all member states to reduce dependency on foreign aid for implementation of infrastructural development projects. He described his predecessor as a true symbol of Pan-Africanism, and as someone whose legacy could be witnessed on the ground in Ethiopia. He said Meles had viewed NEPAD as a model for change in

the management of Africa's relations with the international community. Hailemariam particularly appealed to HSGOC to continue its support and guidance to the implementation of the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the Programme on Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA).

Dr. Boni Yayi, President of Benin and outgoing Chairperson of the African Union Assembly, underlined the need for NEPAD to consolidate the achievements it had made so far to advance the overall development objectives of Africa. He called on Africa to scale up implementation of NEPAD priorities. He said the financing of continental projects and programmes remained of great concern to all stakeholders in Africa's social and economic progress, and emphasized the need to put the issue of Africa's development at the centre of attention of all Africa's leaders. He said the responsibility of the Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee should be "to strengthen the capacity of the NEPAD secretariat and its relationship with agencies of partner countries". He urged all AU member states to ensure that their respective agricultural sectors became the driving force for food and nutritional security and for the creation of employment for their respective populations. He expressed thanks to South Africa's President Zuma for the efforts he had made in steering the high-level committee of the AU Presidential Infrastructure Championing Initiative (PICI) made up of Algeria, Benin, Republic of Congo, Egypt, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal and South Africa.

The AU Commissioner, Dr Dlamini Zuma, commended the efforts that had been made and continue to be made by NEPAD and by the AU Commission to improve the harmonization of their work with a view to avoiding duplication of efforts, particularly through the elaboration of policies and strategies and work programmes. She said synergy between NEPAD and the Commission had been strengthened in the area of agriculture, food security and nutrition and infrastructure in the last six months. However, despite NEPAD's achievements, Dr Dlamini Zuma also emphasized the need to address the challenges related to the necessary resources and human capital to implement NEPAD programmes and projects.

NEPAD's Chief Executive Officer, Dr Ibrahim Mayaki, presented the Agency's Results-based Activity Report of July to December 2012. This highlighted the efforts to sustain the momentum of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) and the various tools and mechanisms for domestic resource mobilization for NEPAD programmes. He said the NEPAD Agency believed the time had come to give new impetus to CAADP to meet the legitimate expectations of member states and provide a clearer perspective and overall role for agriculture in the economic transformation of the continent. He said NEPAD had launched the Africa Rural Development Forum as platform for knowledge-sharing about policies on rural development to support this transformation. CAADP has emerged as a key vehicle to diversify economies, expand agribusiness, ensure food security, and stimulate access to finance, inputs and markets for smallholder farmers. To sustain this development and momentum, the Chief Executive Officer expressed the Agency's need to assess how non-state actors could take ownership of the CAADP process by contributing to the development and implementation of agricultural policy in their respective countries.

After the formal opening of the HSGOC session, the meeting proceeded with its deliberations behind closed doors. However, the Chairman of the AU said in his closing remarks at the AU Assembly on Monday that the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee had "exchanged views and agreed on ways and means of addressing our financial constraints and agreed on the need to find innovative ways of mobilizing domestic resources to finance the implementation of NEPAD programmes". He added that this, like the AU's contributions to Mali, were examples of Africa trying to overcome its own problems instead of waiting for other countries to help.

Ministerial Meeting of the Core Group on Somalia

Another meeting on the margins of the AU Summit was the Ministerial level meeting of the Core Group on Somalia on 25th January. This was attended by representatives of the troop contributing countries of AMISOM and other interested countries, of the United Nations and the European Union as well as other bilateral partners. The meeting was co-chaired by the AU Commissioner for Peace and Security and the Minister for Africa of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom. The meeting had briefings from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Somalia on the priorities of her government. The UN Under-Secretary General for Political Affairs and a representative of the AU Commission spoke about the UN's strategic review on its future engagement with Somalia and the African Union's strategic review on the future of AMISOM respectively.

Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros explained the outcome of the 46th extra-ordinary session of the IGAD Council of Ministers (23rd January) that deliberated on the need for the components of the Grand Stabilization Plan to be integrated into the Somali Government's six-pillar framework and called upon the Somali government to prepare a proposal for the IGAD Council to discuss at an IGAD [meeting] to be convened in the next six weeks. He said the Council had further called upon the Somali government to prepare a proposal on the government's request for the lifting on the UN arms embargo. The Minister stated that Somalia needed help and genuine solidarity which did not infringe on ownership of the process by Somalis themselves. He, therefore, underscored the need to engage with Somalia in the post-transition period wholeheartedly and with all the necessary capacity. He expressed his expectation that the UN strategic review would respond appropriately to the current realities of Somalia and align UN support to the government's priorities. He also hoped the strategic review of AMISOM's mandate and operations, being undertaken by the Commission, would take into account the need to support and strengthen the Somalia national defence and security sector.

During the discussion, the meeting noted that although significant political and security progress had been made in Somalia, there were still a number of complex challenges facing the country. The meeting, therefore, underlined the need for close cooperation and coordination at all levels including national, regional and international. The meeting further emphasized that the support of the international community to Somalia must ensure Somalia ownership and leadership while also making sure that the necessary support is delivered in an appropriate and timely manner to enable the Federal Government of Somalia to deliver on its commitments.

The 50th Anniversary Celebrations of the OAU/AU

In keeping with the decision of the 16th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the Government of Ethiopia has been making preparations for the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Organization of African Unity/African Union. The Golden Jubilee has a special significance for Ethiopia, not only because Addis Ababa is the birthplace and seat of the Organization, but also because of Ethiopia's unwavering commitment to the ideals of the OAU/AU and the active role it has played in the last 50 years.

Even before the establishment of the OAU, a major hurdle had to be surmounted to close the gap between two camps. Ethiopia played a critical role in reconciling the differences between the Casablanca Group and the Monrovia Group, which were advocating dissimilar routes of achieving African Unity. After the establishment of the Organization, Ethiopia wholeheartedly supported the OAU's immediate agenda for the total decolonization of the Continent. Liberation movements across the Continent were able to count on Ethiopia's solidarity and assistance in their fight against colonialism and Apartheid.

In the area of conflict resolution and peacekeeping, Ethiopia's contribution in Africa began with the sending of peacekeeping troops under the banner of the United Nations to Congo in the 1960's. Ethiopia's peacekeeping role in Africa has continued since then in Rwanda, Burundi and Liberia, as well as in current missions in Darfur and Abyei. Ethiopia has also been working closely with AMISOM and the countries of the sub-region to defeat terrorist organizations and bring about peace and stability in Somalia.

On the economic front, Ethiopia has been actively involved in the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) to promote the continent's economic agenda. Ethiopia has been an active participant in the African Peer Review Mechanism. In promoting regional integration, Ethiopia has been working with other countries in the sub-region to strengthen COMESA and IGAD. Ethiopia fully realizes the need to develop regional infrastructure in order to promote trade and investment, foster economic development and create jobs for young people. Accordingly, practical steps are being taken to link Ethiopia and its neighbours by road, rail and air transport as well as through power and telecom interconnections. In the coming years, with the completion of projects that are in the pipeline, regional infrastructure linkages that are expected to contribute significantly to the development of the East Africa region will become operational.

It is with these factors in mind that Ethiopia has been making preparations for the 50th Anniversary celebrations of the OAU/AU. The National Committee and the National Secretariat that have been established to coordinate activities have started their work with press conferences, a panel discussion and the composition of poetic tributes. Other items in the long list of activities that are lined up in order to stage colourful celebrations will include exhibitions, musical performances, children's shows, documentary films, panel discussions, workshops and symposia, sports activities and other events.

Bilateral discussions:

Ethiopia and Botswana sign air transport agreement

Ethiopia and Botswana signed an air transport agreement on Tuesday (29th January) here at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The agreement was signed between Diriba Kuma, Minister of Transport of Ethiopia and Mr. Phandu Skelemani, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Botswana. Prior the signing of the agreement, Mr. Skelemani also held discussions with Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros. Dr. Tedros hailed Botswana's impressive achievements in democracy, good governance, economic growth and developments, calling Botswana "a beacon of hope and pride for all of Africa". He added that Ethiopia which was registering impressive growth in various sectors could learn a lot from Botswana. Referring to ways to elevate bilateral relations, Dr. Tedros emphasized the importance of linking the two peoples. He raised the possibility of using the Ethiopian community in Botswana which includes a number of medical doctors as a bridge to promote people-to-people ties. Botswana investment would be important in increasing economic links. Dr. Tedros said that poor intra-African trade was impeding the integration of African countries and he underlined the imperative of improving these as rapidly growing populations offer big market opportunities to African nations. He also stressed the importance of adopting a realistic approach in achieving economic integration. He briefed the Minister on Ethiopia's efforts in integrating the Horn of Africa region through roads, railways and communications, adding that "we can start with integrating in infrastructure through key NEPAD projects like PEDA towards realizing economic integration and through time achieve political integration".

Mr. Phandu Skelemani, describing bilateral relations between the two countries as warm, also emphasized the need to build more on that. He expressed his government's appreciation to Ethiopia's peace building and peace keeping efforts in Africa. He said Botswana had benefited greatly from its relations with Ethiopia, citing the immense contribution of Ethiopian medical doctors in Botswana's health sector and the training offered by Ethiopian Airlines. He said that Ethiopia's rapid economic growth and especially the government's efforts in creating jobs through small and micro enterprises had been impressive.

After the signing of the air transport agreement, Minister Skelemani praised Ethiopian Airlines "as a success story of the aviation industry of Africa" and underlined the immense opportunity it offered in linking Botswana to other destinations. He said the agreement offered a new opportunity to increase people-to-people interaction, and referring to the relocation to Botswana of the Diamond Trading Company, a major diamond business operator, making the country the biggest hub of the diamond business. He said that Ethiopian Airlines would have a big role in assisting business activity. Referring to the various agreements signed between the two countries since bilateral relations were established in 1998, the minister underlined the need to translate these into action for the benefit of both peoples. Minister Diriba also highlighted the importance of the air transport agreement and said it offered a strong opportunity to boost trade interconnectivity. Before Minister Skelemani left he handed over an invitation from Botswana's President Seretse Khama Ian Khama to Prime Minister Hailemariam to make an official visit to Botswana.

Ethiopia and Somalia to form Joint Ministerial Commission

Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros and Somalia's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Fowzia Yusuf Haji Adan signed a memorandum of understanding for the formation of a Joint Ministerial Commission on Monday 28th January). Deputy Prime Minister Fowzia Yusuf spoke of the immense contribution of Ethiopia to the peace and stability of Somalia "You were with us in all those difficult times over the past and we are grateful. Somalia has decided to put its dark history behind it." Speaking about the six pillar policy of the new government she said "security stands as one of the top priorities." She noted energy, railways and communication among other things were areas in which the two countries could cooperate. Dr. Tedros said the signing of the agreement opened a new chapter in relations, "further strengthening our unique ties and providing us with the opportunity to further cement the existing relations between our peoples". He hailed the successful establishment of the new government as a watershed in the recent history of Somalia. But he noted the "demanding task" that awaited the new government: "As we celebrate the birth of a new Somalia from the ashes of more than twenty years of fratricidal war, we should at the same time appreciate the daunting task of reconstruction and reconciliation". He reaffirmed Ethiopia's readiness to support the new government in all its efforts. Dr. Tedros stressed that Ethiopia wanted to see a united and strong Somalia to consolidate regional peace. He emphasized the importance of consolidating the relative peace that prevails within the IGAD region. Alluding to the fatigue with war within the region he added "If war was a pie this region has had enough share of it". He reiterated the need to maintain peace for the future of the region. Dr. Tedros said the relations between the two countries had been affected by a culture of suspicion: "We need to rebuild our relations on a new foundation of candour leaving this culture of suspicion behind," he said. The first meeting of the Joint Ministerial Commission will be held in Mogadishu.

Ethiopia and Benin sign cooperation framework agreement

Ethiopia and Benin signed a General Cooperation Agreement on Monday (28th January). The agreement was signed between Dr. Tedros Adhanom, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Mr. Nassirou Boko-Arifari, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Benin. Dr Tedros noted that "as much as we

are satisfied with the current level of cooperation at the leadership level, we believe we have not fully utilized the full potential of our close relationship". He stressed the importance of "employing the utmost endeavour, particularly in the economic sphere, to expand and deepen our overall relationships". He expressed his hope that the signing of the agreement would serve as the basis for future cooperation in other fields, and hailed the signing of the agreement as an important step in the relationship between the two countries. He said that although Benin opened an embassy in Addis Ababa in 2005, the two countries had never been involved in any bilateral engagement. He said "the decision to strengthen relations was made by President Boni Yayi and Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn in October 2012. Mr. Boko–Arifari praised Ethiopian Airlines for its excellent service in transporting 4,000 Beninese pilgrims from Benin to Mecca following a special arrangement made between Ethiopian and the government of Benin. Ethiopian Airlines now flies three times a week to Cotonou. The Minister expressed his hope that the two countries would now be able to sign agreements covering cooperation in the areas of agriculture, education and science.

And State Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Berhane meets Portugal's Secretary for Foreign Affairs

Ambassador Berhane on Saturday (25th January) met Portugal's Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Luís Brites Pereira on the side-lines of the Summit. At the conclusion of the discussion, the two sides signed a Memorandum of Understanding to boost diplomatic ties. Ambassador Berhane described the political relationship between the two countries as excellent, but noted that economic relations left much to be desired. He said as Africa was undergoing an economic transformation it was high time for the two countries to work to establish robust relations. He said Ethiopia's burgeoning economy offered huge opportunities to Portuguese investors in agriculture, technology transfer and industry. Mr. Pereira expressed his hope that the long and historic relations of the two states would evolve into stronger relations with the signing of the MoU. He hoped that the double taxation agreement, which would be signed shortly, would play an instrumental role in boosting trade and investment ties. He expressed Portugal's interest in water management, the development of renewable energy and in information technology businesses in Ethiopia. He also thanked Ethiopia for its support for Portugal's candidature for the UN Human Rights Council.

Somalia's President visits EU headquarters in Brussels

Somalia took a fresh step in its return to the international fold on Wednesday (30th January) with a high-profile visit by Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud to the EU. The visit came just a few days after the Somali government was recognized by the United States. An EU official said the visit symbolized a highly significant shift in the way the world saw Somalia and Somalis saw the world, adding that "We want to encourage Somalia, say we are with them, that we take them seriously." At the 27-nation EU headquarters in Brussels, President Mohamud met with EU President Herman Van Rompuy, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs Catherine Ashton and the President of the European Commission Jose Manuel Barroso as well as visiting the EU Parliament the following day and meeting EU Foreign Ministers. The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, announced on Wednesday that the EU planned to host a global conference in the autumn, aiming to "come up with a New Deal for Somalia that will help deliver political, security and development support". During her discussions with the President, Lady Ashton noted that the 95% drop in piracy off the Somalia coast and the beating back of Al-Shabaab insurgents over the last two years were indications that Somalia had come a long way. She announced "a new era" in ties between Somalia and the EU. The European Commission President, Jose Manuel Barroso, welcomed the agreement reached

between Somalia and the EU "to enhance relations" and expressed the EU's belief that "there is a real commitment to going forward". The EU president, Herman Van Rompuy, said President Mohamud's visit, his first to Europe, came as Somalia was on a "path to transforming and taking its rightful place in the community of nations".

President Mohamud said Somalia now needed to move from being a country "in relief" to one in recovery. Somalia could not do this alone and his Government needed the support of the whole international community and in particular the support of the European Union. He said Somalia needed an engagement that looked like the Marshall Plan, the US-funded plan to rebuild Europe after World War II. The EU has provided nearly 600 million Euros to Somalia over the last five years in the areas of defence, diplomacy and development, and has trained some 3,000 Somali troops since 2010. Last week it extended its training mission for another two years at a cost of around 11 million Euros. The EU's anti-piracy mission off the Somali coast, EUNAVFOR, has also been extended until December 2014.

President Mohamud repeated his plea for support from the European Union to the European Parliament during his visit to the Parliament on Thursday. He told the parliamentarians that: "Now we have a better government and parliament, trying to do their best, but we are here because of European help. We are grateful for our traditional partner, and would like to request further support, especially of the European Parliament, to make our legislative organ strong and capable." The Somali president visited Parliament to discuss the current situation with members of the foreign affairs and development committees. He also met the European Parliament President Martin Schulz, who congratulated him on "undertaking the first, important steps in the very difficult task of state-building, bringing peace and improving the daily life of the Somali people." The two men welcomed the possibility of exchanges between the European Parliament and Somalia's parliament, and Mr. Schulz added: "The stability of Africa is also the stability of Europe."

Following his visit to the EU, President Mohamud is travelling to Britain, which is also planning to host another international conference on the future of Somalia on 7th May. There is growing speculation that similar initiatives may be proposed by other states, and some concern has been expressed over possible duplication of initiatives. This has happened in the past and led to developments and assistance falling short of expectation.

Meanwhile, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Jeffrey Feltman, said "Somalia is beginning to undergo profound transformation". It is, he added, a new chapter in its history. He made the statement during a visit to Mogadishu this week where he met with senior Government officials, including Prime Minister Abdi Farah Shirdon, the Speaker of the Somali Parliament, Mohamed Osman Jawari, and members of the UN country team and UN staff serving in Mogadishu. During his visit, Mr. Feltman expressed the United Nations readiness to "continue to assist in any way possible at this critical time". He said he was inspired and encouraged by the programme being organized by the Somali Government which "has both vision and a practical plan to implement it". He said the Somali authorities "have truly taken ownership of the process" and noted that the role of partners including the UN is to do "their utmost to support the Somali authorities, across the board and without hesitation". Mr. Feltman encouraged the Somali authorities to continue with dialogue and reconciliation. He pointed out the importance for the Somali Government of taking the measures necessary to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights including sexual violence against women. His discussions also focused on the future of the UN presence in Somalia and the need for a better coordinated and coherent approach by the international community to support the new phase of peace-building. Mr. Feltman's visit follows the announcement by UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, at the African Union summit in Addis Ababa at the weekend that he would be proposing to the Security

Council the establishment of a new UN peace-building presence in Somalia, as part of the efforts to strengthen the UN-AU partnership on the ground.

Deputy Prime Minister Demeke visits the UK

Ethiopia's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Ato Demeke Mekonnen, has held talks with former British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, the United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education in London. The Deputy Prime Minister was heading a delegation to the Education World Forum (28th to 30th January), attended by representatives from over 100 countries. The delegation also took part in the British Council's annual gathering for African Education Ministers on the teaching of science, technology, English, maths and ICT.

The Deputy Prime Minister briefed Mr. Brown on the latest developments in education in Ethiopia, focusing on the quality of education, enrolment of students, teacher training, the provision of educational materials and the utilization of ICT as part of the modernization and expansion of the sector. Ethiopia, he stressed, was on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goal targets for education. It has made significant progress towards the realization of universal education. It has bridged the gap between female and male students and improved the capacity of teachers to raise the quality of education and student enrolment at all levels.

With a student population of 22 million, Ethiopia employs over 400,000 teachers serving 30,000 schools. It devotes up to 23 per cent of its annual expenditure to education, that is 4.3 per cent of GDP, a strong indication of the commitment to the sector. The former British Prime Minister offered his condolences on the death of the late Prime Minister Meles. He said how much he valued friendship with Ethiopia and pledged support for Ethiopia's efforts to get all possible assistance from international organizations, including the World Bank, DfID, USAID, the UN agencies and other global partners, to expedite the implementation of education strategies and road maps drawn up on the basis of national priorities.

During his visit, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education held discussions with the UK Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, on issues of mutual interest, focusing on progress in improving access to and the quality of education in Ethiopia. He also met the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development, Ms. Lynne Featherstone and discussed the utilization of development finance for its intended purposes and exchanged ideas on how best to further enhance the gains made in development programmes as well as issues related to the quality of education and capacity building, the CSO law, the rights of women and democratization. Ms. Featherstone pledged more support for development in Ethiopia, which she noted had shown resilience in the fight against poverty and headway in achieving MDG targets. The Deputy Prime Minister noted that the UK's 'high quality intervention' focused on Ethiopia's priorities.

The Deputy Prime Minister paid a courtesy visit to the Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Ethiopia, Mr. Laurence Robertson, and members of the All Party Group. Discussions covered development, elections, Ethiopia's role in the maintenance of peace and stability in the Horn of Africa and steps taken to expand and improve the quality of education in Ethiopia. The Deputy Prime Minister highlighted the constitutional multi-party system which Ethiopia is building with the support of development partners like the UK. Noting that Ethiopia's Prime Minister Hailemariam is this year's current AU Chairman, he underlined the role that Ethiopia plays in the African Union, stressing the focus on infrastructure and agriculture development, conflict resolution, maintenance of peace and stability and promotion of good governance. Mr. Robertson, who also expressed his condolences at the loss of a great leader of Ethiopia, said he appreciated the progress being made in various areas, part of the drive to ensure growth and economic prosperity in Ethiopia.

The All Party Group raised a number of issues related to development, the role and participation of opposition parties, peace and security and bilateral relations with the UK. The Deputy Prime

Minister noted that Ethiopia was determined to build a democratic order where the principle of unity in diversity would be celebrated as an anchor with which the new Ethiopia would thrive. “For Ethiopia to be viable and strong”, he said, “We have to nurture democracy, learning from the best practices of the developed nations.”

The Deputy Prime Minister also met and discussed future links with higher education institutions, including the Universities of Northampton and Nottingham. He welcomed the efforts by Northampton University to establish a link with Addis Ababa University and with the Addis Ababa Science and Technology College to encourage a relationship to boost leather technology, water quality and waste management in Ethiopia.

News and Views:

Prime Minister Hailemariam meets US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs

Prime Minister Hailemariam met and held talks with the United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson on Wednesday (30th January). Discussions covered regional and bilateral affairs and the two sides confirmed that they would continue to work together in their efforts to maintain peace and security in Africa, and in particular in East Africa. They agreed efforts should be exerted to improve the relationship between Sudan and South Sudan in particular. Prime Minister Hailemariam briefed Ambassador Carson on the preparations that Ethiopia is currently finalizing for the hosting of the 2013 African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Forum in Addis Ababa. Ambassador Carson praised Ethiopia for its contributions to maintaining peace and stability in neighbouring countries and in particular in Sudan and South Sudan. The Assistant Secretary also said the US appreciated the efforts of the African Union to maintain peace and stability in Mali.

New ways to raise funds for the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

The National Secretariat of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) has announced that it will be introducing new ways of fund-raising to help finance the construction of GERD. A special lottery and musical concerts are among the new fund-raising methods which will be introduced shortly. The Secretariat also plans to collect 1 billion birr through Short Text Messages. Fekadu Ketema, Public Relations Head of the Secretariat, told reporters that from the total of 11.127 billion pledged so far, 4.1 billion birr has been collected. Government and private employees have contributed 1.8 billion birr and started a second round of pledges of their monthly salaries. Speaking about the progress of construction at the Dam, Ato Fekadu said that as of November just over 14% of construction had been completed and by the end of the year the project would be 26% complete.

Celebration of Ethiopian Pastoralists’ Day

The 14th Ethiopian Pastoralists’ Day was celebrated last week in the town of Yabello in Oromia Regional State this year, under the theme: “We shall have the commitment to realize the vision of the Great Leader Meles Zenawi for Pastoralists”. Prime Minister Hailemariam told participants that efforts to allow pastoralists to benefit from the nation’s development and good governance would be reinforced. Pastoralists’ Day, he said, was a time to renew commitments, and he expressed the determination of the government to work for lasting improvement of the life of pastoralists. The Prime Minister also presented awards to 144 pastoralists for their exemplary role in improving their lives. Speaking on the occasion, Federal Affairs Minister, Dr. Shiferaw Teklemariam, also stressed that the government would continue to give due attention to activities that improve the life of pastoralists, who make up 12% of the population. The Minister noted that bringing pastoralists into villages to facilitate crop production and expand social

services were showing results in improving the lifestyle of pastoralists. The Deputy President of the Oromia Regional State, Abdulaziz Mohammed, emphasized that works to expand infrastructure and marketing centres in pastoralist areas would be strengthened in the future. He noted that Pastoralists Day played a significant role in creating a forum for discussion and consultation among stakeholders and in addressing challenges facing pastoralists. The next Pastoralists' Day will be hosted by the Afar Regional State.