

A Week in the Horn

3rd March 2017

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News in Brief

Africa and the African Union

IGAD has announced that a regional special summit will be held in Nairobi in March to help find durable solutions for Somalia refugees. The summit, agreed at the 28th IGAD Summit in Mogadishu in September last year, will be on March 25 to renew efforts to find durable and sustainable solutions for Somalia refugees. An estimated 1.1 million people are currently internally displaced within Somalia, and nearly 900,000 are refugees in the region, in Kenya (324,000), Ethiopia (241,000), Yemen (255,000), Uganda (39,500), and Djibouti (13,000).

Stephen O'Brien, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, is visiting Yemen, Somalia and Kenya this week to meet with stakeholders and people most affected by conflict and drought. In Yemen, more than 7 million people are severely food insecure and 460,000 children are suffering severe acute malnutrition, while in Somalia nearly 3 million people urgently need food assistance. Kenya declared a drought emergency on February 10, and the number of food insecure people more than doubled to 2.7 million in the past six months.

A project to encourage sustainable and productive livestock in Africa was launched on Thursday last week by the FAO in partnership with USAID and six African countries, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda. It aims to facilitate dialogue, knowledge sharing and consultation among livestock, health and environment stakeholders to identify opportunities and threats associated with the long-term development of livestock and create the capacity to ensure sustainable development of the livestock sector.

The 5th African Business Forum opened on Wednesday this week (March 1) in Addis Ababa. The Forum was attended by high-level government officials and more than a hundred business leaders and representatives drawn from different countries as well as the Ambassadors of Nigeria, Germany, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. (See article)

The first Technical Group Meeting of the Intergovernmental Group of Twenty Four (G-24) opened on Monday (February 27) in Addis Ababa. Ethiopia is the current chair of the group, which allows developing countries come to a common stance on global monetary, financial and developmental affairs. The G-24 is composed of 24 countries from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean countries.

The Addis Ababa-based Peace Support Training Centre graduated a group of students who had completed their short-term training on peacekeeping on Friday last week (February 24). UK Ambassador Mrs. Moorehead, handing out certificates, said the center contributed to stronger UN and AU peace operations. She

said the UK views Ethiopia as a capable partner and was keen to help improve standards and performance to benefit UN and AU peace operations.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) opened a two-day regional training course on Hydro-Diplomacy and Negotiation Skills on Monday (February 27). It was part of a series of training sessions for officials and experts from ministries in charge of water resources management, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, and legal experts from IGAD Member States. It is aimed at building and strengthening trans-boundary cooperation in the matters of shared water resources in the IGAD region.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia commemorated the 121st anniversary of the victory of the Battle of Adwa on Thursday (March 2). President Dr Mulatu Teshome led the celebrations at the city of Adwa, noting that it had been a great victory that underlined the spirit of cooperation and mutual respect as well as determination. It was, he said, "a victory for all black people." Adwa marked the defeat of Italy's efforts to conquer Ethiopia but it became a symbol of African valor and resistance, both in Africa and in the Diaspora, underlining the growing sense of unity among Africans and people of African descent, and becoming a driver for the Pan-African vision of freedom. (See article)

President Kiir arrived in Ethiopia Thursday last week (February 23) for a three-day official visit during which he and Prime Minister Hailemariam signed eight cooperation agreements to enhance economic cooperation and border security between the two countries, including an agreement to build a road linking the two countries enabling South Sudan to export its oil to landlocked Ethiopia. (See article)

President Ellen Jonson Sirleaf of Liberia paid a three-day state visit to Ethiopia this week, February 28-March 2. She held bilateral talks with Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn and met with President Dr Mulatu Teshome at the National Jubilee Palace to discuss regional, continental and global issues. Five major cooperation agreements were signed during the visit. President Sirleaf also visited Hawassa and the Hawassa Industrial Park. (See article)

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn led a high-level delegation, including First Lady Roman Tesfaye and Foreign Minister Dr Workneh Gebeyehu, on a three-day state visit to Uganda this week (March 2-4) at the invitation of President Museveni. During the visit, the Prime Minister discussed strengthening bilateral cooperation and regional issues of concern including the situation in Somalia and South Sudan, as well as a Cooperative Framework Agreement on the Nile. (See article)

Foreign Minister Dr Workneh Gebeyehu received the Indian Ambassador to Ethiopia and Representative to the African Union, Ambassador Anurag Srivastava, on Wednesday (March 1). Ambassador Srivastava outlined India's priorities for economic cooperation including textiles, pharmaceuticals, agro-processing, education, infrastructure, sugar projects as potential areas of economic engagement. He said "Ethiopia is in real terms pivotal to India". Dr Workneh emphasized the importance of transforming the already strong relationship to new and higher levels.

Ethiopia's First Lady, Ms Roman Tesfaye, launched a "Project for the Development of Moringa Value Chain (MVC) in Rural Communities in Ethiopia" in Arbaminch this week to improve the nutrition status and economic empowerment of rural communities in Ethiopia with specific reference to women. The five-year joint project of the First Lady's Office, the SNNP Regional State Bureau of Agriculture and Natural Resources and UNIDO, is funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation.

A U.S. delegation led by Republican Senator James Inhofe visited Ethiopia last week, and held talks with Prime Minister Hailemariam who expressed Ethiopia's desire to further strengthen its relations with the new administration of the United States particularly in trade and investment. Senator Inhofe told reporters after the discussion that the U.S would continue to cooperate with Ethiopia and described Ethiopia as a strong ally of the US in the area of security in the Horn of Africa region.

Mrs Hirut Zemene, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, addressing the 34th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, on Wednesday (March 1) noted that Ethiopia valued Human Rights and had the ability to provide a timely and effective response to urgent human rights issues and was responding to the current disturbances in the country in a responsible manner.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Aklilu Hailemichael met with Turkish Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ambassador Fatih Ulusoy and two Turkish investors on Tuesday (February 28). They discussed the implementation of agreements signed between the two countries during President Mulatu Teshome's state visit to Turkey last month.

State Minister for Trade, Ayana Zewdie, met with UAE's Under-Secretary for Foreign Trade and Industry, Abdullah Al Saleh, on Thursday (March 2) in Dubai to discuss ways to develop future economic ties to increase trade, promote bilateral investment and encourage UAE businesses to explore economic opportunities in Ethiopia. Non-oil trade amounted to US\$734 million in the first nine months of last year.

Ethiopian University delegation members from the Universities of Woldia, Wollo, Gondar, Mekelle, Asosa, Bahir Dar and Addis Ababa took part in a workshop on the "Health and Environmental Impact of GERD" in Khartoum on March 1-2. The workshop was organized by the University of Khartoum with the collaboration of Addis Ababa University.

Benishangul Gumuz Regional State security authorities reported on Wednesday (March 1) that they had foiled an attempt to attack the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. An armed group of 21 members of the Benishangul Gumuz People's Liberation Movement (BPLM) coming from Eritrea, [and passing] through Sudan had entered the region. Three members of the group had been killed and two wounded; 16 were captured. The BPLM is a member of the Eritrea-based Peoples' Alliance for Freedom and Democracy organized last year by Ginbot 7 with Eritrean support.

Ethiopian Airlines, the largest cargo operator in Africa, was given the African Cargo Airline of the Year Award during the 2017 Air Cargo Africa Conference held in Johannesburg last week (February 21-23). The conference was organized by STAT Media Group in celebration of excellence in the industry. Ethiopian was recently named Airline of the Year, for the fifth consecutive year, by the African Airlines Association (AFRAA).

Ethiopia-Shandong Investment and Trade Cooperation Forum, jointly organized by the Embassy of Ethiopia in Beijing and the Department of Commerce of Shandong Province of China, was successfully held in Tai'an City of Shandong Province. The aim was to unleash the untapped investment and trade potentials of Ethiopia and encourage public and private enterprises of Shandong Province to explore business opportunities in Ethiopia. More than 70 enterprises engaged in labor-intensive light manufacturing industries such as textile and garment, leather, agri-business and pharmaceuticals participated.

Two agreements for construction of the Chancery and Residence for the Embassy of Ethiopia in Beijing have been signed with the Beijing Housing Service Corporation for Diplomatic Missions for Supervision and Management, and Hongshi Architects, Engineers and Designers Co. Ltd to carry out overall design work. The design work for the two separate buildings is expected to be completed within 8 months.

Djibouti

President Ismail Omar Guelleh is paying a three-day visit to Paris this week, his first for a decade.

Somalia

President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo held an emergency meeting on Tuesday (February 28) with representatives from regional states and international partners to discuss the ongoing relief effort for the humanitarian crisis. (See article)

The Parliament unanimously approved Hassan Ali Khayre as Prime Minister on Wednesday (March 1). He said his government would be based on "competence and efficiency" and said "We will tackle corruption and vow to prosecute individuals implicated regardless of his/her status. The era of impunity is over." He now has 30 days to form a new cabinet.

President Mohamed Abdullahi urged Parliament to ensure the completion of the Constitutional Review Process within its term. In his first address to a joint session, he called on parliament to pass the necessary laws to prepare the country for the 2020 'one person, one vote' elections. He emphasized that the laws on federalization, elections and citizenship have to precede the nationwide voter registration exercise.

The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, Ambassador Madeira said on Thursday (March 2) that the African Union and AMISOM had full confidence in the new Prime Minister's ability to deliver for the people of Somalia. He reaffirmed AMISOM's commitment to work closely with the new government.

AMISOM said on Thursday (March 2) that at least 57 members of al-Shabaab had been killed in an AMISOM and Somali National Forces attack on a camp near Afmadhow, 100 kms northwest of Kismayo. Vehicles and equipment were destroyed and "a large cache of weapons" captured. Helicopter gunships supported the attack.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said on Tuesday (February 28) that it had repatriated some 49,376 Somali refugees from Kenya since the return exercise began in December 2014. The UNHCR said in its bi-weekly update that 10,062 of these had returned this year alone.

The President of Galmudug State in Somalia, Abdikarim Hussein Guled, resigned on Sunday (February 26) citing health reasons. President Guled had been president of Galmudug since its formation as a state in 2015. Over the last year, Galmudug and its neighbor Puntland clashed over the status of Galkayo, and President Guled had also faced problems with the state assembly, which tried to impeach him last month for failures of leadership.

The Galmudug State Assembly announced it will hold an election for the regional presidency on March 21. The chairperson of Galmudug electoral body, Mohamed Hassan Ghedi said he hoped there would be no delays. He said he wanted everything to run smoothly and all those wishing to stand for the office of the president should meet the necessary conditions for election and register in time.

44 local and international aid agencies working in Somalia sent a joint letter to UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday (February 28) expressing their alarm about the possibility of famine in Somalia in early 2017 and saying "We are running out of time. It is time to effectively come together and act in a joined-up manner across the international system to keep the promise of 'never again'." (See article)

EUCAP Nestor, the European Union Maritime Capacity Building Mission to Somalia, was renamed "EUCAP Somalia", the EU Capacity Building Mission in Somalia on March 1.

EUCAP, with a presence in Mogadishu, Garowe and Hargeisa, will now operate under a new, broadened civilian maritime security mandate, to strengthen capacity to ensure maritime security, carry out fisheries inspection and enforcement, ensure maritime search and rescue, counter smuggling, fight piracy, and police the coastal zone on land and at sea.

The export of miraa [khat] to Mogadishu resumed on Monday after Somalia authorities withdrew last week's tax rise. The increase had led to a four-day boycott by Kenyan miraa exporters. After negotiations, Mogadishu officials and traders agreed on a lower rate. Mogadishu takes about 50 tonnes of miraa daily, valued at more than Sh100 million. The daily tax paid in Mogadishu amounts to Sh15 million.

A fire in Mogadishu's largest market, the Bakaaro market, on Monday (February 27) claimed three lives and caused an estimated \$4 million worth of damage. It was the second major fire in the market this year.

South Sudan

The South Sudan government has dismissed Sudanese reports that the Egyptian government has provided it with arms and ammunition. The South Sudan Foreign Ministry described the claim as "unfortunate, unfounded and baseless". It said South Sudan "upholds its commitment to regional peace initiatives and maintains the highest level of bilateral relations with Sudan based on the spirit of the Cooperation Agreement signed between the two countries in September 2012 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia."

The UN Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan, Eugene Owusu appealed on Tuesday (February 28) to all parties in the conflict to ensure immediate, safe and unhindered humanitarian access. He said: "To avert further catastrophe, it is imperative that humanitarians are able to act swiftly and robustly. I implore all parties to this conflict to uphold their responsibilities under international humanitarian law, place the plight of the people first, give aid workers unfettered access, and protect civilians."

The UN Secretary-General António Guterres has appointed Major-General Tesfay Gidey Hailemichael of Ethiopia as Force Commander for the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei. He succeeds Major-General Hassen Ebrahim Mussa of Ethiopia, who completed his assignment on 17 January. UNISFA is currently made up of 4,382 troops, 89 military observers, 20 police and a civilian element of 200, though its authorized strength is for 5,326 troops and 50 police.

Sudan

President Omar Hassan al-Bashir named First Vice-President Hassan Saleh to the newly created post of Prime Minister on Wednesday (March 1). He will retain his position as First Vice-President. This is the first appointment of a prime minister in Sudan since President Al-Bashir took power. The constitution was amended in December to introduce the position of prime minister, as requested by opposition parties that took part in the national dialogue with the government. The prime minister will lead a transitional government tasked with the implementation of the dialogue recommendations. He will be accountable to the parliament and the president, and the members of his government will be chosen and appointed by the President.

President Omar al-Bashir said on Monday (February 27) the Sudan had sufficient natural and human resources to enable it to achieve Arab food security. He told the 3rd Arab Conference for Agricultural Investment in Khartoum, that the government had created a suitable environment for investment, with infrastructure development, the building of roads and water dams and provision of electricity. Foreign investment in agriculture and livestock had risen to \$13 billion, creating 446,000 jobs in the agricultural sector. The 3rd Arab Conference for Agricultural Investment was organized by the Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development under the Theme: "Our Food. Our Responsibility".

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia's State Visit to Ethiopia

Liberian President Ellen Jonson Sirleaf paid a three-day visit to Ethiopia from February 28-March 2, during which she held bilateral talks with Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn. During her visit, President Sirleaf paid a courtesy call on President Dr Mulatu Teshome at the National Jubilee Palace. They exchanged notes on the historical ties between both nations and peoples and discussed regional, continental and global issues. President Dr Mulatu emphasized the need to work towards implementing signed agreements to move relations to a higher level.

At their talks, Prime Minister Hailemariam welcomed President Sirleaf, pointing out that her visit was "indeed a demonstration of the importance that your Excellency attaches to the strong historic relations that existed between the two countries." The Prime Minister noted that the two countries shared the historical similarities of not being colonized by any external colonial power. He said her visit coincided with the 121st anniversary of Ethiopia's outstanding victory at Adwa over Italy, a victory whose memory consistently re-kindles the fire of Pan-Africanism within and beyond the continent. He said that late President William V.S. Tubman of Liberia and Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, who were close friends, had worked tirelessly towards the formation of the Organization of African Unity. In fact, the Prime Minister noted that, as the two countries shared similar experiences during the colonial period, equally, they both needed to extricate their people from the shackles of deep rooted poverty and achieve sustainable development. The Prime Minister said that, as Africa has crossed the Rubicon of colonialism, it was important to embark on a journey of economic emancipation that would lead to job-creation and give a better future to the young generation. He expressed Ethiopia's preparedness to work with Liberia in critical areas of mutual benefit. That, he added, was why they were now working, aggressively and closely, in both bilateral and multilateral spheres, to repeat the historic victory of political emancipation in the field of economic liberty.

Prime Minister Hailemariam commended the leadership of the Liberian government in ensuring an Ebola-free country before it caused irreparable damage. Ethiopia, he said, was proud of the fact that it had played a prominent part in the solidarity among African countries in the fight against the pandemic. The Prime Minister underlined the President's record as the first female Head of State and Government in Africa, and said, "We will always look up to the experiences of Liberia as a prime example and source of inspiration" in ensuring gender equality and improving the role of women in leadership." He praised President Sirleaf's exemplary leadership on the African continent, and as Chairperson of ECOWAS in ending the Gambian crisis without rancor, was a clear manifestation of her stateswomanship. He also commended President Sirleaf for giving

Africa its deserved respect. Ethiopia, he added, would articulate Africa's case as a Non-Permanent Member of the UN Security Council.

President Sirleaf lauded Ethiopia for its unprecedented transformation over the last several years in various spheres of human development. She said Ethiopia has now become not just the political capital of the continent but the economic hub of Africa as well. She said her visit was intended to review and strengthen bilateral and diplomatic ties between Liberia and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, "the oldest independent African Republics". She described Ethiopia as a regional investment powerhouse with vast experience that could be of enormous benefits once tapped into innovatively. She acknowledged Ethiopia's crucial role during the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) especially in advancing and articulating the 'Common African Position', which were fully incorporated into the final documents. She praised the 'financing facility' as a critical contribution of Ethiopia that will inform the realistic integration and domestication of the SDGs. She described Ethiopia as a shining star of Africa in the rail transportation sector in Africa amid its latest modernization initiative, as well as being home to the single largest hydroelectric dam on the African continent.

President Sirleaf emphasized that there was an immense potential for greater cooperation between the two countries particularly in the fields of agriculture, agro-processing, education and health. She underscored the need for more cooperation to achieve better and mutually beneficial growth. She noted that noteworthy physical infrastructural development like the Addis Ababa to Djibouti railway, the Addis Ababa Light Railway and the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) were testimonies to the country's fast growing economy. She praised Ethiopia for standing alongside Liberia during its times of difficulty and thanked Ethiopia for deploying its professionals, mainly young people who made invaluable contributions to the fight against the Ebola virus. She said the young medical professionals from Ethiopia and other parts of Africa and the world had helped to inspire Liberian successful fight against the virus. **Ethiopia deployed 200 health professionals to West Africa during the Ebola outbreak**, 80 of whom went to Liberia. Ethiopian troops also participated in the UN peacekeeping force deployed to stabilize the country.

After their bilateral talks, the two countries signed five major cooperation agreements. in the areas of education, with emphasis on Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) for the development of human resources; livestock and fisheries; on cooperation in agriculture; in the field of health and medical sciences; and in the field of commercial and industrial development. The agreement on TVET set out a framework of cooperation for development of human resources, to encourage and strengthen cooperation by the exchange of experience and information in the sector in accordance with their national laws, policies and strategies. In livestock and fisheries, the deal seeks to encourage cooperation between interested institutions of the countries including human resource development, research and livestock and fisheries development, as well as encouraging private sector involvement. On health, the aim is to promote cooperation in the fields of health and medical sciences on the basis of equality and mutual benefit, including exchange of information on health and medical science, exchange health professionals and experts with a view to sharing experience in designing innovative healthcare systems Liberia's Foreign and Agricultural Ministers, and Ethiopia's Ministers of Education, Livestock and Fisheries, and Health signed the agreements.

Prime Minister Hailemariam and President Sirleaf also agreed to cooperate in economic and social development spheres. The agreements signed will help the two countries work together in areas of technical and vocational education, health, livestock and fishery resources as well as industrial development. Prime Minister Hailemariam said the two countries have enabling policies and strategies that will help them alleviate poverty by bringing about structural changes in the economic and social sectors. He said: "Knowledge and experience sharing would be undertaken in order to implement the agreements signed today". The two leaders agreed to continue to hold ministerial level discussions annually and official level meetings biennially.

During her visit, President Sirleaf also visited Hawassa, the capital of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State, and toured Hawassa Industrial Park, described by the Prime Minister as "the defining instrument for achieving our industrialization goals' when he inaugurated it last year. President Sirleaf was met on arrival at Hawassa Airport by the SNNPR Deputy President, Melese Alemu, together with full military honors and a display of impressive regional cultural dances. At the Hawassa Industrial Park, President Sirleaf and her delegation were given presentation highlighting its major features. The Park provides all necessary government services, a one-stop-shop service center and also uses a Zero Liquid Discharge system that recycles 85% of waste-water and fulfills international standards. This underlines Ethiopia's determination to

build a climate-resilient middle-income economy by 2025. The Park is expected to employ 60,000 people at full capacity and be able to generate export revenue amounting a billion U.S. dollars.

Among the factories that President Sirleaf took a closer look at, were PVH textiles (Phillips-Van Heusen Corporation), a US clothing company which owns brands such as Van Heusen, Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein, IZOD, Arrow; and TAL apparel, the world's leading apparel manufacturer producing technologically advanced garments. They are expected to produce their first exportable products within a few months. Following her tour of the Hawassa Industrial Park, President Sirleaf was given a briefing covering historical, anthropological, economic, tourism, ecosystem, fisheries and the agrarian potentials of the region, which contributes 10% to Ethiopia's overall GDP, covers a total of 109,066 sq. km. and generates 8,600 tons of fish products a year for export and local consumption. Speaking during the visit to Hawassa, President Sirleaf said she was delighted over the progress Ethiopia is making. She said, "What we have witnessed here is remarkable. It showed us that there are tremendous potentials to work in partnership thereby encouraging inter-Africa trade."

South Sudan President Kiir's official visit to Addis Ababa

South Sudan's President Salva Kiir Mayardit paid a three-day official visit to Addis Ababa last week (February 23-25). Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn, Foreign Minister Dr Workneh Gebeyehu and other high-ranking government officials welcomed the President and his delegation on their arrival at Bole International Airport. President Salva Kiir then held talks with Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn focusing on various areas of bilateral cooperation and issues of mutual concern including the resolution of the conflict in South Sudan that erupted in December 2013. Since then, Ethiopia has been working to resolve the crisis in South Sudan by peaceful means.

During the visit of Prime Minister Hailemariam to Juba last October 2016, the two sides decided to strengthen their relationship, concluding various cooperation agreements on bilateral trade, border security and military cooperation, and agreeing not to support each other's rebel groups. Following on from the words and spirit of that visit, eight other agreements were signed during President Kiir's visit to Addis Ababa. These agreements give priority to the construction of two highways linking the neighboring countries, one links Gambella, Paggak and Palouge and another will join Dima, Raad, Boma and Bor. The Minister of the South Sudanese Presidency, Mayiik Ayii Gai, said the construction of the roads comes together with the building of a refinery in Upper Nile with the capacity to process up to 100,000 barrels of oil per day. Swiss and U.S companies are funding this project, and the Minister said: "when the construction of this refinery is completed and the road is completed, we will have access to some hard currency through these refined products". He also noted that the refinery would allow South Sudan to export refined fuel products at very reasonable prices to countries in the region, including Ethiopia. South Sudan currently exports its crude oil to the international market through Port Sudan and imports fuel from countries in the region. Speaking at the signing ceremony, the Ethiopian Prime Minister welcomed the agreement saying "We don't need to go too far to import oil while South Sudan is close by here with us."

A joint statement said that these trans-border highway projects acknowledged that free movement of people and goods was a pre-requisite to boosting economic ties and would enhance trade exchange and social ties between their peoples. In addition to these transport agreements a series of Memoranda of Understanding were also signed covering energy, border trade protocols, preferential trade, communication, health, infrastructure, information, communications and the media. In their statement, the two countries said they wanted to further strengthen the already existing excellent relations between the two countries.

The joint communiqué after the talks also noted: "The two leaders also agreed to form a Joint Border Committee to follow up implementation of joint development activities along with their shared border. They would form a Joint Border Administrators/Governors Committee at the earliest possible time to further enable them to strengthen cooperation on the issues of security, trade, development and infrastructure along their common border." In a press conference he gave after the talks, Prime Minister Hailemariam said "in order to strengthen the bilateral ties between the two countries, we have agreed to hold discussion at a ministerial level twice a year." He added: "We have also agreed to establish a committee which helps strengthen the people-to-people ties of our two nations."

With regard to finding a durable solution to the conflict in South Sudan, the two sides recognized "the need to work together for the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan signed in Addis Ababa on August 2015. It said President Salva Kiir and Prime Minister

Hailemariam would work for its expeditious implementation in letter and spirit. They also agreed to work together for the all-inclusive process of the national dialogue that the President announced on December 14 last year.

South Sudan President Salva Kiir Mayardit, at a state dinner with Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam, appreciated the invitation to visit Ethiopia. He said "The Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding which we signed will go a long way in further strengthening our bilateral relations. These relations are already excellent but our ambition is to take them to a level where the ordinary citizens in our two sisterly countries will feel and practically benefit from the improvement of our two economies and thus lift the standard of livelihood of our people". President Kiir also highlighted that the agreements related to the construction of the two roads would be mutually beneficial, adding that "South Sudan earnestly needs infrastructure and these roads will give access to our people in terms of mobility". He also stressed the South Sudan Government's readiness to build the oil refinery so "our brothers from Ethiopia will have a ready source of refined fuel close to them and that will help in boosting their economic activities. We will make sure this is realized as soon as possible so that our citizens reap the benefits that we promised them".

President Kiir strongly welcomed the Government of Ethiopia for its genuine support to the National Dialogue process. Concerning the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict, the President also said he wished to assure Ethiopia that his Government would enhance the implementation of the Agreement and consolidate peace and stability in country. He added: "This National Dialogue will be inclusive and will reach all corners of our country and involve all our ethnic communities in every single state."

President Kiir declared the "national dialogue" last December, calling on armed opposition groups to lay down arms and join the dialogue. Two weeks ago, President Kiir renewed his call to opposition groups to join the "open forum" arguing that the national dialogue was the best option to consolidate peace in South Sudan.

Before leaving, President Kiir and his delegation paid visits to the Bole Lemi Industrial Park, located in the southeastern area of Addis Ababa and to the Ethiopian National Museum.

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn on a State Visit to Uganda

The Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Hailemariam Dessalegn, arrived in Kampala for a three-day State Visit to Uganda at the invitation of President Yoweri Museveni on Thursday (March 2). The Prime Minister was accompanied by First Lady Roman Tesfaye and a high-powered delegation of Ministers and high-ranking government officials, including Foreign Minister Dr Workneh Gebeyehu. He was received at State House, Entebbe by President Yoweri Museveni and his wife, Janet Museveni. The Prime Minister was given a red carpet welcome and accorded a 19-gun salute. He inspected a guard of honor mounted by the Uganda People's Defence Forces and was also entertained by Ugandan traditional dance troupes.

Prime Minister Hailemariam held talks with President Museveni and exchanged views on a wide range of bilateral, regional and international issues of common interest. They reviewed various cooperation frameworks previously concluded in the areas of defense, security, transport, health, energy, agriculture, education and tourism, noting that implementation of these frameworks was behind schedule. They directed that the Third Joint Ministerial Commission meeting, scheduled to be held in Uganda this year, should draw up Sectoral Implementation Plans for the identified priority areas of defense and security; infrastructure linkages and development; energy; trade and investments; tourism and cultural heritage. They also agreed to hold a Summit level meeting prior to each of the JMC meetings. They also witnessed the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on cooperation in the areas of women and children as well as youth and sports.

The two leaders underlined their efforts to ensure fair and equitable utilization of the River Nile by all countries of the Basin, and underlined the need to provide a new momentum for equitable utilization of the shared resource. They agreed to continue their active role in realizing the objectives of the Cooperative Framework Agreement on the Nile Waters, and on the need to convene a Summit of the Nile Basin Member States to forge maximum consensus on outstanding issues. President Museveni said the Nile water was being politicized and over-securitized due to confusion and misinformation, and urged the importance of maximum consensus to clear away the cloud of misinformation and misconception around the CFA. The CFA is intended to establish a framework to "promote integrated management, sustainable development, and harmonious

utilization of the water resources of the Basin, as well as their conservation and protection for the benefit of present and future generations". He cautioned that some countries had misconceived the agreement. He, therefore, explained that one more summit was needed to clear away misconceptions and achieve maximum consensus among the riparian countries.

The Prime Minister and the President welcomed the conclusion of the elections in Somalia and the election of President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed. They reiterated their full and continued support to the new Federal Government of Somalia to consolidate the gains made in the areas of peace, security and development in the country especially through AMISOM's support for the training of a Somali National Army, the building of basic infrastructure and provision of social services as well as the building and strengthening of State pillars.

They exchanged views on the key challenges facing the Republic of South Sudan including the humanitarian and security situation and urged the region and the international community to assist and help South Sudan address the causes and challenges of the crisis, including the enormous costs associated with implementation of critical elements of the Addis Ababa Agreement signed in August 2015. Prime Minister Hailemariam, recalling his recent discussion with President Salva Kiir, said President Kiir had agreed to bring everybody on board in his national dialogue. He expressed Ethiopia's strong support for an inclusive national dialogue. He also underlined the importance of Uganda in helping to bring South Sudan back to normality. While agreeing with the Prime Minister on the necessity of an all-inclusive dialogue, President Museveni emphasized the importance of elections, security and defense reforms as significant stimuli to bring about relative national unity in South Sudan. The two leaders agreed to call upon the international community to work towards this and hasten deployment of the Regional Protection Force.

They welcomed the ongoing cooperation between the two countries in the defense and security sector particularly in dealing with regional peace and security. They commended the continued efforts of IGAD to ensure peace, security and development in the region and reiterated their commitment to regional peace and security. They appreciated the efforts and contributions made towards restoring lasting peace and stability in Somalia and South Sudan. They agreed to further enhance collaboration in the maintenance and protection of regional peace and security, especially in tackling and defeating al-Shabaab and all forms of terrorism and violent extremism.

The fourth issue discussed was the need to prioritize and enhance trade between Ethiopia and Uganda. They agreed to finalize negotiations of a Trade Agreement in order to further promote trade and to encourage inter-Ethiopian-Uganda investment. To that end, they underlined the importance of developing road and railway infrastructural links among IGAD member states and between Uganda and Ethiopia through South Sudan and Kenya within the context of the proposed Kampala-Juba-Addis-Djibouti-Kenya Corridors and the Northern Corridor Integration Projects of the East African Community. President Museveni highlighted the high potential for investment and trade in the areas of leather and textile industries, hotel and tourism and coffee processing, and stressed the importance of designing a trade strategy beneficial to both parties.

The joint communiqué also stressed that Ethiopia and Uganda agreed to collaborate with other leaders in the region to address the drought. They called on the international community and humanitarian agencies to provide urgent assistance to the affected populations and areas. They urged implementation of the immediate, short, medium and long term measures required, including full implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol on reduction of carbon emissions.

Somali President convenes a high-level drought response meeting

At the beginning of the week, Somalia's President Mohamed Abdullahi declared the drought a 'national disaster' and appealed for help from the international community and from Somalia's two million strong Diaspora. On Tuesday (February 28) he opened the high-level roundtable meeting he had called in Mogadishu to address the drought, now estimated to be seriously affecting over six million people and agreed on the steps necessary to avert a famine. According to the World Health Organization, more than 6.2 million people, half of Somalia's population, need urgent humanitarian aid, including almost three million who are going hungry. WHO said more than 363,000 acutely malnourished children and 70,000 severely malnourished children require urgent, life-saving support. Aid agencies are concerned that the drought is exacerbating the country's on-going humanitarian crisis, while there are reports that the ongoing conflict with al-Shabaab is further blocking access to food.

The meeting, chaired by President Mohamed Abdullahi, brought together 31 delegations of Federal government officials, international partners countries and the African Union and the United Nations, representatives of civil society, NGOs and the private sector, religious leaders and businessmen to discuss ways to avert worsening the humanitarian crisis in Somalia. Representatives from Jubaland, Hir-Shabelle and Southwest states were invited to brief the international aid agencies on the current situation in their regions. In his opening remarks, the President said: "Preventing famine is our top priority. There is no greater threat than famine in Somalia today." He called on international aid agencies and the people of Somalia to extend life-saving humanitarian assistance to those hit by the drought, adding: "The aftermath behind the catastrophic 2011 famine were numerous. We must not make today the same mistakes again." Peter de Clercq, UN Deputy Special Representative and Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia said the United Nations and the entire international community stood with Somalia in the effort to avert famine.

A communiqué issued at the conclusion of the meeting identified the drought crisis as the top priority currently facing Somalia and noted its particularly harsh impact on women, children and disabled persons. Participants in the roundtable discussions welcomed President Mohamed Abdullahi's declaration of a national disaster and warned of the risks posed by the drought in undermining the significant progress achieved in the country over the past five years. They proposed the immediate implementation of a number of specific measures to mitigate the effects of the drought. These included the removal of all obstacles to the delivery of assistance, extending to the import and export of foodstuffs, critical supplies and remittances; the temporary suspension of new bureaucratic requirements placed on aid providers at the level of federal member states and regions; the provision of security; increased logistical support for access to drought-stricken areas; and the rehabilitation of vital infrastructure.

Participants highlighted the importance of a collective and coordinated approach. The critical role of national and international non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies in providing life-saving assistance and livelihood support to populations at risk was emphasized. The communiqué also underscored the role of the country's private sector in facilitating the delivery of supplies to reach the most vulnerable communities and called on the Somali Diaspora to increase its remittances to support the drought response. They adopted a position of zero tolerance to the diversion of humanitarian assistance and pledged to hold accountable anyone engaging in such misconduct. Participants urged the independent media to play a watchdog role in this regard and provide regular updates on the effectiveness of the drought response to the Federal Government and international partners. Participants also welcomed the leadership of the President in declaring a national disaster and offered full support in alleviating suffering and preventing the situation from deteriorating further. They acknowledged the significant progress made in Somalia over the past five years and the risks posed by the drought to the gains made. They recognized the particular impact the drought has on women, children and disabled persons. They, therefore, pledged to maintain the drought as their first priority and recognized the urgent need to do what they could to save lives.

The communiqué referred back to the "devastating famine of 2011-12" and committed them "to taking all necessary action to avoid the mistakes made then and to improve on our collective response." They emphasized that the scale of the crisis and its impact on victims, regional stability and long-term socio-economic growth, required "unity of purpose and action", adding that "in this moment of national and international solidarity, everyone can contribute to the response." It said the responsibility to act concerned everybody: "the Federal Government, the Federal Member States, local elders and leaders, communities of faith, civil society, the private sector, the media, the Somali Diaspora, and international partners, including the African Union, donors and neighboring countries."

Participants committed themselves to developing a mix of short-term emergency interventions to prevent famine and to sustainable, durable solutions to allow Somalia to build resilience at the individual and national levels. Concrete measures to be considered and implemented immediately should include, inter alia: the removal of all impediments to the delivery of assistance, including those on imports and exports of foodstuffs and critical supplies, as well as on remittances; the temporary suspension of new bureaucratic requirements at the sub-federal level on aid providers; the provision of security; increased logistical support for access, and the rehabilitation of vital infrastructure. Other measures should address the adjustment, where possible, of existing programs and projects to benefit drought-affected populations; the generation and sharing of accurate information and data to support the response; a substantial increase in individual, corporate, UN, donor and Diaspora financial contributions; and the meaningful and constructive participation in established coordination structures.

They agreed to strengthen the role of the National Drought Response Committee and their counterparts at state level to engage all actors across all sectors of Somali society to contribute toward the ongoing drought response and prevention of famine. They also encouraged participation in state-level Drought Response Committees, and called for effective links between state and federal coordination mechanisms. They stressed the role of international and national NGOs, and UN agencies, in providing life-saving assistance and livelihood support to populations in need; the responsibility of independent media as an active watchdog, and to provide regular updates on the drought and its response, to both the international community and the Federal Government of Somalia through the National Drought Response Committee; the role of the private sector in supporting the delivery of supplies, in restoring effective markets and in reaching the most vulnerable; and the importance of the Somali Diaspora, whom we urge to increase remittances to Somalia and to support the drought response.

The communiqué welcomed the establishment by the Federal Government of Somalia of special accounts in the Central Bank of Somalia and six commercial banks to receive donations from concerned citizens and friends of Somalia. It stressed these accounts would be independently audited at six-month intervals and public statements posted on the Ministry of Finance website (or NDRC) to ensure public access to information about how money has been allocated and spent. It also declared a policy of non-tolerance to diversion of assistance and pledged to take firm action against anyone engaging in such misconduct. This would cover all forms of diversion and any manipulation of the response, including private profiteering. It requested a National Drought Response Committee to immediately establish appropriate and simple monitoring and mutual accountability procedures, and implement all required actions to support safe and anonymous reporting of impropriety in the drought response.

In conclusion, in line with the Mogadishu Declaration last week, participants agreed to increase intra-regional cooperation, in order to address the immediate crisis as well as to design long-term food security strategies and investments in the region's resilience to humanitarian shocks and climate change. The meeting stressed that only "through urgent, collective and sustained action will we meet today's urgent challenge and build a more prosperous and safe environment for future generations in Somalia and its neighbors."

The Presidents of Djibouti, Kenya and Somalia and the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, the Chair of IGAD, issued the "Mogadishu Declaration on Regional Cooperation on the Current Drought" in Mogadishu on February 22. As we noted last week, this said the four leaders had come together as heads of government of four countries in a region facing significant stress as a result of the current drought. It noted the negative effect of "multiple seasons of failed rains and global weather patterns" on the resilience mechanisms of millions, as well as the security and political implications. This was evident in the immediate humanitarian crisis and would show up in "longer term socio-economic vulnerability in communities" with coping mechanisms eroded and tensions over dwindling resources risking conflict. It noted the upheaval was taking a particularly heavy toll on children and women, and making people vulnerable to exploitation, human rights abuses and to criminal and terrorist networks as well as drought-related disease outbreaks and inter-communal conflict.

The Declaration noted that, while each government was mobilizing to respond, the dire situation called for international collaboration and regional partnership between governments, civil society, aid organizations, business and international donors. It, therefore, committed the four countries to regional cooperation to facilitate a more comprehensive response and strong partnership. They agreed "to strengthen cross-border collaboration and efforts to establish security and stability in Somalia to ensure an effective response to the drought and to enable further progress in peace building and state building in Somalia." They also added a further commitment to provision of "appropriate protection and assistance to those compelled to leave their areas of origin as a consequence of the drought, including those who have fled to neighboring countries." The Declaration said the four leaders would be consulting on a regular basis to review progress and agree any necessary collective action to help respond to this emergency. For the longer term, they also agreed, "to work together bilaterally and through existing regional bodies such as IGAD, the African Union as well as the United Nations to address the underlying structural issues that commonly affect our economies, environments and communities, including cross-border rangeland and water resource management."

Meanwhile, this week, some 44 local and international aid agencies participating in the umbrella Somalia NGO Consortium, appealed to the UN to take urgent action to avert possible famine in Somalia. In a joint letter to UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, on Tuesday (February 28), the agencies urged the UN Secretary-General to encourage the international community to step up its efforts to ensure that the mistakes made in

2011 were not repeated and to push for immediate drought relief transitioning to longer restoration of livelihoods. It said "We, the national and international humanitarian agencies working in Somalia, are writing to express our alarm about the possibility of famine in Somalia in early 2017". They said that in 2010-11, systemic failures on the part of the international community had led to a famine in Somalia in which nearly 260,000 people died, half of them children, and the world swore 'never again': "We are running out of time. It is time to effectively come together and act in a joined up manner across the international system to keep the promise of 'never again'." The letter stressed that "On-going operations to reach vulnerable communities need to be scaled up rapidly across the country." It said, "This must include investment in resilience and be done in a way that enables longer-term prevention so families and communities do not slide further into crisis."

Ethiopia celebrates the Battle of Adwa: a stunning victory for Africa

Ethiopia commemorated the 121st anniversary of the victory of the Battle of Adwa on Thursday (March 2). Adwa, the battle marking the defeat of Italy's efforts to conquer Ethiopia, was not just a victory for Ethiopia but also a victory for Africa, and one with lessons for today. It allows today's new generation to draw lessons for the maintenance of sovereignty, development, commitment to overcome poverty and achieve Ethiopia's renaissance. It is being celebrated colorfully all across the country this week and notably in Adwa city in Tigray Regional State and at Menilek II Square in Addis Ababa, in the presence of high-level government officials, residents and patriots and invited dignitaries.

Speaking at the ceremonies in Adwa, President Dr Mulatu Teshome said Adwa was a great victory that resonated with the spirit of cooperation and mutual respect as well as determination for success. It was, he said, "a victory for all black people." The President said "Our ancestors made huge sacrifices to safeguard the sovereignty of the country and pass it down to the existing generation." He said the current generation, and the youth in particular, needed to step up their engagement in building up the national image. The President called on the nation to support the country's ongoing development projects, notably the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen, Chairman of the National Council for the Coordination of Public Participation of GERD, handed a torch to President Dr Mulatu and the Speaker of the House of Federation, Yalew Abate. This was dedicated to the latest campaign to raise funds for GERD which will be launched on March 26 in Addis Ababa and run throughout the country for the next eleven months. The Deputy Prime Minister called on all Ethiopians to duplicate the unity and participation evident at the battle of Adwa in the construction of GERD.

The former President of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki, attended celebrations at Adwa itself along with senior government officials. They underlined the fact that the Adwa victory played a significant role in stirring independence movements across Africa, igniting African solidarity and pan-Africanism across the continent. It opened a new era for black people. In practical terms, this provided the driver for a collective conviction on the need to prevent injustice. Indeed, Adwa proved the start of a process pushing western powers to change their attitudes towards Africa and to resort more frequently to peaceful and diplomatic relations. The stunning victory has inspired later generations to continue the fight; and, in Ethiopia, the younger generation has now been given the responsibility of creating a prosperous and democratic country.

The Speaker of the House of People's Representatives, Speaker Abadula Gameda, in his remarks, noted the current generation has the responsibility of making its own history. Applauding the celebration of the commemoration of Adwa victory across the nation, he said the day would particularly be observed in the mountains of Adwa, where the Ethiopian forces overwhelmed the Italian troops. He said, "The victory is the testimony that Ethiopians do not give their country up to their enemies even though they are in an unpleasant situation".

The Battle of Adwa was of huge significance for Ethiopia and for Africa. It meant that the age of continental invasion by the then European colonial powers could not be completed. Ethiopia remained independent, a sovereign and un-colonized African country, an example and a model for the rest of the continent. It provided an inspiration for African countries in the subsequent struggles for independence, and it was not mere chance that African countries chose Ethiopia to be a permanent host of the African Union.

The war began with the treaty of Wuchale, an agreement signed between Ethiopia and Italy in 1889. Later, a dispute arose over the interpretation of the Italian and Amharic versions of the document. The Italian language version of the disputed Article XVII of the treaty stated that the Emperor of Ethiopia was obliged to conduct all foreign affairs through Italian Authorities. This would in effect make Ethiopia a protectorate of the Kingdom

of Italy. The Amharic version of the article, however, stated that the Emperor could use the good offices of the Kingdom of Italy in his relations with foreign nations if he wished. When, the Emperor made it clear he would only accept the Amharic version, Italy decided to impose a military solution to force Ethiopia to abide by the Italian version.

Forces that came together from all over Ethiopia fought at Adwa. Emperor Menilek declared, "Enemies have now come upon us to ruin our country and force us to change our religion. Our enemies have begun advancing and digging in to the country like moles. With the help of God, I will not give away. Today let the strong fight on my side; and let the weak pray in our favor!" The Empress Taytu was as determined to resist Italian claims. After the disagreements over article XVII, she told the Italian envoy, Antonelli "We have also made it known to the powers that the said article, as it is written in our language, has another meaning. Like you, we also ought to respect our dignity. You wish Ethiopia to be presented before the other powers as your protectorate - this shall never be."

The battle itself was brief. It had been preceded by several other clashes in the previous few months, with Ethiopian forces winning a victory at Amba Alagie in December 1895 and forcing an Italian garrison at Mekelle to surrender in January 1896. The fighting at Adwa itself, however, barely lasted a morning. It started at dawn and by 12 noon it was all over, with over 7,000 Italians killed and 2,000 or so wounded and 3,000 prisoners; Ethiopian losses were estimated at 4,500 killed and 8,000 wounded.

It was a major victory and a turning point not just for Ethiopia but for Africa and for the African peoples in the Diaspora. A victory in which all the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia participated, it allowed Ethiopia to retain its independence and start its own development. The Italian invasion united all Ethiopians against the colonizing forces. It was a scenario that was repeated again in 1935 when fascist Italy tried to reverse the defeat of Adwa and, once again, brought out all Ethiopians to fight their common enemy. The way the generation, which won Adwa, protected their country from foreign invaders and gave their lives to realize their vision of a free and sovereign Ethiopia, continues to offer a lesson for future generations. Their success provides an object lesson for the current generation. It remains an appropriate lesson for younger generations to protect and keep the country from its enemies, to put aside their differences and cooperate. They have the responsibility of fighting poverty and backwardness. This doesn't demand the sacrifice of one's life. It does demand every effort to maintain fast and sustainable economic growth, to realize the renaissance of the country. It calls on everyone, regardless of age, gender, religion or ethnic origin, to stand together for national interests.

Adwa also compelled Europeans to reconsider their attitudes towards Africans. It forced them to accept Ethiopia's sovereignty and freedom, obliging them to open Embassies in Addis Ababa and become involved in bilateral relations. Most importantly, it became a catalyst for further struggles by other peoples against their white colonizers and Ethiopia became emblematic of African valor and resistance, a bastion of prestige and hope to thousands of Africans who were experiencing the full shock of European conquest and were beginning to search for an answer to the myth of African inferiority. African-Americans saw the victory as justification of their own self-worth. It was one of the primary reasons for the "modern global rise of a Pan-African vision of freedom."

In the final analysis, Adwa symbolized a victory of the African people, both in Africa and in the Diaspora, and underlined the growing sense of unity among Africans and people of African descent. It has always resonated in the heart of black people as a symbol, demonstrating defiance to colonialism, to exploitation and to foreign domination. The first major victory of non-white peoples over a European army, it negated the then widespread belief that Africans were no match for European colonizers. Adwa was a constant reminder of the possibility of defeating the oppressor and a real source of inspiration to oppressed colonial peoples and to the Diaspora of black Africans, struggling to free themselves from slavery and subjugation. It rejected the myth of the 'civilizing mission' of colonizers who claimed it was 'right and proper' to colonize 'savage and barbarous' Africans. Indeed, Adwa showed that these 'savage barbarians' were the true defenders of the virtues of freedom, equality and human dignity.

Adwa was and remains a redeeming moment for black people. It stands with the gallant Zulu resistance by Shaka in the 19th century and the Mau Mau in Kenya fifty years ago as one of the major symbols of resistance. It was a victory that inspired Marcus Garvey, William Du Bois and Martin Luther King and other great freedom fighters that led the Back to Africa and Civil Rights Movements in America. Today, the spirit of Adwa can still provide a springboard for the African Union's "Pan-Africanism for the African Renaissance", for the emergence

of a new Africa, an Africa free to decide its own destiny. Adwa certainly belongs to Africa, as well as to Ethiopia where it provides the basis for the youth of the country to develop their own winning spirit drawn from the example of the courage and determination shown by their grandfathers.

The 5th Africa Business Forum in Addis Ababa

The 5th African Business Forum, one of its bi-annual meetings in Africa and the Middle East, opened this week on Wednesday (March 1) in Addis Ababa. The forum, which presents an invaluable opportunity for companies and investors to connect with clients across different industries and from around the world, was attended by high-level government officials and more than a hundred business leaders and representatives drawn from different countries as well as Ambassadors of Nigeria, Germany, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

In opening the Forum, Ethiopia's State Minister of Industry, Dr Mebrahtu Meles, described it as an important platform to maximize business and investment potentials in Africa. It also, he said, underlined the need for businesses and manufacturing companies operating on the continent to strengthen their partnerships with the view to expanding the reach beyond Africa and competing in the global market. Reflecting on Ethiopia's own significant potential for business and investment as well as the efforts being carried out by the Government of Ethiopia in terms of setting up enabling conditions for investors, the State Minister underlined the fact that Ethiopia has been creating an advantageous and beneficial investment atmosphere for investors. An important element in this was the building of industrial parks across the country, and the State Minister called on African investors to seize the opportunities available.

Ethiopia's ambitious development plans, including the pursuit of rapid industrialization, with priorities centered in developing the manufacturing sector and agro-processing industries, have already managed to attract significant domestic and foreign direct investment. One main driver of this is the massive development of industrial parks. Already-built ones include the Hawassa Eco-friendly Industrial Park, Africa's largest park, and the Addis Ababa Bole Lemmi Industrial Park. They have started operations and a number of major global companies from China, US, Germany and Sri Lanka have invested there in apparel and textiles development. The Hawassa Industrial Park, a model park for future facilities, has the capacity to create 60, 000 jobs. It was established at a cost of IUS\$250 million. Built in a convenient environment, the Hawassa Industrial Park offers investors access to all necessary infrastructure facilities, including power, telecom links and water as well as the provision of one-stop shop services. Along with several other industrial parks being built across the nation, Ethiopia is aiming at a billion US dollars of annual investment in industrial parks over the next decade in its efforts to boost exports. It intends to make the country the hub of Africa's light industries by 2025.

Abebe Ababayehu, Deputy Commissioner of the Ethiopian Investment Commission also spoke at the Forum. He noted that Ethiopia, in relative terms, is characterized with substantial manpower and cheap labor as well as one of the lowest electricity costs in the world. All this, he said, offered significant advantages for businesses and investors. In addition, Ethiopia, he said had been addressing the problem of transportation. He cited Ethiopian Airlines and the country's railway network as success stories. The Deputy Commissioner called on investors to invest particularly in the agro-processing industrial parks being established. They would then be able to maximize their competitive advantages and benefits.

The Panel topics at the Africa Business Forum underlined the areas of interest, representing finance and capital investment, ICT, agriculture, mining, power and energy, consumer goods and general trade, logistics and aviation, infrastructure, tourism, hospitality and real estate as well as manufacturing and all related industries. Since its creation in 2014, the African Business Forum has become a key global platform to explore the best and most competitive ways of investing in both Africa and the Middle East. It offers an opportunity to maximize the global market share by building connections with customers and partners in the African continent.