

A Week in the Horn

4th July 2014

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News in Brief:

AU/IGAD

The 23rd Ordinary Session of the Summit of the African Union concluded in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea (June 27). The Assembly, comprising Heads of State and Government of the African Union, was held from June 26-27, organized under the theme: "2014 Year of Agriculture and Food Security". The Heads of State and Government adopted a number of key decisions. (See Article)

Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in conjunction with Makerere University's School of Law gave the first ever training [June 25-28] on water law and policy for IGAD member states' at the Environmental Law Centre on Makerere Campus in Kampala, Uganda.

Ethiopia

Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn held discussions with local business representatives (July 2) in Addis Ababa and said sufficient loan provision is available for those investors who are engaged in the manufacturing sector. "Local investors are not benefiting from this loan as they prefer the trade and service sectors instead of having taken up manufacturing ", he noted.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs in association with International Organization for Migration (IOM) launched (June 30) a project aiming to provide ways of mobilizing the Ethiopian Diaspora for national renewal, modernization and Ethiopia's Renaissance. Under the theme of "Knowing the Diaspora," over 20 Ethiopian Diplomats and Ambassadors are taking part in the training with a view to further accelerating efforts to tap the wealth of knowledge, resources and expertise within the Ethiopian Diaspora in different parts of the world.

At the 5th Ethio- Russia Joint Commission held (June 24-28), in Moscow, Ethiopia and Russia signed agreements to cooperate in areas of agriculture and energy as well as agreements in areas of trade, economy, science and technology.

A host country agreement was signed by State Minister Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos and UN Women representative to Ethiopia, AU and UNECA, Mrs Letty Chiwara. Ambassador Berhane appreciated the efforts being exerted by the UN Women Country Office in promoting and coordinating gender equality and requested that UN Women scale-up its support for the government's efforts to address the challenges in this area.

The UN World Food Programme appreciated (July 3) Ethiopia's refuge policy saying "the Ethiopian government has an 'open-door policy' for refugees and currently is hosting one of the biggest refugee number without talking too much about it." It also warned that the numbers of refugees from South Sudan to Ethiopia are increasing exponentially.

Foreign Minister, Dr Tedros Adhanom, laying the cornerstone for a hospital to be built by the Ethio-American Doctors Group (EADG) in Addis Ababa, called for increased participation of the Ethiopian Diaspora in the country's development.

Eritrea

Several top Eritrean leaders have been reported to the police for crimes against humanity by a Swedish law firm, as a new law took effect enabling such crimes committed anywhere else in the world to be prosecuted in Sweden. The report lists a series of alleged crimes including torture and kidnapping, and targets Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki and several of his ministers by name.

The United Nations Human Rights Council at its 26th Session adopted (June 27) unanimously, without a vote, the resolution on the situation of human rights in Eritrea that would establish a Commission of Inquiry for a period of one year to investigate the alleged violations of human rights in Eritrea; also extended the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Eritrea for a period of 1 year. (See Article)

Kenya

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon discussed (June 30, with Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, ways to comprehensively and cooperatively put a stop to "heinous" attacks and announced that the UN stood ready to help Kenya and other African countries combat terrorism; affirmed the UN was willing to enhance the capacities of the government of Kenya in its fight against terrorism.

Kenya's Economy was reported to have registered an impressive 4.1 percent growth in the first quarter of 2014, considering the challenges the country has faced in the period under review.

Somalia

China has decided to re-open its embassy in Somalia 23 years after evacuating its diplomats following the nation's plunge into civil war. Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said the decision came after Somalia established its first government and parliament in 21years. The newly appointed Chinese envoy Wei Hongtian presented his credentials to Somalia's Foreign Minister Abdirahman Mohamed Beileh as the first step in reopening the embassy.

The 54th anniversary of Somalia independence was held in Mogadishu on Tuesday (July 1). President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, Prime Minister Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed, and Parliamentary Speaker Mohamed Osman Jawari, invited guests, musicians and other people from across Mogadishu participated in the ceremony, highlighting the importance of the day, with similar celebrations held elsewhere in Baidoa, Beledweyne, Dusamareb, Galkayo and Garowe. (See Article)

Djibouti

The 37th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Djibouti was held on June 27. The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (SRCC) Ambassador Mahamat Saleh Annadif congratulated the Republic of Djibouti on its independence in 1977, lauding the sacrifice made by the Djiboutian contingent in the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) since their first deployment in December 2011.

South Sudan

South Sudanese information minister and spokesperson of the government negotiating team, Michael Makuei, said (July 1) the government is ready to conclude a peace agreement within two weeks with the rebel SPLM in Opposition if they resume their participation in the peace process. He also cautioned that the 60-day deadline set on 10 June by the IGAD leaders passes quickly and announced “we are ready to sign a peace agreement within 15 days”.

South Sudan’s finance minister, Agrey Tisa Sabuni, tabled the 2014-15 annual budget of about \$4 billion before parliament on Wednesday (July 2). The budget tabled showed a significant reduction in spending compared to last year as a result of the significant drop in oil production in Unity and Upper Nile states, it was said.

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang met Vice President of South Sudan James Wani Igga on Tuesday (July 1) in Beijing and vowed to expand cooperation with South Sudan in areas including trade, agriculture, infrastructure, construction and energy.

Sudan

Presidential Assistant, Ibrahim Ghandour met (July 3) with the representative of Head of the Secretariat of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel on Sudan, Abdul Mohammed, to discuss the developments of the national dialogue and the progress of talks concerning the Blue Nile and South Kordofan. The representative will also meet with political party leaders and stakeholders.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called for investigations and reviews on recent reports of allegations against the United Nations-African Union peacekeeping force in Sudan's Darfur region over the last two years to determine what, if any, corrective action needs to be taken.

Egypt

Egypt’s Water and Irrigation Minister, Hossam El-Din Moghazy, met with Sudanese Minister of Water Resources and Electricity, Mutaz Musa in Khartoum and invited Sudan to the tripartite talks involving Sudan, Ethiopia and Egypt in Cairo. An invitation was handed to the Ethiopia at the same time.

Prime Minister Hailemariam visits Nigeria....

An Ethiopian delegation, headed by Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, paid an official visit to the Federal Republic of Nigeria on Tuesday and Wednesday last week (June 24 - 25). The Prime Minister was accompanied by Foreign Minister, Dr Tedros Adhanom, and other high-level officials. The delegation was welcomed on arrival by President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan of Nigeria. During their bilateral meeting, both leaders spoke of the long-standing and strategic partnership that existed between Nigeria and Ethiopia and commended exchanges of official visits at leadership level. They noted that bilateral relations in the economic area were weak and agreed to improve the status quo by signing a number of agreements during the forthcoming Joint Ministerial Commission. The two sides also signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Diplomatic Training and Agricultural Cooperation.

Prime Minister Hailemariam emphasized the parallels existing between the two countries which, he said, could serve as building blocks to strengthen their relationship. He mentioned that the two countries had populations that amounted to over 200 million people, the largest actual and potential markets on the continent. They both developed federal systems as the most suitable means of governing their diversified, multicultural and multi-religious societies. They were both committed to a similar agenda of suitable economic growth and development to improve the lives of their peoples and for the continent as a whole. Prime Minister Hailemariam stressed the importance of sustained cooperation and support for the agenda to encourage the resurgence of African industrialization adding that this would save Africa from becoming “a dumping site for foreign producers.” The Prime Minister said he appreciated the excellent bilateral relations existing between Nigeria and Ethiopia in the political field, but admitted that from the economic perspective the two countries had failed to exploit their cordial and longstanding relations. He further noted that existing

trade relations in no way mirrored the excellent political relations they enjoyed. Prime Minister Hailemariam expressed his concern over the unimplemented trade agreement between the two countries and agreed that they needed to work hard to lift their trade relations to the level they deserved.

In this regard, he said there were considerable possibilities available for developing economic ties and it was time to encourage their respective private sectors to establish greater interaction and collaboration. The Prime Minister said that there were some signs of increased interest in trade and investment between Nigeria and Ethiopia. He welcomed the activities of Mr Aliko Dangote, President and CEO of the Dangote group, in leading the way and pioneering large-scale Nigerian investment in Ethiopia. He urged other investors to follow suit. Referring to the fact that Nigeria was the second most frequent destination for Ethiopian airlines after China, the Prime Minister expressed his belief that the fact that Ethiopian Airlines now flew to four different Nigerian cities would help improve the existing economic ties.

At the joint press conference the two leaders gave at State House, Abuja, at the end of the official visit, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn and Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan announced that both countries had agreed to comprehensively deepen mutual cooperation in the fields of trade and investment, culture, tourism, agriculture and energy as well as security. Both leaders recognized the necessity of jointly promoting development and prosperity through the consolidation of bilateral ties in priority areas including trade, investment, agriculture, the establishment of enabling factors for cooperation and the re-activation of investment-friendly regulatory frameworks. To realize sustainable economic growth and development, both sides committed themselves to extending support to the promotion of regional and global peace and security. They denounced all forms of terrorism and extremism and its growing threat to African countries.

Prime Minister Hailemariam stressed that terrorism was “a global phenomenon that had to be tackled together. “It should not be left to this or that region or this or that country. We have to bear in mind the genesis of this terrorism,” he said. He noted that the increasing surge of suicide bombing by terrorists underlined the need to eliminate their strongholds, stressing that sustaining the momentum in the fight against terrorism was vital. He said that the current situation in Somalia had pushed Al-Shabaab insurgents to resort to suicide bombing, adding that cooperative security in the region and the ideological bankruptcy of the threat encouraged the fading away of terrorism and extremism. He noted that terrorism and killing of people had “nothing to do with religion or political ambition.” He suggested that countries which were vulnerable to terrorist attacks, including Nigeria and Ethiopia, must lead the process of fighting against terrorist activity and the indiscriminate killing of innocent people. They must remain committed to continuing the fight against terrorism until it was wiped out.

President Jonathan said Nigeria could draw lessons from Ethiopia’s experience in the fight against terrorism. He recognized that Ethiopia-Nigeria economic ties had not enjoyed steady development and stressed the urgency of strengthening cooperation in the areas of agriculture, power and commerce. This, he said, would enable the two nations to generate jobs for youths and advance the cause of development. The President appreciated what he described as Ethiopia’s commendable efforts in the development of power generation, agriculture, commerce and industry.

During his visit to Nigeria, Prime Minister Hailemariam attended the ground-breaking ceremony of Centenary City in Abuja. Centenary City is a new government project to build a new city on a 1,000 hectares of land located several kilometers southeast of Abuja itself.

..... and to the Republic of Benin

Before arriving in Nigeria, Prime Minister Hailemariam also paid an official visit to the Republic of Benin on Monday and Tuesday last week (June 23 – 24), to strengthen bilateral ties between Ethiopia and Benin. Prime Minister Hailemariam held talks with President Boni Yayi on the bilateral relationships of the two countries, issues of peace and security in Africa, on ways to advance common continental positions and on issues of African economic integration as well as on global issues of serious concern.

Prime Minister Hailemariam expressed his appreciation of the achievements of the Government of Benin in fighting poverty and for its progress in democratic governance. With regard to bilateral relations, the Prime Minister noted the huge potential of the two countries for strengthening their cooperation both politically and economically. He stressed that the General Cooperation Agreement signed between the two countries in 2012 should provide them with a framework and serve as a basis for wider cooperation. The Prime Minister

hailed the role played by President Boni Yayi and Benin in the efforts to secure peace and stability in Africa during the President's chairmanship of the African Union in 2012/13.

President Bony Yayi congratulated the Ethiopian Prime Minister on the sustained efforts of his government to boost economic growth which has made Ethiopia one of the fastest growing economies in Africa. He said Benin had a lot to learn from Ethiopia's track record in this respect. The President noted the cordial bilateral relations between the two countries and expressed his determination to work towards strengthening existing ties. He commended Ethiopia's role in helping to keep peace and security in its region in particular and on the continent in general.

In their discussions, both leaders expressed their concerns about the persistence of conflicts in various areas of the continent, especially the worsening of security and humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic, South Sudan and Mali. They recommended that the African Union, through its Peace and Security Council, and the international community should hold further consultations with the concerned states, to seek ways and means for a quick return to peace, security and sustainable stability in Africa. They strongly condemned the growing incidence of global terrorism and extremism and the murderous and cowardly attacks of Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab; and agreed to help each other in the fight against terrorism.

During his stay in Benin, Prime Minister Hailemariam visited the Songhai Centre of Porto-Novo, an NGO that promotes entrepreneurship in agriculture, and is active in training, production, research and development in agricultural entrepreneurship and agri-business. During his visit of the centre, the Prime Minister appreciated the dynamic and innovative agricultural programme that the Centre represented. He said other African countries should promote a similar model, applying it in their respective countries to encourage youth employment and wealth generation.

Ethiopia and Benin have now signed a Bilateral Political Consultation and a Joint Ministerial Cooperation agreement aimed at strengthening their bilateral ties; and the two leaders urged the full implementation of the signed agreements. During his visit, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn was awarded the Grand Cross of the National Order of Benin by President Dr Boni Yayi.

Outcome of the 23rd African Union Summit in Malabo....

The 23rd ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union was held in Malabo (Equatorial Guinea) on Thursday and Friday last week (June 26 -27), under the theme **"Transforming Africa's Agriculture for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods through Harnessing Opportunities for Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development"**. The Summit was preceded by the 25th ordinary session of the Executive Council of Ministers and the 27th ordinary session of the Permanent Representatives Committee that took place from June 20-24. The Ethiopian delegation to the Summit was led by Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn. The opening ceremony of the Summit was marked by statements delivered by the Guest of Honor, the Prime Minister of Spain, and by the newly elected President of Egypt who was welcomed at the Summit. Others who addressed the Summit included the President of Palestine and the Vice-President of Cuba.

The African Union Commissioner of Agriculture and Rural Economy introduced the theme of the Summit, and this was followed by a Panel discussion facilitated by the Chief Executive Officer of the NEPAD Agency, involving the Under Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Director General of FAO and the President of IFAD [International Fund for Agricultural Development]. The discussion reflected on the past ten years of the implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Program (CAADP) and the vision of **ending hunger in Africa by the year 2025**. In his contribution to the debate, Prime Minister Hailemariam underscored the importance of the agricultural sector in bringing about the desired structural transformation in Africa. He shared details of the Ethiopian experience with the Summit, indicating that the country had allocated more than 15% of its national budget every year to the agricultural sector. He called on member states to allocate more resources to this sector. The Summit adopted the Malabo Declaration on accelerated agricultural growth and transformation for shared prosperity and improved livelihoods, reaffirming the commitment of member states to the principles and values of the CAADP and their resolve, individually and collectively, to end hunger by the year 2025.

The Summit considered the African Union's budget for the year 2015 and approved a total budget of US\$522 million. The African Conference of Ministers of Finance and Economy were expected to submit their report and recommendations on alternative sources of financing the African Union. However, the Ministers first had to meet and approve the recommendations of the Ministerial Committee that they established; and since this was still in progress, the Assembly instructed the Ministers to submit their report to the next ordinary session of the AU in Addis Ababa in January 2015. The Summit heard a progress report of the AU Commission on the development of Agenda 2063. Member States had been expected to provide inputs to the Commission to finalize Agenda 2063 for adoption by the Policy Organs. So far, however, no more than a few states have done so and the Assembly requested member States to conduct national consultations on Agenda 2063 and provide inputs to the Commission by 31 September 2014. Ethiopia has proposed the establishment of a single African aviation market in recognition of the important role that aviation can play in accelerating Africa's integration and development. The Summit requested that the Commission finalize the first ten-year plan and its implementation, monitoring and evaluation framework, in coordination with other pan-African institutions, and submit it for adoption at the next session in January 2015.

The Summit considered and approved several draft legal instruments for the African Union as proposed by the Specialized Technical Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs. On the recommendation of the Executive Council, the Summit decided to give power to the Pan-African Parliament to propose model laws. It also approved the Protocol and Statute for the establishment of the African Monetary Fund, and adopted the African Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation (Niamey Convention); the African Union Convention on Cyberspace Security and Protection of Personal Data; the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development; and a Protocol on Amendments to the Protocol on the Statute of the African Court of Justice and Human Rights. Member States were requested to sign and ratify these legal instruments and others that they have not yet signed and ratified. The Summit endorsed the election of four judges of the African Court of Human and People's Rights.

The Summit deliberated at length on the report of the Peace and Security Council on its activities over the past six months, as well as on the state of peace and security in Africa. During the discussion, Ethiopia highlighted the relentless efforts exerted by IGAD's Special Envoys to find a peaceful solution to the crisis in South Sudan through political dialogue and negotiation. Emphasis was laid on the need to end the fighting as well as on the sufferings of the South Sudanese people and the importance of solving the crisis through genuine and inclusive political dialogue which included all stakeholders from government, opposition, former political detainees and civil society organizations as well as traditional and religious leaders. Ethiopia requested that the Assembly send the right signals to South Sudanese stakeholders and fully support the ongoing IGAD-led mediation efforts. The Assembly echoed the communiqué issued by the 26th Extraordinary Summit of IGAD and expressed its deep appreciation to the Chairperson of IGAD, other leaders of the region and the IGAD mediation team, for their sustained efforts and the results achieved thus far. President Obasanjo presented the interim report of the African Union Commission of Inquiry established to investigate human rights violations committed in South Sudan; the Summit then extended the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry for another three months to enable it to finalize its work.

In addition to the various conflict situations in Africa, the Summit gave attention to the growing threat of terrorism on the continent and agreed on the need to combat this scourge through collective and coordinated effort. It stressed the urgency of renewed efforts towards effective implementation of the AU Counter-Terrorism framework, which includes the OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism and its Protocol. The Summit requested that the Peace and Security Council convene a meeting at Summit level to discuss the issue of terrorism. The Summit exchanged views on the US-Africa Summit scheduled to take place on August 6, in Washington. The Executive Council had established a Ministerial Committee composed of three countries per region to review preparations for the Summit in which Ethiopia together with Kenya and Uganda were chosen to represent the Eastern African region. The Committee has proposed a number of recommendations to help Africa strategize for the Summit and enable it to speak with one voice. The Assembly considered the Concept Note prepared by the AU Commission on the basis of the Ministerial Committee discussions and adopted the Committee's recommendations.

The Summit also considered a number of items proposed by member states, including, among others, an item proposed by Ethiopia on ending preventable maternal and child health in Africa within a generation. The Assembly fully endorsed the proposal and adopted a Declaration expressing its strong political commitment to end preventable maternal and child deaths in Africa by the year 2035, in line with the post-

2015 framework on sustainable development. During the Summit, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn was elected the new Chairperson of the African Leaders Malaria Alliance.

... and meetings on the side-lines of the Assembly

The series of events on the side-lines of the African Union Assembly in Malabo included, inter alia, the Heads of State and Government meeting, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the African Peer Review Forum, the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC), the High-level Trade Committee of Heads of State and Government (HATC) and the Meeting of Heads of State and Government of the countries contributing resources to the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC).

The NEPAD Summit was held with particular focus on the theme of the AU Summit: agriculture and food security. The leaders took the opportunity to exchange relevant experience from their respective countries in promoting agricultural transformation as the key to ensuring inclusive growth and prosperity in Africa. Ethiopia's State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos, representing Prime Minister Hailemariam at the meeting, highlighted the role of the agricultural sector in Ethiopia's development and transformation drive and shared its successful experiences in achieving food security at the national level and the effort in developing food self-sufficiency at the household level. Ambassador Berhane also expressed Ethiopia's firm commitment to providing the necessary leadership at all levels to bring about the desired transformation across the agricultural sector. During the meeting, the outcome of the recent NEPAD Summit in Dakar on financing the 16 Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) priority infrastructure projects, was considered.

Discussions regarding the African Peer Review Forum (APRM) essentially focused on restructuring the APRM Secretariat and its integration into the structures of the AU Commission without affecting its operational autonomy.

The Assembly considered the Report presented by the Chairperson of HATC and requested that the Commission work on Terms of Reference, which could guide the negotiations and operationalization of the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA), taking into account experiences of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) especially the tripartite negotiation forum. The document should be submitted to the next AU Trade Ministerial Conference for its consideration. The Assembly could then deliberate on the matter during the January 2015 Session and move towards the process of launching of the CFTA in 2017. In this connection, the Assembly called upon Member States to strengthen the existing fast-track momentum for the establishment of CFTA to meet this proposed target date by providing the necessary financial and technical resources at national, regional and continental levels.

The Assembly also considered the report of the Chairperson of the High-level Committee (HLC) on the Common African Position (CAP) on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, and requested that member states popularize CAP, whose overarching goal is eradication of poverty in all its forms from the African continent. Regarding the required leadership on this issue, the Assembly mandated the HLC to coordinate member States, relevant African Diplomatic Missions abroad and the AU Commission, together with its partners, to forge alliances during the global negotiation process.

The Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC) meeting deliberated on key areas for Africa: climate change financing; addressing technology needs; an Africa-wide program on adaptation; actions on mitigation, cross-cutting actions and participation; as well as international cooperation and institutional mechanisms for follow-up. The meeting underscored the need for member States to establish national designated agencies to benefit from the green climate fund, national implementing entities to benefit from the adaptation fund and national technology centers to benefit from the global climate technology center and network in Denmark. The meeting was given an update on the ongoing negotiation process from the chief negotiator, the State Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Sudan, and it reflected on major upcoming events including COP 20 in Lima, COP 21 in Paris and the Special Climate Change Summit to be convened by the United Nations Secretary-General in New York on September 23 this year. The UN Secretary-General had earlier convened an informal consultation meeting on June 26 to 2014, to brief members of CAHOSCC on the ongoing preparations for the Special Climate Change Summit. He explained that the main objective of the Summit would be to provide member states with a platform to announce their national ambitions and plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build momentum for a

global agreement in Paris in 2015. He expressed his desire for Africa to have more visibility during the Special Summit to enable the continent to highlight its efforts in adapting and mitigating the adverse effects of climate change. During the discussion, Prime Minister Hailemariam proposed that Africa collectively announce its continental ambitions and targets instead of 54 countries doing so individually. This was accepted.

The countries contributing resources to the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC) also met at Summit level to review the progress made in its establishment as a stop-gap measure pending the full operationalization of the African Standby Force and its Rapid Deployment Capability. The African Union Commission presented a progress report on the efforts made thus far in developing a roadmap and implementation modalities for the establishment of the ACIRC. It reported a strategic cell had been established within the Commission and a number of countries had voluntarily seconded their experts to work as part of this. They had visited the countries that had made concrete pledges and assessed the levels of preparedness. The Commission reported that the ACIRC would be ready to become operational by the end of September this year. At need, the ACIRC is expected to be deployed within 21 days and those countries contributing to ACIRC will be expected to sustain their forces for up to 90 days. After that, it is envisaged that the Peace and Security Council will decide to send an African Union Peace Support Operation to replace the ACIRC. The issue of funding was identified as a major challenge for ACIRC operations and the need to establish a dedicated funding mechanism for the ACIRC was identified. Meanwhile, member states of the East African Standby Force (EASF) also met at Summit level to sign the agreement, policy framework and other relevant legal documents of the EASF, with a view to launching it as a fully operational force in December this year. Prime Minister Hailemariam expressed Ethiopia's firm commitment to fulfilling its membership obligations and paying its assessed contribution to the force.

A new chapter of bilateral relations between Ethiopia and Egypt

Last week, on the margins of the 23rd African Union Summit in Malabo, Ethiopian Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, and newly elected Egyptian President, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi held discussions covering a wide range of bilateral, regional and continental issues. High on the agenda was the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), and Prime Minister Hailemariam reaffirmed Ethiopia's determination to ensure the project provided mutual benefit. He repeated his assurances that the construction of the Dam would pose no significant harm to Egyptians, as has been clearly stated by the report of the International Panel of Experts, emphasizing that the construction of the Dam is solely for power generation. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi renounced the past practices of former Egyptian governments to try to destabilize Ethiopia and declared that his administration would not continue these "obsolete practices." Indeed, on the contrary he vowed to oppose any anti-Ethiopia forces bent on destabilizing the country. Prime Minister Hailemariam welcomed and commended the new Egyptian administration's will to cooperate and to encourage collaboration.

In a joint statement on the outcome of the discussion, read by Ethiopian Foreign Minister, Dr Tedros Adhanom, and Egyptian Foreign Minister, Sameh Shoukry, both sides reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing bilateral relations based on the principles of cooperation, mutual respect and the achievement of common interests. They also agreed to start preparatory work for a **Bilateral Joint Commission**, with the aim of implementing this within the next three months. The two sides agreed to respect the principles of dialogue and cooperation as the means to achieving the necessary win-win scenarios and providing priority to establish regional projects to meet the rising demand for water and to mitigate water shortages. Both countries also agreed to respect the principles of international law and immediately resume participation in the Tripartite Committee on the Grand Renaissance Dam. This would allow for the implementation of the recommendations of the International Panel of Experts (IPOE). It would also provide for acceptance of the joint technical studies recommended in the IPOE final report throughout the implementation phase of the project. The joint statement also revealed that a decision had been taken to form a Higher Committee to look at all dimensions and elements of the relationship between Ethiopia and Egypt at bilateral and regional levels in the areas of politics, economics, social affairs and security.

After reading the joint statement, Dr Tedros Adhanom stressed the meeting would open a new era of partnership between Ethiopia and Egypt. "This is a very good beginning, as we have been saying, [the] Nile should be a symbol of cooperation and collaboration", he added. Egyptian Foreign Minister, Sameh Shoukry, said the meeting had provided an opportunity for both leaders to demonstrate their commitment to development for the peoples of Ethiopia and Egypt. He also noted that the spirit in which the discussions had

been conducted on both sides and the substance of the discussions pointed to a more positive future, replacing the troubled past relationship.

Ethiopia's approach to the GERD Project, as it has repeatedly emphasized, is essentially based on the principles of four pillars: a win-win approach, equitable and reasonable utilization, no significant harm and genuine cooperation. The sole objectives of the GERD are poverty eradication and support for regional integration. Energy generation from the GERD will enhance regional and economic integration through power interconnections, demonstrating regional cooperation, trust and confidence building. In addition, among the major benefits to downstream countries, GERD will hold back a very substantial element of the huge quantities of sediments carried by the Blue Nile. This will significantly increase the reservoir capacity of the Aswan High Dam as well as protecting irrigation canals and equipment from damage in both Sudan and Egypt. It will check the destructive floods that have so often hit downstream countries by regulating the flow of the Nile throughout the year and will support the flow arriving at High Aswan Dam.

GERD, in fact, will have multi-fold beneficial applications throughout the region. Its completion and success will provide a source of hope, power and prosperity for the region and a very real symbol of regional integration. The meeting between Ethiopia's Prime Minister Hailemariam and Egypt's President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi is now set to provide a strong and firm foundation for a new chapter of improved and enhanced bilateral relations and regional cooperation.

The 6th Northern Corridor Integration Project meeting

The 6th Northern Corridor Integration Projects Ministerial meeting was held on Wednesday this week (July 2) in Kigali, Rwanda. It was attended by Sam Kutesa, Foreign Minister of Uganda; Barnaba Benjamin Marial, Foreign Minister of South Sudan; Louis Mushikiwabo, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Rwanda; Engineer Michael Kamau, Cabinet Secretary of Kenya; Dr Richard Sezibera, Secretary General of the East African Community (EAC) and representative of the government of Burundi; and other high level officials. Dr Tedros Adhanom, Foreign Minister of Ethiopia attended as an observer.

The Ministerial meeting deliberated on the performance report of the senior officials meeting based on the directives of the 5th Northern Corridor Summit. Foreign Minister of Uganda, Sam Kutesa, noted that the tremendous results achieved within the past year are due to the countries maintaining a common purpose. South Sudan's Barnaba Marial highlighted South Sudan's strong interest in joining the projects and the need to foster relation also in defense and security. Burundi also reflected a strong desire to fast track infrastructure projects under the auspices of the Northern Corridor. The North Corridor Ministerial Meeting approved the formal joining of the Republic of South Sudan, while Burundi decided to stay as observer for the coming three months, though indicating its intention to eventually join the projects.

Ethiopia participated in the meeting as an observer and in his remarks, Dr Tedros Adhanom attributed the progress of the Northern Corridor Projects to the strong political will of the leadership of the region. He hailed the focus given to human resource development schemes as a vital step to boosting the overall capacity of the region. He noted the importance of infrastructure integration as a key for the positive growth trajectory of the East African Region. He also noted that Ethiopia's own mega infrastructure projects in railways, highways, hydro dams, power interconnection and telecoms were "contributing in a concrete way to expediting the economic integration of Ethiopia and its neighbors." He said the Northern Corridor projects will complement the Lamu Port South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor Project (LAAPSSSET) between Ethiopia, Kenya and South Sudan which includes road networks, standard gauge railways, an oil pipeline and oil refinery and airports, aiming to connect the wider East African region with a web of regional infrastructure networks.

During the Ministerial meeting, the number of projects under the Northern Corridor was raised from 8 to 14 to expedite holistic integration of countries of the Northern Corridor. Among the projects, the Ministerial meeting reviewed the status of the standard gauge railway that connects Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda. Kenya has embarked on construction of the Mombasa-Nairobi part of the project and has identified a contractor for the Nairobi-Malaba section, while Uganda is in the process of finding a contractor and Rwanda is currently reviewing expression of interest for the construction of the Kampala-Kigali sector. The total cost of the project is estimated at US\$13.5 billion and will take five years to complete. The meeting also reviewed the national broadband harmonization project which aims to abolish roaming charges. The plans for the construction of an oil refinery, crude oil pipeline development and power transmission projects from Kenya

to Uganda were also reviewed. Decisions were also discussed and reviewed in regard to the establishment of an East African Commodity exchange, human resource development, and for cooperation on joint marketing of tourism, with consideration of the executive organs of respective countries about the East African Tourist Visa, jointly issued by Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda.

The Ministers also deliberated on the importance of diversifying sources of finance to move forward with speedy implementation of the projects. They indicated that the International Finance Cooperation, the African Development Bank and the EXIM Bank of China have all shown keen interest in supporting projects. The ministerial session approved the report of the senior officials meeting, with some amendments, after thorough deliberation. The ministerial meeting also decided to hear a report in November on modalities to expedite political federation.

The ministerial meeting produced a report for the sixth summit on Northern Corridor integration which opened on Thursday (July 3), with Rwanda's President Paul Kagame hosting Presidents Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya and Salva Kiir Mayardit of South Sudan. Delegations from Burundi, Tanzania, and Ethiopia were also present.

Foreign Minister Dr Tedros shared Ethiopia's experience in domestic mobilization of finances through increased domestic saving, which he said is greatly contributing to infrastructure financing. The Summit held discussions following a presentation on the projects championed by each partner state. In regard to the flagship standard gauge railway project connecting Kenya to Uganda and Rwanda of the Northern Corridor, the Summit hailed the commencement of the Mombasa-Nairobi sector, while urging the commencement of the construction of the Malaba-Kisumu and Malaba-Kampala sectors construction not later than October 2014. In the area of telecommunication and ICT, the leaders agreed to launch a one area network service by September 2014. The launch of the one area network will abolish roaming charges among the four countries. In addition, it will reduce the cost of calls among Rwanda, Uganda, South Sudan and Kenya by 50%. During the discussions President Kiir announced his government's decision to grant \$200,000 for ICT-related research and development. In regard to oil refinery, the leaders agreed to solicit 60% of the funds from private sector and 40% of the equity to be shared among member states. It was decided that report on expression of interest among the private sector should be submitted in the next summit which will be held in October 2014. With regard to crude oil pipeline development, the Heads of States and Government agreed that financing arrangements should be submitted for the next meeting. It was agreed that the roadmap for the power interconnectivity project between Uganda, Rwanda and Kenya, should be reviewed before July 2014 in consultation with the African Development Bank and the Nile Equatorial Lakes Subsidiary Action Program (NELSAP). In relation to political federation, the EAC was given the task of finalizing the modalities before April 30, 2014 [2015?]. The leaders also agreed to work out a comprehensive strategy for joint airspace management. Furthermore, finance ministers were tasked with continuing engagement with AfDB, IFC, EXIM Bank of China to solicit funds. The four states welcomed Burundi's decision to join the Northern Corridor in the next fiscal year.

The Northern Corridor is a transport corridor that currently connects the Kenyan Port of Mombasa with Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi. The Northern Corridor Integration Project is an initiative of Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda, aiming to integrate these countries within a corridor through railway links, power connectivity, broadband fiber optics, an oil refinery, a commodity exchange, a single customs union, joint services, immigration and labor policies and a political federation. The Northern Corridor, in effect, aims to translate into action the ideals of the East African Community in integrating the East African region.

A UN Commission of Inquiry to investigate human rights in Eritrea

The United Nations Human Rights Council on June 27, 2014 established a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the deteriorating human rights situation and all alleged human rights abuses in Eritrea. The move underlines the continuing reports of a worsening human rights situation in Eritrea and what many observers see as an ongoing political crisis facing the Eritrean nation and its people. The UN Human Rights Council resolution was very clear in expressing its concern regarding "the ongoing reports of grave violations of human rights by the Eritrean authorities against their own population and fellow citizens ... and the alarming number of civilian fleeing Eritrea as a result of these violations."

Establishment of a country-specific commission of inquiry by the UN Human Rights Council is a very rare phenomenon. The just announced Commission on Eritrea is only the fourth such body in the entire working

history of the Council. Eritrea now officially joins North Korea, Syria and Sri Lanka as one of the few places which has necessitated the creation of a Commission of Inquiry. Given the numerous calls that have been made to the Eritrean regime to halt the repression of its own people and to govern with at least a bare minimum of what normally constitutes international state custom, this decision is neither surprising nor unexpected. The point was underlined by last month's brave decision by four Catholic bishops in Eritrea to issue an open letter calling for more humane treatment of the Eritrean people. This was a significant testimony to the efforts to encourage change in a country which many now describe as "one giant prison".

In its resolution, the United Nations Human Rights Council said that it was gravely concerned over "the continued use by the Government of Eritrea of arbitrary arrest and detention, including incommunicado detention and life-threatening conditions, of persons for suspected evasion of national service, attempting to flee the country or having a family member who has fled, inability to produce identity documents." The resolution expressed concern on the whereabouts and the unknown conditions of detainees, including the group of former senior officials of the government and the ruling party known as the G15 detained in September 2001 and the journalists detained shortly afterwards, as well as members of the armed forces detained following the January 23, 2013 incident at the country's Ministry of Information. The Council called for the release of those detained or for the Eritrean authorities to "ensure that they are given a free and fair trial, with full respect for due process of law".

The resolution also strongly condemned the "severe restrictions on freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of information, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and freedom of peaceful assembly and association, including the detention of journalists, human rights defenders, political actors, religious leaders and practitioners in Eritrea". The resolution condemned "intimidation and detention of those suspected of evading national service in Eritrea and their family members; forced participation of citizens in the militia, and the detention of those suspected of not participating in it; severe restrictions on freedom of movement, including, but not limited to, the arbitrary detention of people caught attempting to flee the country or suspected of an intention to do so". It also condemned "the use of places of detention that fall far short of international standards, including underground cells and metal shipping containers; the shoot-to-kill practice employed on the borders of Eritrea to stop Eritrean citizens seeking to flee their country; the violation by the Government of Eritrea of its international human rights obligations in connection with the collection of taxes outside Eritrea from its nationals; and a lack of cooperation with international and regional human rights mechanisms by Eritrea."

The fact that the Eritrean government is a self-declared dictatorship with no elections held during the entire history of the country has made political participation by its citizens a distant dream. The encouraging post-independence start of the early 1990s to build institutions and establish a rule of law turned out to be a sham when the President unilaterally undermined all working institutions of the Eritrean government, suspending the country's draft constitution after it had been accepted by the (appointed) National Assembly. Referring to the lawlessness of the state and the rule by fiat, the Council called on the Eritrean government to "implement fully the constitution of Eritrea adopted in 1997 and govern in accordance with the principles of the rule of law". Popular dialogue on any issue or topic of wide interest, let alone of national import, does not exist. Having views and opinions different from those sanctioned by the ruling party is often considered to amount to treason. The government and its leader, President Isaias, have repeatedly and publicly affirmed that their policy and intent is to maintain the one-party system they currently practice. They have made it clear they will consider no alternatives. The consequences have been dire.

Eritrea has become known for the alarming exodus of its people, currently running at the rate of 4,000 or more a month. The bulk of those fleeing the country are the youth but people of all age groups are now joining this mass exodus, from people in their nineties to children as young as eight. Observers have described this as a phenomenon that is threatening to rip the country's social fabric apart and suggest it will create a dangerous long-term economic and political deficit for Eritrea's future. One of the causes for this distressing condition is the seemingly never-ending conscription of Eritreans into the government's national service program. The Council condemned this practice, calling it "a system that amounts to forced labor." It equally condemned the compulsory practice of making all school children undertake the final year of schooling in a military training camp. Taking note of the growing humanitarian crisis caused by the Eritrean government's cruelty towards its own citizens, the UN Human Rights Council resolution urges the international community "to strengthen efforts to ensure the protection of those fleeing from Eritrea, in particular the increasing number of unaccompanied children".

The Council was clear in its strong condemnation of the “widespread use of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and the use of places of detention that fall far short of international standards, including underground cells and metal shipping containers” and called upon the government of Eritrea to account for all those under detention and to put an end to the indefinite national service.

The Council’s resolution also calls on Eritrea “to make available information pertaining to Djiboutian combatants missing in action since the clashes of 10 to 12 June 2008 so that those concerned may ascertain the presence and condition of Djiboutian prisoners of war”. It extends the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Eritrea for a period of a year, and requests that the mandate holder present a report to the Human Rights Council at its twenty-ninth session and to address and engage in an interactive dialogue with the General Assembly. It also invited the High Commissioner to report to the Human Rights Council on the progress in cooperation between Eritrea and the Office of the High Commissioner.

The resolution calls upon the Government of Eritrea to cooperate fully with the Special Rapporteur and the Commission of Inquiry, to permit them and their staff members unrestricted access to visit the country, to give due consideration to the recommendations contained in the reports of the Special Rapporteur, and to provide them with the information necessary for the fulfilment of their mandates. It urges the international community to cooperate fully with the Special Rapporteur and the Commission of Inquiry, and to strengthen efforts to ensure the protection of those fleeing from Eritrea. It requests that the UN Secretary-General provide the Special Rapporteur and the Commission of Inquiry with all information and the resources necessary to fulfil their mandate. The Commission of Inquiry will be set up as a three-member panel, with the Special Rapporteur on Eritrea as one of the members and the other two members to be appointed by the President of the Council. The resolution gives the Commission powers to investigate all alleged violations of human rights in Eritrea and its mandate will run for a year.

The UN Human Rights Council resolution was tabled for deliberation by Somalia and France and was co-sponsored by Estonia, Netherlands, Djibouti, Spain, Maldives, Switzerland, Norway, Luxemburg, United Kingdom, Hungary, Ireland, Slovenia, Germany, Romania, Lichtenstein, Poland, Portugal and Austria.

During deliberations on the resolution, it was noted that the scale of violations in Eritrea was unparalleled. Numerous calls had been made to the Council asking for assistance to Eritrea to overcome its challenges. The country has been on the council’s agenda since 2011 and the situation inside the country has remained extremely worrisome. The Somali government, as a co-presenter of the draft resolution expressed its hope that the Commission would establish the facts and circumstances where violations may amount to crimes against humanity with a view to ensuring responsible parties are accountable. The Somali ambassador said Eritrea had been given the chance to respond to allegations levelled against it, including disclosure of the whereabouts of prisoners and their conditions but it had failed to respond. Eritrean Ambassador Tesfamichael Gerahu speaking at the meeting said Eritrea totally rejected the resolution which “violates the basic principle of the council.” He defended Eritrea’s record, highlighting the “prevailing harmony, progress, peace and stability of the society” in Eritrea, which is going through, “political, economic and social transformation.” He claimed the resolution was only intended “to divert attention of the council and indeed the international community from the just struggle of the Eritrean people against the continued occupation of its sovereign territories, the UN sanctions imposed on Eritrea, and the belligerent stance to destabilize the country.” He said Eritrea had become a target of US hostilities for geopolitical reasons and that it is “apparent that this draft resolution is also part of Ethiopia’s strenuous efforts to maintain the UN sanctions imposed on Eritrea.”

Somalia celebrates its 54th anniversary of independence

A colourful ceremony to commemorate the 54th anniversary of Somalia independence was held in Mogadishu on Tuesday (July 1). July 1, 1960 was the day on which the southern area of Somalia achieved independence from Italy and the day of union with Somaliland which had achieved independence from Britain four days earlier, setting up the Somalia Republic. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, Prime Minister Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed, and Parliamentary Speaker Mohamed Osman Jawari, invited guests, musicians and other people from across Mogadishu participated in the ceremony, highlighting the importance of the day. Similar celebrations to mark the day were held elsewhere in Baidoa, Beledweyne, Dusamareb, Galkayo and Garowe.

Speaking at Tuesday's ceremony, President Mohamud sent congratulations to Somali people all over the country. He emphasized that the Federal Government was committed to restoring the unity of Somalia and highlighted the achievements of the Federal Government including maintenance of security. He said the attacks of Al-Shabaab would not affect the efforts of the Government to maintain security. He thanked government forces all over the government-controlled areas for their maintenance of overall security, and urged them to redouble their efforts to enable the community to break their fast with peace. The President said that Somalia now had a golden opportunity to reinvent itself and take its rightful place in the international arena. He wished the Somali people unity and a prosperous future. Parliament Speaker, Mohamed Osman Jawari, congratulated Somali people on Independence Day and urged them to embrace Somalia's recent progress and development.

Prime Minister Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed also highlighted the importance of this occasion to the Somali people and noted that Somalia is on the right track for a prosperous future after more than twenty years of chaos and civil war. The Prime Minister said that the Federal Government would continue the work of rebuilding a nation that fought hard to achieve independence and that it would stay steadfast, to achieve its vision of a prosperous and stable Somalia. The Prime Minister said "We honour the men and women who gave us this opportunity to forge our own destiny and to ensure our nation lives up to its best potential." He said it was a day that reminded the Somali people across the world of the "immeasurable bravery of the men and women who continue to fight for peace and justice." The Prime Minister said: "today is a day of celebration, a day for Somalia to look towards the future. It is a day we renew our solemn duty to Somalia and the Somali people to live up to our promises. Reminding people that the country faced a daunting set of challenges, he reaffirmed his own commitment "to upholding the principles of peace and justice and to serve the great people of Somalia to the best of my ability". He called on people "to celebrate while working towards a day when Somali children will live a life free of poverty and accomplish all their dreams", adding that the Federal Government of Somalia looked forward to rebuilding the country and forging unbreakable bonds with all Somalis "and reaffirming our commitments to the great Horn of Africa."

The Prime Minister said in an interview this week that Al-Shabaab was "on the back foot, running for their lives; they will soon be disbanded." He said "We are not saying that they will disappear for entirety, indeed they are capable of posing threats, but we will not stop going after them until we've finished them." He said that as pressure on Al-Shabaab was increased "desperately they try to do whatever they can to create publicity for themselves; they attack people in mosques at Friday prayers and other people in restaurants. That shows how desperate they are. That should clearly indicate that they are a group that are dying." He took the opportunity to call once again for the partial lifting of the UN arms embargo: "We are building our army, and you cannot build an army without firearms. We are in the middle of a fierce war against an international terrorist group that is well trained and well financed and is posing a threat not only to Somalia but to the whole region and the whole world. So the government must be allowed to defend itself." He noted that the Government was receiving substantial support from a number of countries, including Ethiopia, which were providing intensive training and helping restructure the Somali National Army to become a "professional, ethical, non-clan-based national army." The Prime Minister said any perception of Ethiopia's presence as a new occupation was "fading away very quickly because Ethiopians are coming to help Somalis go free from Al-Shabaab. Now people understand the difference between someone who is coming to help them and someone who is killing them."

The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia, Nicholas Kay, and the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Ambassador Mahamat Saleh Annadif, also both offered their congratulations to the people of Somalia on this independence anniversary. Mr Kay called on all Somalis to unite and continue the hard work to build a peaceful future for their country. He pointed out that 54 years ago the people of Somalia had taken charge of their own destiny and realised their aspirations for an independent sovereign nation, committed to the ideals of unity, equality and justice. Today, Mr Kay said, the hard work of building a peaceful and prosperous nation continues. He said that while celebrating independence and the historic achievement of 1960, people should also "look towards the future and pledge to support a peaceful and stable future for all Somali people." A few days earlier, Mr Kay had warned that Al-Shabaab still had the "capability and intent" to spread its attacks beyond its strongholds in Somalia, and called for greater regional cooperation to combat the threat. He said it had a regional agenda and its top leadership saw themselves as pursuing something above and beyond just a Somalia national agenda. Al-Shabaab had the capability and intent to carry out attacks across the region and this required the countries of the region, with the support of the international community, "to be much more joined up in their approach."

Ambassador Mahamat Saleh Annadif, speaking on behalf of the African Union, extended his felicitations and warm wishes to the people of Somalia. He said that “today we witness the renaissance of Somalia as it enters a new chapter of its history.” Ambassador Annadif, reiterating AMISOM’s unwavering commitment and support for Somalia, noted the country’s role as a founding member of the Organization of African Unity. He urged Africa to support Somalia’s ambitions to reinvent itself and take its rightful place in the world. He said “the Somali people have demonstrated their unwavering resolve to take charge of their country’s destiny and they are working hard to see their ideal state take shape. Despite all the challenges facing the country, recent developments are encouraging and show that the gains are irreversible.”