

A Week in the Horn

8th July 2016

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News in Brief

Africa and the African Union

The 27th Summit of the African Union is due to be held in Kigali, Rwanda, from the 18th to the 19th of July 2016. The theme of the summit is "Year of Human Rights, with a particular focus on the Rights of Women".

The Executive Secretary of IGAD, Ambassador (Eng) Mahboub Maalim, and the European Union (EU) Head of Delegation to Djibouti, Ambassador Joseph Silva, [signed] a Joint Programming Arrangement for the support of the implementation of the third Phase of the IGAD Strengthening Action Plan (2016-2020) and IGAD Peace and Security Strategy on Sunday (July3).

Ethiopia

The Ethiopian House of People's Representatives approved over 274 billion birr for the coming Ethiopian fiscal year on Tuesday (July 5). On the occasion, Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn answered questions from MPs. (See article)

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to Addis Ababa this week promised to make full use of the potential as well as the creativity of Ethio-Israeli ties. Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn and the visiting Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu met at the National Palace on Thursday (July 7), wherein discussions covered bilateral and regional issues of mutual interest. Later on Thursday Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the Ethiopian House of People's Representatives. (See article)

President Mulatu Teshome received Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the National Palace later on Thursday (July 7). Noting that Ethiopia offers profitable business and investment opportunities, the President told Netanyahu that Israeli investors could be successful on such a score.

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Tedros Adhanom met with former Irish president and the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary General on El-Nino and climate change, on Tuesday (July 0). Mrs Mary Robinson commended the Government of Ethiopia for its unreserved efforts in dealing with the challenge of the El-Nino induced drought, adding that Ethiopia's response to the phenomena can be taken as a significant example for a number of countries across the world.

Ethiopia is particularly pleased to have been elected to the United Nations Security Council as a non-permanent member as this will put the country in a far better position to contribute effectively to the lofty goals for which the United Nations was established. (See article)

As part of Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu's landmark visit to Ethiopia a key Ethio-Israeli Business Forum was held on Thursday (July 7) at the Sheraton Addis. (See article)

The Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and the Israeli Export Institute signed a key document on July 7, which should lift government to business transactions to a higher level. (See article)

President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, responding to the award of an honorary degree from Bahir Dar University on July 2 said, "We will continue to work together ever more closely with the people of this great nation." (See article)

A new World Bank Group report, "**2015 Ethiopia Public Expenditure Review**" released on Wednesday (July 6) said Ethiopia's investments in health, education, social protection, and infrastructure have had a positive impact on economic development and on promoting shared prosperity in the country.

Eritrea

The UN Human Rights Council passed a strong resolution referring the report of the Commission of Inquiry into human rights abuse to the United Nations and also asked the AU to investigate Eritrean leaders with a view to bringing to justice those responsible for violations and abuses "including any that may amount to a crime against humanity." (See article)

This week the Dutch Parliament passed a number of resolutions calling for the Dutch government to control the activities of the Youth Wing of the single ruling Eritrean Party, the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (YFPDJ), and of the Eritrean Embassy in the Netherlands. This followed a critical debate on Eritrean activities in the Dutch Parliament last week. (See article)

Kenya

The United Nations High Commission for refugees on Monday this week (July 4) launched a "verification exercise" to determine how many residents of the Dadaab complex might be Kenya citizens posing as Somali refugees. It hopes to finish the process within two months as part of efforts to facilitate the return of 150,000 Somalis to Somalia by the end of the year.

Somalia

Somalia celebrated 56 years of independence on Friday last week (July 1). On July 1 1960, the then territories of British Somaliland, which had become independent five days earlier, and Italian Somaliland, merged to form the Republic of Somalia. A special ceremony was held at the recently renovated Mogadishu's Municipal Council building, on Wednesday last week, attended by government officials including President Mohamud and Prime Minister Abdirashid Sharmarke. The President urged the nation to dedicate itself to defending the country's freedom and sovereignty.

President Mahamoud has again called for al-Shabaab fighters to stop the killing of "innocent citizens." In a speech marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan, the President called on both leaders and members of al-Shabaab to lay down their weapons and get back to normal life. He said the government was ready to rehabilitate those who want to denounce the radical ideology and integrate back into society. "We are calling on them to cross the bridge, so that we can help them reclaim their normal social life," he said.

Prime Minister Hailemariam told Somalia Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke this week that Ethiopia will consolidate its support for Somalia to build up its military capacity and provide necessary assistance to ensure its own peace and stability.

The African Peace and Security Council meeting last week approved the revised AMISOM Concept of Operations which provides for enhances AMISOM operations and for AMISOM forces to start withdrawing from Somalia in October 2018, and allow AMISOM to hand over to Somali forces by 2020. (See article)

The European Union Special Envoy for Somalia, Ambassador D'Urso of Italy, in an interview this week, emphasized the importance of a transparent electoral process, and called for the government to put in place the necessary transparency and accountability mechanisms. (See article)

South Sudan

South Sudan's Defense Minister Kuol Manyang Juok on Friday (July 8) said five government allied soldiers were killed and one SPLM Opposition gunman were wounded in a Thursday evening shootout in the South Sudanese capital, Juba.

Following Thursday's incident, South Sudanese Second Vice President, James Wani, on Wednesday (July 6) warned of the danger that the country could become ungovernable if the issue of the unknown gunmen is not promptly addressed by the security forces.

Sudan

Leader of the opposition National Umma Party (NUP) al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, on Wednesday (July 6) said the opposition groups of the Sudan Call forces will likely sign the Roadmap Agreement after a meeting the parties would hold in Addis Ababa during the coming days.

The House of People's Representatives approves the budget for the next fiscal year

The Ethiopian House of People's Representatives on Tuesday this week (July 5) unanimously approved a budget of over 274 billion birr for the coming Ethiopian fiscal year, 2016-2017. The budget, endorsed by the members of the Ethiopian House of People's Representatives, showed a 13.3% rise over the previous year. Over 65% of the budget is earmarked for poverty reduction activities, which includes expenditure on agriculture, education, health, water, infrastructure and rural electrification. A total of 105.7 billion birr was allotted for capital expenditure, while regular expenditure and subsidies to regional states stand at 68.8 and 87.87 billion birr, respectively. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are allocated 12 billion birr. The new budget assumes 11% growth and 8% inflation rates during the next fiscal year.

On the occasion, Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn also replied to questions from members of the Ethiopian House of People's Representatives. He said there was a slower rate of economic growth towards the end of the 2015-2016 budget year, due to the impact that the El-Nino drought had on the country's agricultural products over the year. He said the government "has expended 800 million dollars to control the impacts of drought". Despite the impact of the drought, however, the Prime Minister said, the agriculture sector had been able to register 3% growth. He added that further efforts would now be put in place to boost productivity. The Prime Minister also noted that the industry and service sectors had shown growth of 7%. This means, he added, that the overall national economic growth is expected to reach 8.5% by the end of the budget year.

The Prime Minister pointed out that 70% of the country's export trade depended on trading of agricultural products, and given the decline of commodity prices on the international market, the export trade did not achieve the desired growth. He underlined the need to work on enhancing import substitution. Accordingly, the Prime Minister said the government plans to do more this coming year to boost the export trade in terms of prioritizing the manufacturing sector and expanding the agro-processing industries. In the coming fiscal year, the government aims to achieve 30% growth in the export sector. In this connection, the Prime Minister also emphasized the need to involve both youth and investors in the mining industry, with a view to expanding the sector's export earnings.

The Prime Minister stressed that much remained to be done to enhance the country's tax revenues. He said the government would work hard to ensure it secured an additional 30 billion birr in tax revenue in the coming fiscal year. He also stressed that maximizing efforts to enhance the implementation capacity of institutions, notably the national plan commission, and improving the operational standards of internal and external auditing mechanisms, would be instrumental in the effort to ensure a successful budget year.

In this connection, the Prime Minister noted that the government had already launched a number of activities to help deal with problems related to the exercise of good governance. These efforts, he said, had already begun to show positive development. He added that the government planned to do more in the days ahead in close coordination with the public.

In regard to foreign policy, the Prime Minister mentioned that Ethiopia had been elected to be a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. This, he said, was the result of the country's consistent diplomatic efforts and it showed the diplomatic efforts of the last twenty years had paid off. The Prime Minister stressed that Ethiopia would do everything necessary to discharge its responsibilities. He also referred to the government's stance on Eritrea, underlining that Ethiopia was willing to negotiate at any time with Eritrea, provided that Eritrea was ready for dialogue. He added, however, that the government would continue to take proportional measures in response if Asmara continued attempts to destabilize the country.

Israeli Prime Minister's visit lifts the potential of Ethio-Israeli ties

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to Addis Ababa this week promised to make full use of the potential and the creativity of Ethio-Israeli ties. The public diplomacy, business and political aspects of his visit set Ethio-Israeli ties on a new journey of scientific and economic links and his speech to the House of Representatives promised a new era of joint progress as well as continued growth of bilateral ties between Ethiopia and Israel. The visit underlined the importance of stimulating existing ties with a full range of diplomatic activity, encompassing all aspects of government as well as public diplomacy.

The governmental level of diplomatic activity featured the high-level talks between Prime Minister Hailemariam and Prime Minister Netanyahu as well as the signing of agreements on science, technology and tourism. It underlines the readiness of both countries to cooperate to reaffirm and reactivate their age-old links and stabilize, and expand, bilateral relations. Cooperation in the sphere of scientific diplomacy represented a major innovation, reflecting the expected role and strategic attention to be given to science and technology as driving engines of Ethio-Israeli diplomacy as well as foreign policy in the future. Israel is now going to share its rich experience in space science, bioscience and nanotechnology with Ethiopia. At the signing of the agreements, Prime Minister Hailemariam stressed Ethiopia's interest in drawing lessons from Israel's rich experience, noting, in particular, the areas of agriculture, irrigation and water use. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu underlined that his visit to Ethiopia was aimed "at further elevating the over 3,000-year old bilateral relations of Ethiopia and Israel to a higher level."

In relation to economic diplomacy, an **Ethio-Israeli Business Forum** was held on Thursday (July 7), offering a blueprint for a mutually cooperative partnership in innovation, science and technology. Addressing the Forum, Prime Minister Hailemariam stressed that the business summit would provide extra momentum to strengthen the two countries' long-lasting fraternal relations in important areas of cooperation, in investment, trade and technology transfer. He recalled Ethiopia and Israel had a number of economic and technical cooperation agreements. He said Ethiopia gave full importance to the ongoing technology and skill transfer extended through the Israel Agency for International Development Cooperation (MASHAV). The flow of Foreign Direct Investment over the past twenty-five years had now reached to about US\$330 million. However, the Prime Minister said, it was now time to boost this, "by expanding our level of cooperation, increasing the growing flow of FDI in areas of horticulture, integrated annual farming, crop production and manufacturing to a higher level." He also mentioned renewable energy, ICT development and mining as other areas that could interest both sides to collaborate and work together.

Prime Minister Netanyahu, underlining Israel's firm determination to continue its commitment to advance technological research, stressed that: "the future belongs to those who can innovate. Nothing evades technology." He said Ethiopia was open to Israel's business, and he called on the participants and other Israeli businesses to invest in Ethiopia and for Ethiopian businesses to invest in Israel's knowledge and technological expertise. Prime Minister Netanyahu's delegation included more than forty business leaders from Israel; representatives of more than 90 Ethiopian companies also attended. In all, more than 250 business representatives from over 130 companies attended the Forum.

Ethiopian State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Regassa Kefale, told the opening session that the economic and business engagement between the two countries had been growing ever since Ethiopia had put in place the right policies to encourage foreign and private sector investment. He noted that the increased business-to-business and government-to-business networking between Israeli and Ethiopia would further augment knowledge of the extensive potential investment opportunities in Ethiopia. At the afternoon sessions, there were a number of different presentations. Mr Ofer Sachs, CEO of the Israeli Export Institute and Head of the Business Delegation, stressed the need to shift to an economy based on revolutionary technological innovation. The Forum also encouraged the raising of government-to-business transactions to a new level with the signing of an agreement between the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and the Israeli Export Institute.

During his visit, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also addressed the Ethiopian House of People's Representatives, extending his "greetings from Jerusalem, the city I grew up in and where King Solomon met the Queen of Sheba. Ethiopia, Prime Minister Netanyahu said, has a place in the heart of Israel and Israel was in the heart of Ethiopia. He said, "The two countries have enjoyed age-old relations," and, in honor of these historic relations, "a street in the center of Jerusalem is named after Ethiopia." Noting that Ethiopia was on the rise, Prime Minister Netanyahu stressed that his country was ready to work with Ethiopia and the rest of Africa. He said his country was keen to cooperate with Ethiopia in a bid to equip Ethiopian farmers with the necessary technology for development. He underlined concerns about security and stressed that Ethiopia and Israel should work together to fight terrorism. The Prime Minister, the first Israeli Prime Minister to visit Ethiopia, told the parliamentarians: "You in Ethiopia, you fought for your freedom for millennia. We respect you; we admire you. You resisted foreign rule and lived as a free independent homeland. We, too, we live as a free independent homeland."

The visit of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Ethiopia, the first by an Israeli Prime Minister, was the conclusion of a visit to East Africa that took him to Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda and Ethiopia. In Uganda, Prime Minister Netanyahu participated in a regional summit on counter-terrorism. The meeting, attended by President Museveni of Uganda, President Kenyatta of Kenya, President Kagame of Rwanda, Prime Minister Hailemariam of Ethiopia, President Kiir of South Sudan, President Lungu of Zambia and Dr Augustine Mahiga, Foreign Minister of Tanzania, agreed upon the importance of encouraging new avenues of co-operation based on human capacity building and the utilization of new innovative technologies to confront the scourge of terrorism.

A damning UN Human Rights Council resolution passed on Eritrea

The UN Human Rights Council in Geneva last Friday (July 1) accepted resolution 32/24 which endorsed the Commission of Inquiry's report into Human Rights Abuses in Eritrea. The resolution was proposed by Djibouti and Somalia and endorsed the Commission's findings. Among its 19 recommendations, it reiterates the calls on the Government of Eritrea to end the use of arbitrary detention, put an end to the system of indefinite national service and to allow unhindered access to the country to further missions of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, including the consideration for the Office to be based inside the country. It calls for Eritrea to resolve a range of systematic abuses, including extrajudicial killings, torture and indefinite detention, as well as permanent national service and forced labor. It called for the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea to be extended for a further year.

The Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights welcomed the strong resolution on Human Rights in Eritrea. Chairman Mike Smith said the human rights violations over the past 25 years, had now taken a step closer to being realized. He reiterated that Eritrea was an authoritarian state with no independent judiciary, no national assembly and there are no other democratic institutions in Eritrea. This, he said, has created a governance and rule of law vacuum, resulting in a climate of impunity for crimes against humanity to be perpetrated over a quarter of a century. These crimes are still occurring today. Mr Smith said the Commission hoped that Resolution 32/24 would provide a solid platform for the next steps to be taken by the Government of Eritrea, in partnership with the international community, and will bring justice for the Eritrean people. It also welcomed the resolution's strong encouragement for the African Union to follow up on the report and recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry by establishing an investigation, supported by the international community, with a view to examining and bringing to justice those responsible for violations and abuses of human rights.

In its report, first published on June 8, the Commission made recommendations to eight parties: the State of Eritrea; the UN Human Rights Council; the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; the UN General Assembly; the UN Security Council, the African Union; Member States; and Transnational Corporations. The resolution responded to this by referring the Commission of Inquiry report and all its recommendations, to the United Nations and its relevant organs for consideration and urgent action. This covers the UN General Assembly and includes the UN Security Council as well as the UN Secretary-General and also the African Union.

The Human Rights Council called on the African Union to investigate Eritrean leaders "with a view to examining and bringing to justice those responsible for violations and abuses of human rights identified by the commission of inquiry, including any that may amount to a crime against humanity." The AU, of course, has no prosecutor or court system, but it played a leading role in setting up a special court to prosecute the former Chadian military dictator, Hissene Habre, sentenced to life imprisonment in May for war crimes and

crimes against humanity. This would avoid any involvement of the International Criminal Court to which Eritrea is not a signatory and whose activity in Africa has been controversial.

As there was no specific reference in the resolution to the ICC, supporters of Eritrea were quick to try and turn the devastatingly critical resolution into a victory for Eritrea's criticisms of the report, claiming that the text of the resolution had been modified in Eritrea's favor. It is, however, difficult to accept this as the resolution is quite categorical: the report is referred to all the relevant UN bodies, and these most certainly include the Security Council. Indeed, the resolution was not, in fact, watered down and the Government of Eritrea essentially acknowledged that in a statement released on Friday last week, describing the activity of the Human Rights Council as "a grave injustice, yet another in a long train of injustices, being committed against the human rights of the people of Eritrea." This "unfair and unjust resolution" is prompted, the statement said, by the political agenda of the United States and a few of its European allies to ratchet up their harassment of Eritrea.

Eritrea's statement went on to claim the consequences would not be limited to Eritrea and would engulf the entire region, a threat given added weight by the recent attack across the Ethiopia border. The attack was apparently an effort to distract attention from the report and subsequent publicity. Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam told the Ethiopian House of Representatives on Tuesday this week (July 5) that Ethiopia would respond "to any action to destabilize" the country by Eritrea. Referring to the clashes last month near Tserona in the central area of the Ethiopian-Eritrean border, he said Eritrean forces had carried out "provocation" in an attempt to divert attention away from the UN Commission of Inquiry on human rights' violations and abuses in Eritrea. Ethiopia, he added, would always respond to any such provocation and attacks but he said, as he has before, "If this shaky government will dialogue with us, our doors are open."

The Eritrean statement described the UN Human Rights Council resolution as an "eminently political action [reflecting] its growing politicization and its increasing departure from its mandate." It claimed "Eritrea will never tire from underlining that it is a nation born in the struggle for human rights; and that it will not lessen its vigorous undertakings to promote and protect the welfare and dignity of its people. In the face of continued hostility, the people of Eritrea will remain steadfast and will not be distracted from their vision and program of comprehensive nation-building." Indeed, the government of Eritrea made every effort to prevent the resolution passing, encouraging its supporters and associated academics to write in its favor and even tabling its own resolution, largely commending the progress in human rights that it claims to have made.

By contrast, Eritrean human rights bodies welcomed the resolution. Citizens for Democratic Rights in Eritrea said the UN Council's resolution constituted "a huge blow" to the Eritrean government. It was "also a very strong message to those who operated with total lawlessness for so long and that it won't be long before the days [of] impunity and the rule by terror come to an end." Another Eritrean human rights organization said: "the resolution we have now is fair enough in laying down the necessary ground work for tangible accountability mechanisms for crimes against humanity in Eritrea.

One of the issues that the Commission of Inquiry noted in its report was the way the Eritrean government put illegal pressure on Eritreans in the Diaspora to pay the government's 2% tax, and in a number of other ways to demand support. This has been given considerable added support in the last week by a debate by the Dutch Parliament. At the beginning of this week, the Dutch Parliament passed a number of resolutions relating to a debate held last week in the Parliament on the activities in the Netherlands of the Youth Wing of the single ruling Eritrean Party, the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (YFPDJ). Eleven motions were passed in all, calling on the Dutch government to carry out a number of responses to the way members of the YFPDJ have been behaving. These include their efforts to try and take journalists and academics to court to prevent publicity over concerns about YFPDJ behavior in Holland.

The first resolution noted that, as there were indications that the Eritrean Embassy played a role in threatening and intimidating Eritreans in the Netherlands who do not submit 2% of their income as tax, the government should summon the Eritrean ambassador and instruct him to halt the taxation and the malpractices surrounding it. If this failed to halt the abuses, the resolution calls for the closure of the Embassy. A second noted that 50% of Eritrean refugees living in the Netherlands are dependent on government support. These people are forced to pay a 2% tax to the Eritrean government. The Netherlands should not finance the Eritrean regime in this way and the resolution requests that the government come up with proposals to end the payment of Dutch taxes to foreign powers. Another calls for the government to take the initiative to start an investigation as to the nature and scope of the Diaspora tax.

Another resolution which defines the Eritrean regime as “one of the most repressive in the world” and notes that Eritreans flee oppression and not the lack of socio-economic development, requests that the government not agree to the spending of 200 million Euros in Eritrea, but use the money for Eritrean refugees. Parliament also asks the government to call on the responsible European Commissioner to freeze the contribution to Eritrea and to make it available instead to UNHCR or other NGOs. Other resolutions called on the Netherlands’ government to refer the report of the UN Commission of Inquiry to the UN Security Council for it to take action to combat crimes against humanity in Eritrea; to screen out job candidates who are active in organizations that are related to the Eritrean regime, such as for example the Young members of the PFDJ in Holland; and launch an investigation into the involvement in criminal activities of the Eritrean embassy in The Hague. Parliament also requests that the government investigates the possibility of outlawing the payment of the diaspora tax of Eritrea in the Netherlands and to ask advice on this from the advisor on international law. It requests the government to provide data on the representatives of the Eritrean regime in the Netherlands and to update the parliament about this as soon as possible.

In their debate on Thursday last week, (June 30), Dutch MPs had made it very clear they were concerned about the behavior of the members of the PFDJ Youth Wing in Holland, which operates under the direct authority of Yemane Gebreab, adviser to President Isaias. During the discussion, MPs called for investigation of the role of Eritrean officials in Holland as well as in the European Union. They suggested preventing PFDJ members from accessing centers for asylum seekers and demanded the investigation of subsidies provided to organizations affiliated to the PFDJ as well as of the activities of the Eritrean Embassy in Holland. Their concerns were underlined in the measures passed on Monday this week (July 4).

Non-permanent membership of the UNSC to improve Ethiopia’s status and standing

Ethiopia has secured a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council (UNSC), the most important governing body in the United Nations. It will serve a two-year term commencing in January 2017. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is the most powerful of the principal organs of the United Nations (UN), established after the end of the Second World War in 1946. The United Nations Security Council is charged with the maintenance of international peace and security. Its powers are exercised through United Nations Security Council resolutions. They include the establishment of peacekeeping operations, the establishment of international sanctions, and the authorization of military action. The Security Council consists of fifteen members of the United Nations. Five members are permanent: China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. There are ten non-permanent members elected by the General Assembly by secret ballot. Every year, five non-permanent members are elected to serve for two-year terms.

This year, with the full backing of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union, given at the 26th Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Ethiopia put its name forward to obtain the required two-thirds of votes from the 193 members of the General Assembly to win the African seat. Impressively, in the first round of voting, Ethiopia managed to secure overwhelming support with 185 countries out of the 190 United Nations member states in favor. Along with Ethiopia, the General Assembly elected Sweden, Bolivia and Kazakhstan, with Italy and the Netherlands splitting the fifth seat. The support given to Ethiopia was not entirely a surprise, considering the contributions it has made to global peace and regional development programs, and the General Assembly gave overwhelming support to Ethiopia. Ethiopia will now be able to add a significant African voice to the deliberations of the United Nations Security Council.

Ethiopia is particularly pleased to have been elected to the United Nations Security Council as a non-permanent member as this will place the country in a far better position to contribute effectively to the lofty goals for which the United Nations was established. The United Nations Security Council will provide a forum in which Ethiopia and other elected representatives will be able to define common ground for development in a wide variety of areas, not least climate change. The significance of this kind of opportunity gains further importance in times when problems can no longer be addressed only on a national level but require global solutions.

United Nations members take the competition for non-permanent seats very seriously. Membership of the Security Council is pertinent and important and never more so than today. UNSC seats provide international prestige. Since the United Nations Security Council may decide on enforcement measures in support of international peace and security, including collective military action for peace keeping operations, or economic sanctions, including trade embargoes, it is very definitely the most powerful organ of the United Nations. Membership provides for greater ability to effectively influence the decisions even among states like

Ethiopia that contribute significantly to United Nations peacekeeping. Conversely, failure to obtain sufficient votes for a non-permanent seat offers negative publicity for the state's representatives at home. Ethiopia is a country with a strong interest in United Nations peacekeeping, troop deployment and other security issues and knows it can better pursue its own interests and those of Africa as a United Nations Security Council member. Membership, in fact, enables Ethiopia to advance its support for peacekeeping operations as well as encourage advancement of cooperation between the UN and regional and sub-regional organizations on pressing issues such as terrorism and climate change. Ethiopia is very clear that dealing with terrorist groups like al-Shabaab requires extensive international cooperation, especially in intelligence sharing and preventing terrorist fund raising activities.

Other advantages of membership of the Security Council include having the chance to look more closely at any situations threatening international peace and security, as well as being able to recommend procedures for peaceful resolution of disputes and the ability to comment on issues deliberated by the Security Council. It allows a country to improve the possibility of taking up a more effective position to help deflect attempts to encourage negative influences from whatever quarter.

Membership allows for a state to raise certain issues as well as take an active part in Council discussions. Both can have an important impact on the outcome. Membership, indeed, offers recognition of Ethiopia's relevance, and significance, in the world order of the 21st century. It will also allow Ethiopia to expand its diplomatic circle and assist in helping to attract increased levels of foreign direct investment.

One of the most important advantages, of course, is that membership also provides an important platform for Ethiopia to promote African and third world causes. Ethiopia has long been a strong proponent for the promotion of Africa's rightful place in the global arena. The election to the Security Council will present an important opportunity for Ethiopia to advance and safeguard African interests further, something that it has already emphasized that it will ensure happens during the next two years.

The UN Security Council to renew AMISOM's mandate in Somalia

As expected, the United Nations Security Council on Thursday this week (July 7) reauthorized the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) until May 31, 2017. Under a unanimously adopted resolution, the Council maintained AMISOM's troop deployment "up to a maximum level of 22,126." It set out further strategic objectives for the mission to facilitate the Somali political process, as well as the efforts for stabilization, reconciliation and peace building by the provision of security. The resolution allows for the gradual handing over of security responsibilities to Somali security forces, contingent on their abilities. The resolution also authorizes AMISOM's 'essential tasks', including engagement with communities in areas recovered from al-Shabaab and the promotion of understanding between AMISOM and local populations to allow for longer-term stabilization by the UN Country Team. Securing key supply routes is identified as a related 'priority task', essential for improving the humanitarian situation, as well as being critical for AMISOM's logistical support. The resolution also emphasizes the importance of AMISOM forces operating in full compliance with obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law, and cooperating with the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia and the UN Support Office in Somalia. It also calls on the African Union to investigate and report any allegations of violations and abuse.

In May, the Security Council adopted resolution 2289, which provided a short technical rollover of AMISOM until July 8 to allow the members of the Council time to assess the results of their visit to the Horn of Africa (May17-22) that focused on Somalia and the implications for AMISOM. At the beginning of last week (June 27) the Security Council held an informal interactive dialogue on AMISOM. The Special Representative of the AU Commission Chairperson for Somalia, Ambassador Francisco Madeira; the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Michael Keating; and the Under-Secretary-General for Field Support, Atul Khare provided briefings. The Special Representative of the AU Commission Chairperson also provided an account of the review of AMISOM's Concept of Operations, which had taken place in Addis Ababa a week earlier, and of the meeting of the AU Military Operations Coordination Committee, which met in Kampala, June 22-23. The interactive dialogue also gave members of the Security Council another opportunity to have a direct dialogue with the AU on security issues. These remain of serious concern with al-Shabaab continuing asymmetric and conventional attacks and with suicide attacks on two hotels in Mogadishu in June.

The AU Peace and Security Council last week approved AMISOM's revised Concept of Operations (CONOPS). This allows for African forces to start withdrawing from Somalia from October 2018. The Council said the two-year period would allow proper establishment of necessary facilities for the handover of AMISOM to the

Somali National Armed Forces. The revised CONOPS reflect “efforts toward enhancing AMISOM and Somali National Armed Forces operations and identifies indicative timelines for an exit strategy of AMISOM from Somalia.” This prioritizes territorial recovery and consolidation by AMISOM and the SNAF till October 2018, and a subsequent draw down and transfer of security responsibilities to the Somali forces from 2018 to December 2020.”

Following AMISOM’s revised CONOPS, a key issue surrounding the re-authorization of AMISOM is the need to prioritize elements of the mandate, notably enhancing command and control and improving coordination, to improve its implementation capacity. It is also important to assess how AMISOM’s Concept of Operations can be refined to enable the mission to better respond to the threat posed by al-Shabaab. Another important issue now is the need to address the financial challenges facing AMISOM. The European Union, AMISOM’s largest financial contributor, earlier this year decided to cut funding to the mission by 20%. This raised concerns about how long some of the troop-contributing countries will be prepared to remain involved, and the need to find alternative options. Both Kenya (3,664 troops) and Uganda (6,700) suggested they might have to pull out of the Mission. In fact, AMISOM, and the Somali National Army, with international support, have made great strides in reversing some of the territorial control that Somali militants have had. It is everybody’s interest to continue AMISOM’s operations, as well as for the UN Security Council to continue to consider converting the Mission to a United Nations peacekeeping mission. The advantages of that would include allowing the United Nations to draw on different countries for troop contributions as well as offer more stable funding.

The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, Francisco Madeira, underlined the effectiveness of AMISOM this week when issuing a statement wishing all Somalis a happy and prosperous Eid al-fitr on Wednesday (July 6). He said AMISOM forces, together with the Somali National Army, had pushed al-Shabaab “from all key towns in Somalia.” It was working with the Somali government to strengthen state institutions as well as empowering the Somali security forces to take over the security responsibility of Somalia. His statement also called on all Somalis to work together with the Federal Government and AMISOM to “help the country overcome its present predicament and achieve peace and stability.” The three major military operations, Operation Eagle, Operation Indian Ocean and Operation Juba Corridor, have liberated many of the towns; disrupted terrorists’ supply routes; and prevented al-Shabaab from collecting illegal taxes from the population. Al-Shabaab’s areas of control have been seriously degraded. It has been forced to engage in asymmetric warfare, indiscriminately targeting civilians, public places, government installations and businesses in attacks calculated to cause maximum destruction and publicity rather than try to control territory.

Another pressing issue is ensuring that Somalia adheres to the timeline for the current electoral process and conducts peaceful, transparent and inclusive elections in August. This also involves UNSOM’s support for progress towards the constitutional review process and completion of the federal state formation. Somalia does appear to be on track to hold elections in August as outlined by its electoral timetable. Security Council members issued a press statement on May 23 that welcomed the electoral process set out in President Mohamud’s decree the previous day, noting that this should enable the necessary technical preparation and implementation without further delay.

The importance of this was underlined by the European Union Special Envoy for Somalia, Ambassador D’Urso of Italy, in an interview with the Somali website, *GaroweOnline.com*, this week, on Wednesday (July 6). He emphasized the importance of a transparent electoral process. “This’, he said, “is what the Somali people and we are demanding from the authorities.” However, he pointed out, “at the moment, the rules of the game are not yet clear and the interim election management bodies are yet to be operationalized.” Somali leaders agreed to the election timetable on June 25 as well as to the selection process for election teams, the Federal Electoral Implementation Team and State-Level Electoral Implementation Teams. Ambassador D’Urso emphasized the importance of these bodies working without political interference. He said it was still necessary and important to put in place transparency and accountability mechanisms.

While the Ambassador was confident that the 2016 electoral model would hold through August, [he] said it would also require sustained commitment by political leaders and urgent work to put in place the remaining elements, the dispute resolution mechanism, the adoption of criteria for candidates, the mechanism to ensure women representation, security arrangements and so on. He also stressed the importance of adhering to a credible timeline for the elections, of urgently putting security arrangements in place, and of showing “real commitment on the 30% quota for women and not mere rhetoric”. It would, he said, all be possible, but it required strong commitment from all stakeholders. He welcomed the decision of the National Leaders Forum

to remove politicians from the Federal Indirect Election Implementation Team as it made clear the distinction between political and electoral management. But, he said, more needed to be done. He noted that the National Leaders Forum should establish a Dispute Resolution Mechanism and ensure the role of civil society and the media.

Ambassador D'Urso said there was no doubt that in the longer-term perspective there had been considerable progress: the contours of a new, federal Somalia were emerging; AMISOM and Somali security forces have recovered many of the areas previously under al-Shabaab control; state authority is starting to be extended in these areas; donors are investing again in Somalia and international financial institutions re-engaging. Overall, he felt "something fundamental has changed in the way politics is being conducted: politics now takes place through dialogue and within a constitutional framework, despite its many imperfections." This meant Somalia [is building] institutions and works within the rule of law, critical for moving forward.

The Ambassador was particularly pleased, that despite some deadlock at times in the political discussions, political leaders were working "in a consensual manner; seeking compromise." He added that political deal-making and compromise always remain necessary and moving forward required a degree of pragmatism and willingness to compromise, while remaining committed to key principles. He agreed that ideally the preparations for elections should have started much earlier, but he stressed again that the process must be Somali led, the international community would not and should not be in the lead. It was there to support processes and to help reach decisions. It was not the job of the international community to put the necessary mechanisms in place for this, but the Somali authorities. Ambassador D'Urso said: "We all have a responsibility to make sure that Somalia keeps moving forward and we are ready to facilitate inter-Somali decision-making when needed, but Somalis are and should be in the lead."

"We will continue to work together ever more closely with the people of this great nation"

"We will continue to work together ever more closely with the people of this great nation," said President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, responding to the award of an honorary degree from Bahir Dar University on July 2, at the hands of Ethiopia's President, Dr Mulatu Teshome. President Mulatu said: "It is an honor for us to have President Kagame grace this graduation, and a continued testament of our close relations." President Mulatu said, "On behalf of the Government, I would like to thank the University for presenting this degree to President Kagame. Congratulations, President Kagame, on receiving this honorary Doctor of Law. May our two countries continue to prosper."

President Kagame was honored for his extraordinary achievements in stopping the 1994 Genocide, championing the empowerment of women and ensuring Rwanda's sustainable development. Ethiopia was very quick to respond to the UN call for contributing troops for peacekeeping and humanitarian operations in Rwanda following the genocide; after the French Army completed its mission, Ethiopia deployed two battalions, the 'Wegagen' and 'Guna' battalions for the United Nation's Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR).

President Kagame thanked Bahir Dar University for awarding him an honorary degree, which, he emphasized, paid tribute not just to him but also the Rwandan people. "This recognition is a great honor for the struggle of the Rwandan people for liberation and prosperity." He continued, "You got it right by emphasizing the huge role Rwandan women have played in Rwanda's rebirth. Thank you for that. Our brothers and sisters in Ethiopia have been with us, all the way, which we will always appreciate and reciprocate. I am honored to stand together with you today and to be associated with this university and the great nation of Ethiopia."

The President told the new graduates of Bahir Dar University to use their voice always to stand up for what was right. He said "You have as much stake in this world of ours as anyone. Take your seat, Africa's seat at the high table. In every situation strive to bring people together, never to divide them. We benefit from our diverse ideas and identity." He added that whether in reference to a nation, a continent or the world, there was always a way to build a common purpose and "we should strive" for this. He went on: "Thank you for this great honor bestowed upon me and my people. This speaks a lot as to how much we can do as brothers and sisters. We will continue to work together ever more closely with the people of this great nation of Ethiopia. These are among the African and universal values that you, the youth inherit, and you should be proud."

President Kagame said: "Like your parents, I came of age in a different Africa with complicated circumstances. Injustice and bad politics prevented many of us from attending university. Even the right to live was not always assured. We had no choice but to struggle and fight to secure the dignity and opportunity we now enjoy and

deserve.” He urged the graduates to build on “this foundation” and do even more and better for the continent’s future. He stressed that “We must therefore never take for granted how far we have come and the sacrifice required to get to where we are today. Neither can we be satisfied with mediocrity or praise for small ambitions. We live in a better Africa than ever before.” He told them that it is not enough to have a degree or to be young. More important, he said, is the mindset of ownership, responsibility and curiosity. The biggest part of any problem, President Kagame added, is accepting it as normal.

The event was attended by high-level government officials, including Dr Mulatu Teshome, the President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Dr Tedros Adhanom, Ethiopia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ato Gedu Andargachew, President of the Amhara Regional State, the senior management of the university, invited guests and families of the graduating class of 2016. Rwanda’s First Lady, Jeannette Kagame accompanied President Kagame. On this occasion, Bahir Dar University, located in the city of Bahir Dar, the capital of the Amhara National Regional State, graduated 8,321 students from first, second and doctorate degree programs.

During his brief stay in Ethiopia, President Paul Kagame met with Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn in Addis Ababa, where the two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to work on Africa’s common agenda.