

A Week in the Horn

9th December 2016

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News in Brief

Africa and the African Union

The 29th Extra-Ordinary Summit of IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government took place on Friday (December 9) under the chairmanship of Ethiopia's Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn. The Summit was attended by President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti; President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of Somalia, President Salva Kiir of South Sudan; President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, of Sudan; and President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda. South Sudan and Somalia were on the agenda.

The 5th Ministerial Retreat of the Executive Council of the African Union was [held] in Addis Ababa this week (December 8-9). Key elements of the agenda were: Elections, Democracy and Effective and Responsive Governance; Draft Commodities Strategy; and an Update on the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and African Integration. (See article)

The Fourth Africa-Korea Forum took place on Tuesday and Wednesday this week in Addis Ababa. The Forum reviewed implementation of the previous plan of action (2013-2015), identified further areas of cooperation, and adopted the "Addis-Ababa Declaration for the 4th Africa-Korea Forum" and the "2017-2022 Africa-Korea Forum Framework for Cooperation". (See article)

Ethiopia

President Dr Mulatu Teshome, Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn, and representatives of nations, nationalities and peoples from all around Ethiopia, celebrated the 11th Nations, Nationalities and People's Day at the new Awabadir Stadium in Harar town, Harari Regional State on Thursday (December 8) under the theme "Our Constitution for Our Democratic Unity and Renaissance!" Among the distinguished visitors were President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan and President Ismail Omar Guelleh Djibouti. (See article)

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn attended the UNESCO Conference on Safeguarding Endangered

Cultural Heritage in Abu Dhabi at the end of last week (December 2-3). He also held talks with Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi on expanding the horizons of cooperation between the two countries. (See articles)

Foreign Minister, Dr Workneh Gebeyehu, recently appointed Foreign Minister of Ethiopia, held a reception for the members of the Diplomatic Corps and all foreign diplomats accredited to Ethiopia on Monday, (December 5). (See article)

Foreign Minister, Dr Workneh, met with South Korean Foreign Minister, Mr Yun Byung-se on Tuesday (December 6). He underlined Ethiopia's appreciation for the broad development assistance Korea has provided to Ethiopia. Mr Yun Byung-se commended Ethiopia's achievements in infrastructure and rural development and said it offered a very good example for African countries. He also mentioned the significant role of Ethiopian Airlines in boosting bilateral cooperation, especially the direct flight from Addis Ababa to Seoul.

The Oromia Regional State has recognized the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its significant contribution towards getting the Gadaa System into UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. A Certificate of Appreciation was presented to Dr Workneh Gebeyehu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on Monday (December 5).

State Minister Mrs Hirut Zemene received the newly appointed Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy, Ambassador Luciano Pezzotti on Thursday (December 8). Mrs Hirut underlined the need to check the continued efforts of the Eritrean regime to destabilize the Horn and Ethiopia and asked for Italy's cooperation for Ethiopia in voicing Africa's concerns in the UN Security Council. Ambassador Pezzotti underlined the importance of strengthening cooperation to mitigate the challenge of migration."

State Minister, Mrs Hirut Zemene, received a copy of the credentials of the newly appointed Ambassador of Senegal to Ethiopia, Mr Baye Moctar Diop on Tuesday (December 6). Ambassador Diop said Senegal would work closely with the Ethiopian mission in New York after January when Ethiopia joined the UN Security Council.

Ethiopia and Romania celebrated 50 years of diplomatic relations this week. State Minister Mrs Hirut attended the occasion. (See article)

Ethiopia and UAE have concluded a reciprocal promotion and investment protection agreement intended to boost bilateral trade volume and investment flows. The agreement was signed on Saturday (December 3) in Abu Dhabi during the visit of an Ethiopian delegation to the UAE. (See article)

The World Bank Group praised Ethiopia last week for a "respectable economic performance" in spite of the biting drought affecting the entire Horn of Africa region. It said "Economic growth remained at a respectable 8% in 2015/16, which is impressive especially compared to previous drought situations". (See article)

An Ethiopian delegation attended an African Investments and Business Forum held in Algiers (December 3-5) with the theme: "Towards a new dynamic", showcasing Ethiopia's achievements in agri-business and its development of agro-industrial zones. The Forum aimed to stimulate inter-African trade, fast-track continental integration and promote human capital development. (See article)

Ethiopia and China signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) over the weekend to work together on issues of maternal and child health, post-graduate program expansion and donation of medical equipment. The agreement is part of a Chinese plan to establish 20 hospitals in 20 African countries, as well as the proposed trauma center and nursing unit at Tirunesh Beijing Hospital in Addis Ababa.

GIZ has launched a new training program for people who will work in Hawassa Industrial Park. The training is part of a 17 million euro program funded by the German government under the umbrella of the **Sustainable Training & Education Program** (STEP). It will be carried out in partnership with Hawassa Industrial Park Association and the Ethiopian Textile Industry Development Institute (ETIDI).

Ethiopia's Almaz Ayana was named female World Athletes of the Year at the IAAF Athletics Awards 2016, held at Sporting Monte Carlo on Friday (December 2). She had a record-breaking year, recording the fastest 10,000m debut in history in June, winning the 10,000m Olympic title in a world record and taking a bronze medal for the 5,000m and becoming the Diamond Race winner at 5,000m Genzebe Dibaba and Meseret Defar won the award of female World Athlete of the Year in 2015 and 2007 respectively. Jamaica's Usain Bolt was named male World Athlete of the Year for the sixth time.

Djibouti

President Ismail Omar Guelleh opened a three-day meeting to reflect and discuss Djibouti's economic development strategy on Sunday (December 4). The President defined the objectives of the seminar as drawing lessons from reforms initiated at the international level and revitalizing growth strategy as well as providing better coordination of government action and teamwork.

Djibouti's Foreign Minister Mahamoud Ali Youssouf said in an interview in the Saudi paper *Asharq al-Awsa* on Sunday that Djibouti would welcome a Saudi Arabian military base. He said Saudi military authorities had visited Djibouti to discuss the establishment of a facility, and a draft strategic security agreement had been prepared with some coastal areas designated as suitable for a Saudi military base. Mr Youssouf said a deal would be signed soon.

Minister for the Budget, Bodeh Ahmed Robleh, said this week that Djibouti's economy was expected to grow 7% in 2017 from a projected 6.5% this year, helped by investment in ports, telecommunications and airports. The cabinet approved a \$674.92m budget for fiscal year 2017, with spending focused on improving water supplies, desalination of sea water, housing, building power lines, drilling geothermal exploratory wells and the construction of port terminals.

The President of the National Assembly, Mohamed Ali Houmed, met with a US military delegation led by General Benjamin Adams, Commander of the State Guard of the State of Kentucky on Tuesday (December 6). They emphasized the friendship and cooperation existing between the United States and Djibouti. The National Guard of Kentucky has a partnership program with the Djibouti army.

Djibouti chief-of-staff, Zakaria Cheikh Ibrahim, on a visit to China, met with Fang Fenghui, a member of China's Central Military Commission and chief of the Joint Staff Department, China's Defense Ministry. He thanked the Djibouti chief of staff for supporting China's construction of a military base in Djibouti. Fan Changlong, a vice chairman of the Central Military Commission visited Djibouti last month.

A Chinese Ministry of Defense spokesperson said last week that the Chinese support facility being built in Djibouti would be used mainly to support Chinese armed forces to carry out escort duties, humanitarian rescue and other tasks in the Gulf of Aden and the waters off Somalia. He said: "China's overseas support facilities are aimed at better helping it fulfil its international responsibilities and obligations, as well as protecting China's legitimate rights; they are not aimed at military expansion."

Eritrea

The Government of Eritrea and the United Nations launched a Strategic Partnership Cooperation Framework for 2017 to 2021 in Asmara this week. The new SPCF will start on January 1, 2017. It has strategic pillars for intervention and cooperation: Basic social services; environmental sustainability, resilience and disaster risk management; public sector capacity development; and inclusive growth, food security and sustainable livelihoods.

A total of 17,500 poor rural households in six regions of Eritrea will benefit from an agreement, signed between the International Fund for Agricultural Development and Eritrea, to boost coastal and inland fisheries on Tuesday (December 6). The program will cost US\$32.1 million and be co-financed by the Government of Germany, the Global Environment Facility, the FAO, the Eritrean government and the beneficiaries themselves.

Kenya

The United States government has given six new helicopters to the Kenya Defence Forces to assist in the campaign against al-Shabaab in Somalia. Two more helicopters are expected to be delivered in May next

year. Kenya's Defence Cabinet Secretary, Ms Raychelle Omamo, received the Huey II helicopters last week. She said they were "an exceptional force multiplier for the Kenyan Defence Forces."

Somalia

Somalia's National Leadership Forum has agreed to December 28 as the new date for the election of a president by Parliament. The Forum held another meeting on Wednesday and Thursday this week (December 7-8) before issuing a statement on Thursday evening that they expected the new parliament to elect a speaker on December 22, and then to elect the president on December 28.

The United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Peter de Clercq, appealed on Saturday (December 3) for urgent scaling-up of humanitarian assistance for Somalia. He said relief agencies were overstretched and the 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan had received just 47% of the total \$885 million requested. The current 'Deyr' rainy season has been poor so far across most of Somalia, and nearly five million people need assistance, with more than a million in a state of crisis and emergency.

At the weekend, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) issued an appeal to its member-countries and partners in humanitarian action to give support to Somalia and intervene quickly to alleviate the suffering of those affected by drought.

Officials in Puntland say Puntland forces recaptured the port of Qandala on Wednesday (December 7) from the group of former al-Shabaab fighters who broke away from al-Shabaab last year and declared allegiance to Islamic State.

Somali piracy remains a major threat, even though international attention has shifted away from the problem, International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) Secretary Peter Hinchliffe said on Monday (December 5). He praised the extension of EU Navfor's Operation Atalanta until the end of 2018.

Somaliland Information Minister, Osman Abdullahi Sahardid, reiterated on Sunday (December 4) that Somaliland was not a party to the ongoing elections in Somalia. He said those participating in Somalia's parliamentary elections on behalf of the region had betrayed Somaliland's quest for independence: "We do not have anyone representing us in the government of Somalia. Those who purport to do so are job seekers advancing personal interests."

EU NAVFOR and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime carried out a Joint Maritime Security Seminar at the weekend for Somaliland. The seminar was attended by Somaliland's State Minister for Security at the Ministry of Interior, Admiral Abdi Hersi from the Somaliland Coast Guard, as well as the Minister of Justice, the Chief Justice, the Attorney-General, the Immigration Commissioner, and the Regional Governor, Berbera's Mayor and members of the international community.

South Sudan

The South Sudanese government said on Monday (December 5) that it had requested that the Sudanese government shut down offices of the armed opposition faction, SPLM-IO. It said this would be a demonstration of commitment to implementing the outcome of the meeting between President Kiir and President Al-Bashir in Equatorial Guinea.

The UN has announced that a troop battalion from Bangladesh is to replace the Kenyan peacekeepers withdrawn from South Sudan. The deployment of 850 Bangladeshi soldiers is in response to a UN request following President Uhuru Kenyatta's decision last month to end Kenya's participation in the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) after the sacking of the Kenyan general in command of the UNMISS peacekeeping force.

Sudan

Following a four-day visit to UAE last week, President Omer al-Bashir said on Tuesday (December 6) that Sudan would receive a \$500 million central bank deposit from the United Arab Emirates. The President also said the UAE had pledged to cover Sudan's gasoline consumption for 6 months and to build a solar power plant.

In a statement on Wednesday (December 7), the troika of the US, UK and Norway, the European Union and Canada expressed concern about the detention of a number of political leaders. It said "the arrest of political leaders for non-violent dissent risks hindering efforts for an inclusive National Dialogue that involves all the relevant political forces in Sudan in line with the African Union Roadmap, which we all support". The Foreign Ministry said the statement was an "unacceptable attempt to interfere in Sudan's internal affairs".

The 4th session of the joint Sudanese-Russian High-level Committee on Monday (December 5) in Moscow discussed a number of issues including mineral exploitation. The Sudanese delegation was led by the Minister of Minerals Ahmed Sadiq al-Karouri, and the Russian delegation by the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment. The three-day meeting agreed on a number of Memoranda of Understanding covering minerals, investment, agriculture, education and health.

Sudan's Foreign Minister Ibrahim Ghandour met with British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson on Thursday last week (December 1) on the side-lines of the three-day Mediterranean Dialogues Forum, organized by the Italian foreign ministry in Rome. They discussed ways to develop bilateral relations and trade between the two countries.

The National Congress Party said on Wednesday said the Higher Coordination Committee to Follow Up on the Implementation of the Dialogue Outcome had been expanded and endorsed. The Dialogue Higher Coordination Committee known as 7+7 dissolved itself on Monday (December 5) after approving the formation of a follow-up committee.

Ethiopians celebrate 11th Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Day in Harari

Ethiopia celebrated the 11th Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Day in Harar, capital of the country's smallest *killil*, and a city commonly referred to [as] a city of love and tolerance. Ethiopia is, of course, a home to diversity, with around 80 nations, nationalities and peoples, each having their own distinct culture, history, language and way of life. They are brought together under the umbrella of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Despite all the problems of history, and a variety of regimes and ideologies, the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia with their numerous shared values and norms, have always held their loyalty to their motherland and enthusiastically defended Ethiopia's sovereignty against foreign aggression.

Equally, there has been misrule during which some of the peoples have been treated as second class citizens and deprived of equal opportunities within their own country. This led to struggles to create a political system under which their human and democratic rights could be respected, their languages, cultures, identities and history freely exercised and their right to self-administration and self-determination recognized. It was this that drove the near two decades of struggle to depose the military dictatorship of the Derg on May 8, 1991. This victory provided the country's first democratic constitution on December 8, 1995, enshrining all basic rights and freedoms. That is the reason to celebrate December 8, the historic day marking the ratification of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, a constitution which formally guarantees the rights and equality of Ethiopia's nations, nationalities and peoples.

The day was first celebrated in 1999 EC [2007] on the eve of the Ethiopian Millennium in 1999 E.C. and in the capital Addis Ababa. The House of Federation then decided to celebrate the occasion yearly each December 8 to provide a platform for the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia to promote their cultures, histories, lifestyles and other values, creating a common political and economic community and strengthening their brotherhood under the national spirit of the motherland, Ethiopia.

This year the scene of the national celebration was the city of Harar, the capital of the Harari Regional State, and the celebration was held under the theme: "Our Constitution for Our Democratic Unity and Renaissance!" Thousands of people representing all the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia were present at the celebration in Awabadir Stadium, in Harar. The ceremonies were attended by President Dr Mulatu Teshome, Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn and First Lady Roman Tesfaye, as well as the Speaker of the House of Federation, Yalew Abate, and other high-ranking government officials, and members of the diplomatic corps. The celebration was also honored by the presence of the President of Sudan, Omar Hassen al-Bashir and of Djibouti Ismail Omar Guelleh.

Prime Minister Hailemariam spoke of the ancient civilization of Ethiopia, its glorious history and the diversity to which all the nations, nationalities and peoples have contributed their share. Although deprived of their basic rights and neglected by previous regimes, he said, the peoples of Ethiopia, after decades of struggle, achieved their goal of freedom and equality on December 8, 1995 with the ratification of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Since then, Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' of Ethiopia have enjoyed 21 years of constitutionalism which have ensured their equal rights, self-administration and equal representation. This day, indeed, marked a milestone when the common vision of Ethiopians established a system of constitutional government, allowing for sustained development.

The Prime Minister said that the country had now reached the point at which it needed to resolve numerous challenges related to a lack of good governance which had led to legitimate popular grievances. He underlined that all the questions raised related to a lack of good governance, abuse of power by government officials, corruption or questions of identity and self-administration, could be solved by ensuring the proper implementation of constitutional issues. He stressed that his government was committed to solving the problems and he called on the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia to stand alongside the government to achieve this. He also emphasized the need to strengthen national unity and stand together against anti-peace elements that were trying to threaten the sovereignty of the nation.

The Speaker of the House of Federation, Yalew Abate, said that this year the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Day celebration should not confine itself to praising past success and achievement, but it should also express the commitment to solving the current problems, which posed dangers for the federal system. He took the opportunity to praise the Harari Regional State for successfully hosting the celebration. The President of Harari Regional State, Murad Abdulhadi, said that the celebration of this historic day would help Harari to build up its positive image, help to make it a center for medical tourism and strengthen its efforts for infrastructural development, as well as provide a strong basis for Harar's efforts to become registered as a World Heritage site by UNESCO.

Present on the occasion as a Guest of Honor, Sudan President Omar Hassen Al- Bashir, expressing his congratulations on the occasion and said Sudan and Ethiopia were connected by old and deeply rooted relations of blood and tribal interaction. The commonalities of the two could have a great impact in strengthening and enhancing socio-economic and political interaction at all levels. He noted that the vision of both countries was identical at regional and continental level. The President of the Republic of Djibouti Ismail Omar Guelleh, speaking in Amharic, said that the Ethiopian peoples' diversity was a source of the country's prosperity and renaissance. On behalf of the government and peoples of Djibouti, he congratulated the brotherly people and government of Ethiopia.

The celebration of Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia Day has created a platform to acknowledge the diverse cultures and identities of the country and demonstrate the strength that maintains the unity of the country. It is a great opportunity to reaffirm and strengthen the commitment to the common destiny of ensuring the democratization, and the renaissance, of the nation. The day was celebrated across the country and in all Ethiopian Embassies and consulates overseas. The 12th Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia Day, next year, will be celebrated in Samara, the capital of the Afar Regional State.

Prime Minister Hailemariam at the Conference on Safeguarding Cultural Heritage in UAE...

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), supported by the governments of France and the United Arab Emirates, organized the two-day conference on Safeguarding Endangered Cultural Heritage in Abu Dhabi at the end of last week (December 2-3). The conference brought together representatives from over 40 countries in the international community that have been seriously affected by heritage loss due to conflict, as well as key players in world heritage preservation. The conference aimed to support UNESCO's global mandate to protect cultural heritage during armed conflict as well as safeguard historic sites and monuments that represent civilizations dating back millennia from systematic destruction or looting. The conference was also a response to the growing threat to some of the world's most important cultural resources arising from sustained periods of armed conflict, acts of terrorism and illicit looting and trafficking of cultural property. The importance of this has been underlined by the destruction and thefts that have occurred in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Mali, and elsewhere in recent years.

In his introductory remarks, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, said the destruction of cultural heritage was an attempt to obliterate

humanity. He said the perpetrators of this evil were using the name of religion. He underscored the urgent need to stop their malevolent and wicked actions. President Francois Hollande of France said his country was championing this cause because of the increasing trend of extremists to launch deliberate and calculated violent attacks on the people and their cultural symbols and heritage in conflict areas. Irini Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO said: "Unfortunately, we see the illicit trafficking of items even without conflict, but in times of conflict we see, I would say, disastrous proportions of looting and trafficking," adding, "I would argue that it is recognized that the illicit trafficking of objects abroad from Syria is one of the ways of financing extremism". Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras of Greece also underscored the need to set up and strengthen international networks for saving and protecting cultural heritage and property. He said the world was witnessing escalation of efforts at deliberate cultural cleansing. This was having devastating effects.

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn stressed the deliberate destruction of heritage, now a part of the de-culturalization process used by terrorist groups, was more serious than the looting and trafficking of heritages. He said that Ethiopia, home to a wide spread of diverse cultural heritage, was deeply concerned with this deliberate destruction of heritage, intended to de-culturalize the world. He stressed the need for strong cooperation to effectively safeguard cultural heritage from armed conflicts, terrorism, and illicit trafficking. He pointed out that Ethiopia had been subject to heritage plundering and looting from foreign invasions as well as from criminal trafficking. As a victim of cultural heritage plundering and looting it had lost many ancient and valuable manuscripts, religious objects and archaeological remains. Manuscripts illegally taken out of the country included books on religion, medicine, astronomy, the Ethiopian calendar, philosophy, law and administration. **The 1868 British expedition** and the 1935 Italian invasion were the most extensive examples of the looting of Ethiopia's heritage. The Prime Minister said over 3,500 Ethiopian manuscripts were now believed to be in European countries and the U.S. He urged the international community to help in the restitution of the heritage of Ethiopia, looted during foreign invasions, emphasizing that any processes designed to restore stolen treasures had proved quite extraordinarily slow and cumbersome.

Mohammed Al Mubarak, the Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Tourist Cultural Authority, said it was never too late to act. He pointed out that acts of cultural destruction and looting were continuing. The Middle East and South Asia region, he said, had been suffering destruction for a considerable time: "from the looting of the Egyptian museum at the start of the Arab Spring to the dynamiting of the Buddhas of Bamiyan, cultural genocide has been rampant in the region," he added.

The two-day conference focused on improving legal and funding mechanisms to facilitate emergency protection of heritage sites as well as post-conflict cultural rehabilitation. It considered the development of concrete and innovative solutions, as well as the creation of a global framework for immediate and long-term goals. It also launched the creation of a global network of safe havens as refuges for endangered works and an international financial fund to sustain long-term programs to preserve cultural heritage, as well as build on the capacity of conservation professionals in conflict areas.

The conference concluded with the ratification and adoption of the Abu Dhabi Declaration. This underlined that the world's cultural heritage is a mirror of mankind, a guardian of collective memory and a witness to the extraordinary creative spirit of humanity, and it represents the foundation of our common future. The Declaration reiterated that the world needed to ensure respect for universal values, in line with the international conventions of The Hague of 1899, 1907, 1954, and the 1954 and 1999 Protocols, which require people of the world to protect cultural property as well as human life in times of armed conflict. The declaration said: "We are committed to pursuing two ambitious, long-term goals to guarantee the further mobilization of the international community for the safeguarding of heritage: The creation of an international fund for the protection of endangered cultural heritage in armed conflict, which would help finance preventive and emergency operations, fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural artefacts, as well as contribute to the restoration of damaged cultural property; the creation of an international network of safe havens to temporarily safeguard cultural property endangered by armed conflicts or terrorism on their own territory, or if they cannot be secured at a national level, in a neighboring country, or as a last resort, in another country, in accordance with international law at the request of the governments concerned, and taking into account the national and regional characteristics and contexts of cultural property to be protected.

Following the Declaration, the Conference announced the creation of an international fund for the protection of endangered cultural heritage in armed conflicts. The fund, which aims to raise \$100 million when established, will help finance preventive and emergency operations, fight against the illicit trafficking of

cultural artefacts, and contribute to the restoration of damaged cultural property. The Conference agreed that the headquarters of the Fund would be located in Switzerland with 10 million dollars as preliminary funding.

....and holds talks with UAE's Crown Prince

Prime Minister Hailemariam and his delegation held a series of meetings with UAE leaders during the visit to Abu Dhabi. On arrival on Friday (December 2), the Prime Minister was received at the Presidential Airport by Sheikh Sultan bin Tahnoon Al Nahyan, Member of the Executive Council, and other officials. Later, he met Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, and held discussions on expanding the horizons of cooperation between the two countries. The Prime Minister's Special Envoy, Ewnetu Bilata said later that the discussions focused on boosting cooperation in investment, trade and tourism so as to build relations based on mutual benefit. In addition to boosting bilateral ties, the two sides also discussed issues related to peace and stability in East Africa. They stressed the need for enhancing their respective role in ensuring lasting peace in the region.

Ethiopia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Workneh Gebeyehu, met with Sheik Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International cooperation of UAE, during which the two sides discussed bilateral ties and explored ways of enhancing cooperation between the two countries, as well as exchanging views on current regional and international developments of mutual concern.

Ethiopia and UAE concluded discussions and signed an agreement on reciprocal promotion and investment protection. This is expected to significantly boost bilateral trade volume and investment flows. Investment officials from both countries signed the agreement on Saturday (December 3). The Director General of the Ethiopian Investment Commission, Fitsum Arega, said that although guarantees for protection of investments were already established in Ethiopia's investment law, bilateral agreements of this kind further encouraged companies to invest in the country. The Commissioner said UAE investors were already interested in investing in the hospitality industry, in agriculture and agri-industrial food areas. He said the conclusion of the agreement will bolster their engagement in these areas.

Ethiopia's new Foreign Minister, Dr Workneh, meets the Diplomatic Corps

Dr Workneh Gebeyehu, recently appointed Foreign Minister of Ethiopia, held a reception for the members of the Diplomatic Corps and all foreign diplomats accredited to Ethiopia on Monday, (December 5). He took the opportunity to share his thoughts on how he intended to strengthen Ethiopia's partnerships with their countries and organizations in the coming year and beyond. He quoted Prime Minister Hailemariam on the major priorities in the government's reform agenda: inclusive and equitable economic growth; dialogue; and structural transformation of the economy. These, Dr Workneh underlined, together with Ethiopia's emphasis on regional peace and security, integration, and the deepening of democracy were the foundation of Ethiopia's diplomatic efforts.

Dr Workneh said the challenges Ethiopia had been facing over the previous year had highlighted the vital importance of peace and the need to sustain inclusive and rapid economic growth, as well as deepen democracy in the country. Diplomacy would, therefore, continue to focus on enhancing the bilateral and multilateral partnerships that were so important for the country's inclusive development, institution building and good governance agenda, an agenda based upon mutual interest and respect. He pointed out that Ethiopia had achieved almost all of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and had witnessed double-digit growth for over a decade. Despite this, a significant element of the population, especially the youth, had not benefitted sufficiently. The Government had, therefore, decided to refocus its aims to ensure no one would be left behind. That, indeed, was the core principle of the present Growth and Transformation Plan. Dr Workneh said he was confident that Ethiopia's partners would continue to support the target of transforming Ethiopia into a middle-income country by 2025. Ethiopia and its partners had cooperated very successfully on the MDGs; it had every confidence it would be able to do the same with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Another key priority in achieving inclusive growth must be trade and investment. Dr Workneh noted there had been an encouraging flow of foreign direct investment in recent years and he emphasized that the Government was confident that the construction of more industrial parks would encourage this as well as create jobs, particularly for youngsters. It, therefore, wanted to further strengthen trade and investment exchanges with both existing and with new partners. In this context, he therefore wished to request the assistance of his listeners to encourage their nationals to continue to invest in Ethiopia.

Dr Workneh underlined the government's firm conviction that sustainable economic growth was only possible with peace, good governance and strong democratic institutions. He reminded his listeners that Prime Minister Hailemariam had recently emphasized to the diplomatic community in Addis Ababa the importance of enhancing civic participation and institution building. These were critical for the achievement of building a free and productive citizenry. This, indeed, was why Ethiopia was determined to carry out the necessary reforms to strengthen its democratic institutions including the Election Board, the Human Rights Commission, the Ombudsman and the Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission as well as other bodies.

As a central element in its deep reform agenda at home, the Government would be concentrating on building partnerships at all levels to achieve peace, development and democratization, not least with its own people. It was doing this through the creation of a national consensus on the subject of poverty reduction, involving inclusive and fast growth and development, as well as democratic institution-building and good governance. Dr Workneh emphasized that the Government believed this was critical for the achievement of sustainable peace and transformation in our country.

Ethiopia's second level of partnership was with the region and the continent. Ethiopia's commitment to regional and continental peace and prosperity emanated from its deep conviction that its own peace and prosperity could not be separated from that of the peace and prosperity of the region and the continent. Ethiopia would continue to remain totally committed to the African Union and to the successful achievement of Agenda 2063. Equally, it would remain committed to IGAD and the other Regional Economic Communities, the building blocks of continental integration. It would continue to work closely with IGAD member states and international partners to strengthen IGAD to become an effective regional body for peace and integration. Ethiopia, of course, hosts the AU and the UNECA as well as other international organizations. It would continue to do everything possible to provide proper conditions for the effective discharge of their responsibilities.

Another important level of partnership, Dr Workneh underlined, was with bilateral and multilateral development partners. He noted that today we lived in an increasingly globalized world where collective strategies and actions were needed to address common developmental and security concerns. Ethiopia cooperated closely on a wide range of issues including peace and security. Ethiopia currently contributed the largest number of peace-keepers to UN and AU peace keeping operations, mainly in Africa. Convinced that Ethiopia's own peace was intertwined with that of Africa and the world at large, it firmly believed that global peace and security depended on collective security arrangements. Indeed, as the holder of a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council, it would work closely with all council members in addressing peace and security concerns. Dr Workneh took the opportunity to thank all those who had voted for Ethiopia's membership of the Security Council.

In conclusion, the Foreign Minister emphasized that he strongly believed that bonds between individuals could be a key ingredient in successful diplomacy. He reiterated his commitment and readiness to work closely with all members of the Diplomatic Corps, and stressed that he counted on their support and cooperation to help him in successfully discharging his heavy responsibilities.

The 5th Ministerial Retreat of AU's Executive Council

The 5th Ministerial Retreat of the Executive Council of the African Union was held on Thursday and Friday this week (December 8-9) at the African Union Headquarters, in Addis Ababa. The main objective of the Retreat was to discuss three key issues: Elections, Democracy and Effective and Responsive Governance; Draft Commodities Strategy; and an Update on the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and African Integration. The 5th ministerial retreat is being attended by representatives from all 54 African Union member states. In addition to the Ministers, the President of the African Development Bank, the Executive Secretaries of the UNECA, ACBF [the African Capacity Building Foundation] and of the Regional Economic Communities and the CEO of NEPAD were also invited, as were the Heads of the AU Organs.

Ethiopia's Foreign Minister, Dr Workneh Gebeyehu, welcomed participants at the official opening, noting that: "The vision of our Union that aims to create an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, and indeed the agenda of this retreat, has significant meaning to Ethiopia in particular and Africa in general." He said, "The Ministerial Retreats of the Executive is an important forum towards engagement on the key steps necessary to take forward the continental integration project, the effectiveness of the Union institutions and the implementation of Agenda 2063." He noted that the meeting would also give participants the opportunity to

deliberate on how to deepen democratization and good governance on the continent among other issues. The opening statement of the Foreign Minister of Chad, Moussa Faki Mahamat, the chairman of the Executive Council, similarly stressed the significance of the Retreat, and also highlighted the prominence of elections, democratization and good governance as elements to realize the implementation of Agenda 2063.

Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, noted that the 5th Ministerial Retreat of the Executive Council was being held just as the Cuban people had buried Fidel Castro, the father of their modern nation and a friend to many African countries. He had been responsible for building over 10,000 new schools and raising literacy to 98% and creating one of the best and most accessible healthcare systems in the world," she said. The Commission Chairperson said the Executive Council had an important role in monitoring the agenda of the Union, the integration agenda and making recommendations on strategic approaches to take forward this agenda. Recalling the core responsibilities of the Executive Council and the previous ministerial retreats, she emphasized that the 5th Retreat should again discuss Agenda 2063 progress "since we have now conducted domestication missions in over 30 countries. We place emphasis on domestication, because it allows for Agenda 2063 and the SDGs to become an integral part of national development plans and budgets of Member states." As far as elections, democracy and effective and responsive governance was concerned, Dr Dlamini Zuma said over 50 elections had been held in the past four years. The majority had been peaceful and fair with improved election management. In fact, she said, the growing number of mass protests that could be seen across the continent were signs of improved political space, but, at the same time, the violence associated with these protests was worrisome. She also noted the many opportunities and challenges on the global level, and said "Africa must continue to position itself in such a manner that advances its agenda."

The Ministerial Retreat has also received presentations and discussed the candidates vying for position of Chairperson of the African Union Commission. There are five candidates for the position: Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi and Agapito Mba Mokuy, the Foreign Ministers of Botswana and Equatorial Guinea respectively; Abdoulaye Bathily, the former United Nations Special Envoy for Central Africa and a former Minister of Environmental Affairs and Energy of Senegal; Moussa Faki Mahamat, the Foreign Minister and former Prime Minister of Chad; and along with Amina Mohamed, the Foreign Minister of Kenya and a former Deputy Executive Director of the UN Environment Program. The MjadalaAfrika AU leadership debate between the five candidates is being held on Friday at the Old Conference Center of the African Union.

Another important issue being raised during the retreat is the Peace Fund. At the July 2016 summit in Kigali, the Heads of State and Government agreed on a new mechanism to finance the AU and the Peace Fund, namely a 0.2% levy on all imports into African countries, as well as on a new structure for the fund. Also brought to the table for detailed discussion has been implementation of the **African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance**. The Charter seeks to promote adherence by state parties to the universal values and principles of democracy and respect for human rights. The Retreat is also allowing the ministers to deliberate and exchange views on the envisaged continental commodities strategy. They have also been discussing the implementation of Agenda 2063, and various African Union flagship projects, including the Inga III Hydro power project in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Integrated High Speed Train Network, the Pan African ENetwork and the establishment of a virtual university.

The outcomes of the Ministerial Retreat will be submitted to the Ordinary Session of the Executive Council which will be held at the end of next month, prior to African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government on 30 and 31 January 2017. The deliberations will contribute to the report of the Executive Council to the Assembly.

The 4th Africa-Korea Forum in Addis Ababa this week

The Fourth Africa-Korea Forum took place on Tuesday and Wednesday this week at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa. The main objective was the enhancing and strengthening of the economic, social and political partnerships and cooperation between Africa and the Republic of Korea. It also had the aim of reviewing the implementation of the previous plan of action (2013-2015), and to identify further areas of cooperation based on mutual interests for the coming five years. The Forum also adopted the "Addis-Ababa Declaration for the 4th Africa-Korea Forum" and the "2017-2022 Africa-Korea Forum Framework for Cooperation".

The Senior Officials meeting, held prior to the Ministerial Forum, took place on Tuesday. Sessions included remarks by representatives of governments and the African Union Commission, and consideration of a review of the implementation of the Plan of Action introduced at the 3rd African-Korea Forum. They also included consideration of the draft outcome document for the 4th Africa-Korea Forum later addressed by presentation of the Addis Ababa Declaration of the 4th Africa-Korea Forum and the "Framework for cooperation."

In his opening remarks at the Senior Officials meeting, Ambassador Wahide Belay, Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the African Union and the Economic Commission for Africa, welcomed participants to Addis Ababa and commended the sub-committee on multilateral cooperation for the preparation of the outcome documents. Korea, he noted, had been a symbol of success and a model for many countries; it had been "one of the handful of success stories during the last century." He emphasized that there were "fertile grounds for cooperation in industrialization, agriculture, science and technology transfer, human resources development and even more." He stressed that to harness the potential of Africa for peoples' all-rounded development, Africa was also designing its own policies and strategies. "I believe", he said, "that one of the key strategies for the advancement of Africa is to beneficially integrate into the global economy, and this can, in turn, be facilitated through effective collaboration with partner countries such as the republic of Korea".

Speaking on behalf AU Commissioner, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Ms Fatima Haram, AU Commissioner for Trade and Industry, said Africa had strong partnerships with various regions and countries worldwide. She praised the on-going partnership between the Africa Union Commission and African Countries with the Republic of Korea. She noted the importance of concerted efforts to realize further strong regional and continental ties in line with the African Union Agenda 2063. She said Korea had huge development experience and this could be shared with African Countries.

Mr Kwon Hee-Seog, Director General for Africa and Middle Eastern Affairs for Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, emphasized that that close and wide-ranging cooperation between Korea and African countries was a priority for Korea. He said partnerships would be further enhanced through such mechanisms as the African-Korea Forum and the framework of cooperation between the African Continent and the Republic of Korea.

The Ministerial sessions of the Forum, held for the first time in Africa, took place on Wednesday (December 7). Those attending included ministers and senior officials from Korea and high-level government officials from across Africa as well as the Chairperson of the AU, the immediate past AU Chairperson the Chairperson of the AU Commission, NEPAD founding members, and the Chairs of the Regional Economic Communities - Ethiopia (IGAD), Libya (AMU), Kingdom of Swaziland (SADC), United Republic of Tanzania (EAC), Madagascar (COMESA), Liberia (ECOWAS), Gabon (ECCAS), Chad (CEN-SAD).

In his opening remarks, Dr Workneh Gebeyehu, Foreign Minister of Ethiopia, said since the launching of the first Korea-Africa Forum in Seoul in 2006, the fora had been held in the Republic of Korea. Ethiopia was pleased to host this Fourth Africa-Korea Forum for the first time in Africa, suitably in Addis Ababa, the Diplomatic Capital of Africa. Following agreement in 2012 to apply a principle of rotation, alternately in Africa and in Korea, for the future meetings of the fora, Ethiopia was designated by Africa as the host for the Fourth Africa-Korea Forum meeting.

Dr Workneh, praising Korea's successful development story, stressed Korea's massive economic, social and political transformation. It was, he said, now one of the world's industrial powerhouses. He emphasized that Africa could draw valuable lessons from Korea's "rapid industrialization, scientific advancement and educational gains." The partnership of Africa and Korea also provided ample opportunity for mutual growth and the prosperity of their respective peoples. The Foreign Minister noted that the first years of implementation of Agenda 2063 and its framework of cooperation provided a sound basis for enhanced cooperation with the Republic of Korea. Referring to the UNECA's Economic Report on Africa 2016, Dr Workneh said "Africa has registered some of the fastest growing economies in a constrained global environment". Equally, it still relied heavily on production and export of raw commodities, so drawing on best experiences from Korea would be very valuable. Dr Workneh said, "Cooperation in industrialization, knowledge and technology transfer, among others, would enable us to add value and benefit from our abundant natural resources."

Erastus Mwencha, Deputy Chairperson of the Africa Union Commission, said the Forum was an opportunity to review strategic partnerships for mutual growth and prosperity. He noted that the people-to-people ties between the two sides were growing steadily. He commended Korea for the 6,000 scholarships given to young

Africans and the 4,000 Korean volunteers who had come to Africa under exchange programs. The Deputy Chairperson emphasized that Africa had the opportunity to draw experience from a wide range of sectors of Korea, including mining, tourism, infrastructure development, and airlines among others. He said cooperation in other economic areas was growing rapidly and he praised Korea's role in supporting peace and security in Africa. Dr Mwencha said the African continent and the Republic of Korea should work further to strengthen and solidify their partnerships over a wide range of areas. The African Union Commission, he said, would collaborate on implementation of programs based on the framework of cooperation agreed by the two sides.

Korea's Foreign Minister, Mr Yun Byung-se, said that "this year is the year of Africa in Korean Diplomacy". He said Africa was a priority region for Korea and particularly for economic sector cooperation, development cooperation and peace and security. He mentioned Korea's involvement in Africa's rural development, healthcare and education sectors as well as development assistance and bilateral ODA. The Korean Foreign Minister took the opportunity to ask for African support against the North Korean nuclear program. He emphasized that Africa had been a long-standing friend of South Korea and stressed that the Forum should be instrumental in raising ties to a higher level once again. Yun Byung-se said the two regions, among other aspects, would work in close collaboration for the peace, prosperity and human dignity of their respective peoples.

The ministerial sessions of the Forum included deliberations on a variety of themes, including "Enhancing Peace and Security in Africa" and the "Africa-Korea Partnership for Shared Economic Development". In conclusion, the Ministers adopted the Final Document of the 4th Africa-Korea Forum. This included the "Addis Ababa Declaration" and the "Framework for Cooperation".

The new date for Somalia's Presidential election is December 28

Somalia's National Leadership Forum has agreed to December 28 as the new date for the election of a president by Parliament. The Forum held another meeting on Wednesday and Thursday this week (December 7-8) before issuing a statement on Thursday evening that they expected the new parliament to elect a speaker on December 22, and then to elect the president on December 28. The meeting, which was also attended by Somalia's international partners, underlined the importance of holding the presidential elections before the end of the year. Speaking at the Forum, on Wednesday, President Mohamud said his administration was still committed to seeing the elections concluded during December, and he called on the regional states to complete the process in time. The meeting was also trying to find a solution to Puntland's concerns over the distribution of the northern regions' Upper House seats, for the areas of Sool, Sanaag and Buhodle, disputed by Somaliland and Puntland.

Puntland's Vice President, Abdihakim Abdulahi Haji Omar, and Puntland Parliament Speaker, Ahmed Ali Hashi, travelled to Mogadishu at the beginning of the week to hold talks with the National Leadership Forum and government leaders over the representation of the clans from the disputed regions of Sool, Sanag and Buhodle. The Federal Interim Election Implementation Team announced last week that the elections for both the Upper and Lower Houses for clans hailing from Somaliland region would take place in the capital Mogadishu. Puntland wants the elections for the disputed regions to take place in Garowe, the Puntland capital.

Lower House elections continued this week in Mogadishu for clans representing Somaliland and in Adado town, the interim capital of Galmudug state where three MPs were elected on Tuesday. There had been delays in the Somaliland elections after disputes and alleged harassment of Somaliland delegates. By Thursday, six MPs had been elected to the House of the People. A total of 46 seats have been allocated for all the sub-clans in Somaliland for Lower House representation. It has 11 seats in the Upper House. Lower House elections are based on the 4.5 clans system while senatorial elections are distributed through the federal member state system.

The Government in Somaliland itself, reiterated on Sunday that it was not party to the elections in Somalia. Somaliland Information Minister, Osman Abdullahi Sahardid, told reporters in the Somaliland capital, Hargeisa, that Somaliland was pursuing its independence and was therefore not party to the elections. Sahardid said Somaliland did not recognize those who are participating in Somalia's parliamentary elections on behalf of the region. They had, he said, betrayed Somaliland's quest for independence: "We do not have anyone representing us in the government of Somalia. Those who purport to do so are job seekers advancing personal interests."

At the beginning of the week, South West State became the second federal state after Jubaland to complete elections for the House of the People. Jubaland completed the elections at the end of last month, providing 43 MPs for the House of the People. The last day of the voting in South West saw the re-election of two former members of parliament, bringing the number of those elected to the House of the People to 69. Speaking after the conclusion of the process, State Indirect Electoral Implementation Team Chairman, Mohamed Abdullahi Mursal, commended all those who had made the exercise in South West State successful. He said: "This was a very long journey; we have successfully concluded the elections for South West today, ending with the last seat of 69. We were very pleased about the manner in which this election occurred since it was the first election of this type to happen in Somalia."

South West State elections involved all the five major clans of Somalia. It was the federal state with the highest number of seats allocated for the next federal parliament, a total of 69. The United Nations and AMISOM were at the forefront in ensuring that the electoral process there was successful, and Mr Mursal thanked the "United Nations, AMISOM and all the partners who offered their unrelenting support during the electoral process." South West, however, failed to achieve the 30% quota for women, electing only 14 rather than the 23 required by the quota.

At a press conference in Garowe this week, the Puntland State Indirect Electoral Implementation team (SIEIT) announced that the Puntland Lower House elections will resume next week. The announcement followed the lifting of the suspension on the parliamentary elections over the dispute for seats for clans from Sool, east Sanag and Buhodle regions. The suspension was lifted by the Puntland President after talks with Federal Prime Minister Omar Sharmarke and representatives from the international community. Puntland has elected 22 MPs out of the 37 it has been allocated and the SIEIT has called for the candidates competing for the remaining 15 seats, and the delegates who will choose the MPS, to register quickly. Four of these seats will be reserved for women candidates.

Ethiopia's National Planning Commission says economy has grown by eight percent

The National Planning Commission of Ethiopia has disclosed that the country's economy grew by 8% in the 2008 Ethiopian fiscal year (2015/16). In a press briefing on Friday last week (December 2), Dr Yinager Dessie, Commissioner of the National Planning Commission said the projected target had been 11% and the main reason for failing to achieve this figure was the worst ever El Niño-caused drought which the country had faced during the previous fiscal year. The drought had led to failed harvests, and 95% of the country's *meher* (main harvest) production had been affected. The economy had seen rapid growth in the manufacturing and service sectors but it still remained significantly reliant on agriculture. Inevitably, the El Niño climate phenomenon hit Ethiopia's economy hard, with the record dry weather undermining the all-important agricultural sector.

Last year, the agricultural sector accounted for only 36.6% of real Gross Domestic Product (GDP), compared to 44.4% five years ago, showing a slight shift away from dependency on agriculture. Dr Yinager said that by contrast the industrial and the service sectors accounted for 16.6% and 47% of GDP respectively, both showing significant growth compared to the results registered in past years. Overall, of course, Ethiopia has experienced double-digit economic growth for over a decade.

The 5th Ethiopian Economic Update, released on December 2 by the World Bank, also agreed with the Planning Commission that "the Ethiopian economy grew by 8.0 in 2015/16 due to the recent drought affecting agricultural production with spill-overs on the trade sector." It revealed that the fiscal deficit was virtually unchanged in 2014/15 and 2015/16. The general government fiscal deficit remained modest at 2.4% in 2015/16 despite the extra spending to finance drought affected areas. This, according to the report, was because of an increase in revenue collection, mainly from non-tax sources. This compensated for the increase in total expenditure and helped to contain the fiscal deficit. Inflation remained remarkably stable despite the recent drought and indeed even declined; it stood at 5.6% in October 2016.

In a recent review of Ethiopia's macroeconomic performance, the International Monetary Fund praised the government's efforts to tackle the adverse conditions it faced in fiscal year 2015. According to the IMF, government policy essentially alleviated the negative effects of the severe drought, preventing this from causing even greater devastation. It underlined that any economic slowdown was mitigated by effective and

timely policy responses to the drought, and buoyant industrial and services sectors. A supplementary budget helped address the social costs of the drought, while keeping the general government deficit at 3% of GDP.

In an interview, Commissioner Dr Yinager emphasized the need to enhance the capacity of the government in collecting revenues in the second Growth and Transformation Plan. He noted the importance of strengthening the mobilization of domestic revenues to finance development strategy. Dr Yinager said remittances, which are one of the major hard currency earning mechanisms of the country, should get further attention to increase the benefit. He added that in 2015/2016 fiscal year the revenue collected from remittances, US\$ 4 billion, was higher than the aggregate annual exports of the country. He also noted that despite the predictions of a few analysts that economic growth would be affected by the unrest in some parts of Oromia and Amhara regions that have seen demonstrators attack some foreign-owned factories and flowers farms, the state of emergency declared on October 8, had restored order in the country before it could affect the economy. The Planning Commission has underlined that if the agricultural sector performs well the economy would also be in good shape. The country is witnessing signs of an excellent harvest for this *meher* season. The economy for 2016-2017 is expected to show an improvement on the previous fiscal year.

African Investments and Business Forum held in Algiers

Described by organizers as the first of its kind, the African Investments and Business Forum was held in Algiers over the weekend, December 3-5. The Forum, organized by the Government of Algeria and Algerian business leaders as well as partners including the African Development Bank (ADB) and the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), attracted about 1,000 participants, including representatives of private and public sectors from more than 40 African countries. The Forum, with its theme, "Towards a new dynamic", focused on how to stimulate and promote intra-African trade and partnerships, good governance for pro-growth public-private partnerships, and the promotion of continental integration through joint infrastructure projects and human capital development.

Delegates called for more intra-Africa trade and more African solidarity to unleash the continent's economic potential and prosperity. Ali Haddad, President of the Algerian CEOs' Forum, which co-organized the summit with the Algerian government, noted: "Against the backdrop of current geostrategic upheavals, the need for exchanging with our closer friends is overwhelming. Each one of our nations chooses its path depending on its experiences but we are convinced that no state in Africa can alone address the looming future challenges on its own." He said: "We are bound to unify ourselves for the good of our continent and people," and urged African leaders to embrace Pan-Africanism ideals of solidarity. Experts, who made presentations at the forum, urged African governments to create a good environment for intra-Africa trade; they also called on African entrepreneurs to be more creative and move into industrialization and big-cash investments.

Delegates concurred with the need for increased intra-African trade and urged African governments to create a better environment to ease internal trade across the continent, starting with a functional transport infrastructure. Amina Mohamed, Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs, pointed out: "It took me about 20 hours to come to Algeria. We need to be better connected in order to work together," The former Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Dr Carlos Lopes, challenged his fellow Africans to explore the economic benefits of manufacturing by raising the case of yoghurt: "Yogurt is imported at 83% in Africa. What is complicated in making yogurt?" He accused African financial institutions of being "lazy", saying that they aren't doing enough to support small businesses while they sit on US\$80-billions of capital that remains non-invested and sits idle in the banks' coffers as they fear to invest it on the continent. He said, "It's a paradox that people outside Africa see it as an investment opportunity but Africa-based operators keep talking about perceived risks for investments."

An Ethiopian private sector delegation, led by Feyisa Ararssa, Deputy Secretary of the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations and President of the Adama Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations, took part in the sessions on energy, infrastructure, ICT and agribusiness. During the Forum, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Ethiopian and Algerian Chambers of Commerce. The MoU, a first between the two Chambers, is expected to lay the basis for the strengthening of relations between the two countries. It is also expected to lead to a future visit by the Algerian Chamber to Ethiopia. The Ethiopian delegation, comprised of various public and private companies, had fruitful discussions with Algerian and various other companies from African countries.

Dr Tedros Adhanom, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister, speaking at one of the high-level plenary sessions on agri-business, explained the developments of the agricultural sector in Ethiopia and the policies focused on small-holder farmers that had helped the country register tremendous growth over the past decade. Dr Tedros also detailed the current initiatives of the government, in coordination with UNIDO, to develop agro-industrial zones to advance and change the agricultural sector in Ethiopia. He stressed that "Ethiopia is open for business" and invited Algerian and other African countries' investors to come and invest in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia and Romania celebrate the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties

Romania and Ethiopia celebrated the 50th anniversary of the opening of diplomatic relations on Wednesday (December 7) at the Hilton Hotel in Addis Ababa. On the occasion, enhanced with Romanian and Ethiopian cultural and musical displays, State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs Hirut Zemene, extended her sincere congratulations to the people and the government of the two countries on the historic day. She underlined that Ethiopia and Romania had enjoyed historic relations dating back well beyond the establishment of diplomatic links, to the last decades of the 19th century. She also recalled the unforgettable support of the former Romanian Foreign Minister, Nicolae Titulescu to Ethiopia at the League of Nations. State Minister Hirut also mentioned the historic visit of Emperor Haile Selassie to Romania in 1964 as a milestone in the diplomatic history of the two countries. She also emphasized the substantial current commitment of both sides to further strengthen these historic ties through investment and trade. The State Minister said the signing of agreements for the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and capital were useful instruments to create confidence among the businessmen of the two countries. She noted that after a lull of some years, the two countries had recently witnessed an extraordinary increase in bilateral trade exchanges which, in just ten months, exceeded US\$180 million.

The State Minister also stressed there was real potential for expansion of Foreign Direct Investment and tourism. She said there are several opportunities and complementarities between the economies of the two countries. Ethiopia, she pointed out, is creating an enabling economic framework for foreign investors and is open for technology transfer and investment. In conclusion, Mrs Hirut said she believed there was an urgent need for a leap forward to lift bilateral relations to a new level. She said: "Ethiopia will continue to hold its relations with Romania in the highest regard and will work for a more enhanced and exemplary relationship during the coming years."

Marius Nocolaescu, Charge d'Affaires of the Romanian Embassy to Ethiopia, emphasized that that the celebration marked a socio-economic and political commitment between the two countries that had lasted for half a century. He said: "I take this opportunity to underline the excellent relationship between Ethiopia and Romania in the fields of technology, trade, higher education scholarships and vocational training." He noted that Romania, cognizant of the importance of establishing multifaceted relations with the African Union, had also appointed him as the country's first representative to the African Union. Mr Nocolaescu praised Ethiopia's exemplary role in Pan-Africanism, its unwavering commitment in bringing about peace and stability in the region and commended the government's socio-economic and political plans which he described as being in line with the continental Agenda 2063. He added that a productive 50 years of diplomatic ties was a signpost to a prolific future. The government of Romania has recently offered financial assistance to Ethiopia to support the museum to be built in Axum Tsion in Tigray Regional State.