

A Week in the Horn

10th March 2017

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News in brief

Africa and the African Union

US President Donald John Trump has signed a revised travel ban, banning citizens of 6 Muslim-majority countries from entering the United States. Somalia, Sudan and Libya remain on the list which is due to come into effect on March 16. The order places a 120-day freeze on all refugee arrivals. It says the countries were targeted because their screening and information capabilities could not meet US security requirements.

The three candidates for Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) nominated by its Executive Board held a public debate in Geneva on March 6. Ethiopia's Dr Tedros Adhanom, Pakistan's Dr Sania Nishtar and the UK's David Nabarro, held a vibrant debate on how the multilateral development system can deliver in an increasingly complex environment and it can spearhead the transformation required to implement the Sustainable Development Goals. Dr Tedros is known for his bold and transformational leadership in the health sector in Ethiopia, his high-level experience in government, civil society and multilateral institutions and his experience in public health, uniquely positioning him to lead reform of the WHO and ensure its fitness to deal with the health challenges of the 21st century.

Ethiopia

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn speaking on the 41st International Women's Day (March 8), celebrated under the theme "Enhancement of women's saving culture shall be the basis for our renaissance", urged Ethiopian women to struggle hard to ensure their equal participation and for economic benefits in the country. He said any development activity which did not involve the full participation of women was doomed to fail. Over 50% of seats in regional councils in Ethiopia are held by women and they also had 38% of the seats in the House of People's Representatives and the House of Federation.

Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen said on Wednesday this week (March 8) that the government was working to ensure effective and speedy delivery of supplies to the 5.6 million people affected by the drought. It was focusing on delivery of potable water, food and fodder for livestock and provision of health services for human and livestock populations. He said the strategy would help to avoid human loss and maintain, as much

as possible, the livestock population. He said drought response was not affecting the country's ongoing development programs.

Foreign Minister Dr Workneh Gebeyehu led a delegation to Kenya this week. He delivered a special message from Prime Minister Hailemariam to President Kenyatta and held bilateral discussions with Ambassador Amina Mohamed, Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs. (See article)

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs Hirut Zemene, headed Ethiopia's delegation to the high level segment of the 34th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, last week. The State Minister held a number of side-line meetings as well as discussions with members of the Diaspora in Geneva. (See articles)

State Minister Mrs Hirut received the credentials of the newly appointed Ambassador of the Sovereign Order of Malta, Ambassador Paolo Borin, on Wednesday (March 8). They agreed on the need to enhance partnership in technical cooperation, refugee, health, education and development cooperation.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Aklilu Hailemichael met with Dr Stefan Liebing, Chairman of the German-Africa Business Association (Afrika-Verein) on Wednesday (March 8). The Association promotes exchanges between German and African representatives in business and politics. They discussed ways to enhance cooperation with particular emphasis on the energy sector, Dr Stefan and company representatives from Andritz, one of Germany's leading suppliers of metal technology, will meet senior officials from the Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Electricity and Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation during their visit.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Aklilu Hailemichael briefed a South African business delegation this week on investment incentives and market opportunities. Members of the delegation said South African companies had a significant interest in Ethiopia because of the buying power, level of consumption, and the fact that it had the second largest population on the continent and a strategic location.

Mr Metasebya Tadesse, African Affairs Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, led the Ethiopian delegation to Malawi this week for the first meeting of the Ethiopia-Malawi Joint Permanent Commission for Cooperation (JPCC) in Lilongwe. (See article)

The National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDMRC) announced on Monday this week (March 6) that it is setting up a national command post to manage emergency food assistance in the drought-affected areas. (See article)

The Ethiopian Transport Authority said on Monday (March 6) that cross-border bus transport between Addis Ababa and Khartoum would start on Sunday (March 12). It will take only two days to reach Khartoum from Addis Ababa, and the cost will be \$60.

The Borana Oromo elected Kura Jarso as their 71st Abba Gadaa last week on March 2 in an elaborate, week-long ceremony attended by tens of thousands of people in Badhaasa, southern Ethiopia. In his inaugural address, Kura Jarso prayed for the rain to come and called on the federal government to bolster its assistance for the Borana who are dealing with the effects of a severe drought.

Eritrea

Foreign Minister Osman Saleh, on a visit to Belgrade, signed a MoU for annual political consultation between Serbia and Eritrea with Serbia's Foreign Minister, Ivica Dacic, on Wednesday (March 8). Minister Dacic said that the two states could cooperate in the areas of agriculture, mining, energy and medicine, as well as develop military cooperation.

Minister of Education, Semere Russom, joined China's Ambassador to Eritrea, Yong Zigang, the Minister of Information, Yemane Gebremeskel, and Wang Xiaohua, Director of the Confucius Institute, at the ground breaking for the construction of a new School of Chinese Language and Culture in Eritrea. The Centre, to be run by the Confucius Institute will cost an estimated 4 million US dollars.

Kenya

During his visit to Kenya, the UN Secretary-General visited the Dadaab refugee camp and discussed its closure with President Kenyatta. The President reiterated Kenya's policy of repatriating refugees and said an extraordinary IGAD [meeting?] would be seeking a durable solution to the issue. He said: "The events that led to the establishment of Dadaab are a terrible tragedy, but the best response to that tragedy is to help the refugees to return and rebuild their nation," adding, "Our efforts to hasten the repatriation and resettlement of the refugees remain guided by the relevant domestic and international laws and agreements."

A judge ruled on Monday (March 6) that a government program to install a monitoring system on mobile phone networks should remain suspended until the end of May when the court will hear the arguments. Last month, the Communications Authority of Kenya requested that three mobile service providers provide access to their computer systems to install a device management system.

Somalia

The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres visited Somalia on Tuesday (March 7). He held talks with President Mohamed Abdullahi and visited a hospital and a camp for displaced people in Baidoa: "People are dying. The world must act now to stop this." (See article)

The U.N. Secretary General said on Wednesday (March 8) that AMISOM was doing remarkable work "in very precarious conditions" and urged more funding for the Mission saying, "My belief is that AMISOM is under-equipped in relation to the needs." The UN Secretary-General was speaking in Nairobi after a visit to Somalia.

President Mohamed Abdullahi has pledged his government's support to journalists, acknowledging the very crucial role they have played in Somalia's reconstruction process despite risks. Speaking during a meeting with journalists on Sunday (March 5), the President also paid tribute to journalists who have died in the course of duty. Somalia is among the most dangerous places for journalists in the world with 26 being killed since 2012. Last month, the Committee to Protect Journalists called on the President to ensure justice for journalists killed over the years.

The UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien, arrived in Mogadishu on Monday (March 6) to see the situation in Somalia where the UN estimates over 6 million people will need urgent life-saving assistance over the next 6 months. Mr O'Brien had previously been in Yemen, South Sudan and Kenya to see the drought situation at first hand.

Prime Minister Hassan Khayre has ordered all accounts belonging to Ministries to be frozen. The announcement was made on Wednesday at a meeting with the current Ministers and Director Generals. The Prime Minister said the move was to avoid any possible squander of public funds in the transition period before he appoints a new cabinet. Two weeks ago, President Mohamed Abdullahi froze government transactions from the Central Bank of Somalia.

A US think-tank, the American Enterprise Institute, in a report last week ("US Counterterrorism Objectives in Somalia: Is Mission Failure Likely?") calls for the US to increase its anti-terrorist activity in Somalia. It said, "A small investment in Somalia today can yield a large return in the future in the form of attacks averted and wars we do not have to fight." (See article)

Somalia marked International Women's Day on Wednesday (March 8) with the Somali Women's Organization collaborating with the Mogadishu administration holding a ceremony in which women leaders and government officials spoke of the role of women in Somali society today. Women now make up 24% of the members of parliament (80 out of the total of 329 in the House of the People and the Senate).

A senior al-Shabaab leader, Hussein Salad Mukhtar, on Tuesday (March 7) surrendered to the Somali National Army in Baidoa. AMISOM described his decision as courageous and urged other fighters to surrender.

AMISOM opened a three-day training on Monday (March 6) to build and strengthen the capacity of Somali stakeholders in conflict negotiation, resolution and management. The workshop in Nairobi is being attended by 21 Somali participants including state ministers, former MPs, government officials, clan elders and representatives of civil society.

Former President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud took the oath as a Member of Parliament on Saturday (March 5). The original Somali constitution written in 1960 allows a former President to be given a seat in the Lower House of Parliament as an MP. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud is now the 276th Member of Parliament.

The Upper House (Guurti) in Somaliland this week postponed presidential election until November 2017 rather than to June as the country's political parties requested, and parliamentary elections until 2019. A press release from donors said Denmark, the European Union, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, the UK and the US were "deeply disappointed by the Guurti's decision to delay further Somaliland's electoral cycle". It said Parliamentarians will have been in office 14 years without an election, more than twice the constitutional limit."

South Sudan

Stephen O'Brien, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, (UNOCHA) on a visit to South Sudan at the weekend said hundreds of thousands of people in South Sudan will starve unless relief workers gain access and unless more funds are available. He said millions of people were prevented from receiving aid by parties to conflict. This was "Immoral, unlawful and unacceptable." (See article)

Sudan

President al-Bashir on Wednesday (March 8) issued a decree dropping death sentences against 66 members of Darfur rebel movements and pardoned 193 others. The decree said this was to promote the spirit of national accord and create a climate conducive to achieving sustainable peace in light of the recommendations of the national dialogue. Earlier in the week, one rebel faction, the SPLM-N released 125 prisoners and detainees from the Sudanese army.

President al-Bashir discussed "major investment projects" with a delegation from the United Arab Emirates on Tuesday this week (March 7). The Minister of Investment said the delegation was considering investment in services, minerals, industry and hotels besides farming and production schemes in the North State. The meeting was a continuation of talks to enhance economic and development cooperation begun in Abu Dhabi by the President last month. The estimated size of UAE investments in Sudan is \$11 billion, of which about \$5 billion are projects in progress.

The EU's ambassador to Sudan, Jean-Michel Dumond, visited Gadaref State this week where the EU is planning to launch a number of projects in areas of food security, poverty eradication, water harvesting, vocational training, health, education and services. This is because Gadaref is a border state affected by immigration. The Governor of Gadaref praised EU support to combat arms and drugs smuggling and human trafficking. Last year, the EU allocated Sudan €100 million to improve the living conditions for refugees, help Sudanese returnees reintegrate and improve border security.

Qatari Deputy Prime Minister, Ahmed bin Abdullah Al-Mahmoud, head of the international follow-up committee for peace implementation in Darfur, said on Monday (March 6) that any new deal with holdout groups in the Darfur peace process could be inserted as an annex in the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) but he ruled out opening a new process. Al-Mahmoud said that the return of refugees and displaced people to their areas has not yet been implemented but that 10,015 fighters belonging to the signatory movements had been demobilized 2015-16 and 6,800 fighters integrated. Another 9,185 others will be integrated or demobilized in the next stage.

125 prisoners of the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) arrived in Khartoum at the weekend after Ugandan President Museveni had mediated their release. A government spokesperson in Khartoum praised the SPLM-N's "good gesture". The Foreign Ministry called on the SPLM-N to sign a humanitarian cessation of hostilities agreement and to turn over the page of war and engage in the political process under the auspices of the national dialogue conference.

Sudan expressed "deep regret and discontent" on Wednesday (March 8) in response to US President Trump's revised travel ban barring its citizens from travelling to the United States. On Monday, Mr Trump signed a revised ban on refugee admissions and new visas for travellers from six Muslim-majority nations, among them Sudan. The new order, which takes effect on March 16, suspends refugee admissions for 120 days and halts

new visas for travelers from Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Yemen and Sudan. Refugees already approved and Green Card holders will not be affected.

Foreign Minister Dr Workneh on an official visit to Kenya

Ethiopia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Workneh Gebeyehu, left on a two-day visit to Kenya on Wednesday (March 8) at the invitation of Ambassador Dr Amina Mohamed, Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs and International Trade of the Republic of Kenya.

During his stay, Dr Workneh held discussions with Dr Amina Mohamed on bilateral, regional and international issues of common interest. He also paid a courtesy call on President Kenyatta and delivered a special message from Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn. Dr Workneh was accompanied by Ambassador Girma Temesgen, the Director General for Neighboring Countries and IGAD, Ethiopia's Ambassador to Kenya, Ambassador Dina Mufti, and other senior officials of the Foreign Ministry. The Ethiopian delegation attended a working dinner hosted by Ambassador Dr Amina Mohamed, on Wednesday, with both sides looking at issues to be tabled for later discussions, and giving particular emphasis to the areas of cooperation in which Ethiopia and Kenya have shown substantial progress.

In the discussions with Ambassador Dr Amina Mohamed, the two sides covered a range of bilateral and regional issues of common interest, including the implementation of the Special Status Agreement; Joint Border Development Programs; the establishment of a One-stop Border Post; issues of peace and security cooperation under the AU and IGAD; and the Northern Corridor framework. Dr Workneh underlined the century-old relationship between the two countries and peoples, emphasizing that Ethiopia welcomed its excellent relationship of cooperation with Kenya and attached great importance to its ties with Kenya. He said that Ethiopia viewed Kenya as its most trusted ally within the region.

Ambassador Dr Amina Mohammed, also underlined the historic ties between the two countries, stressing Ethiopia and Kenya had close and solid relations covering wide areas of cooperation. This had provided immeasurable opportunities which had indeed been well exploited, she said, but the way was also open for much more. Raising the importance of progress in implementation of signed agreements, Ambassador Amina noted the need for a strengthened Monitoring and Evaluation mechanism to identify challenges and opportunities in carrying out the agreements reached. The two Ministers agreed to ensure their governments continued their unwavering support for the peace processes currently under way in the region.

In the communiqué issued at the end of the visit, the two Ministers noted with satisfaction the progress achieved in various projects including the road linking Nairobi to Addis Ababa, the Lamu, South Sudan, Ethiopia (LAPSSET) Project, and the construction of power transmission lines. They welcomed Ethiopia's membership of the Northern Corridor Integration projects.

Dr Workneh stressed that Ethiopia's priority was relations with neighboring countries, including Kenya, for the peace and security and overall development of the region. He said: "we are two inseparable nations in conveying a common interest in international, continental and sub-regional fora." Commending Kenya's role in IGAD, Dr Workneh said IGAD is one of the most effective Sub-Regional organizations and its effectiveness could be measured practically by its role in pacifying the region. The communiqué commended the Government of South Sudan in its efforts for an inclusive National Dialogue as a tool to restore lasting peace and stability, and agreed on the need to support the full implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan, signed in August 2015. It also welcomed the election in Somalia and agreed on the need to continue to assist the government to strengthen state institutions and support its fight against al-Shabaab. They agreed to support economic empowerment through building up infrastructure. The Ministers agreed on the necessity of holding more negotiations with the EU over the 20% reduction in its support for AMISOM.

Dr Workneh referred to the Special Status Agreement signed five years ago and designed to lay down a really solid foundation to the relationship and is even considered as a first step towards moving to full economic cooperation. It stipulated that both sides could open offices in each other's territory for facilitation of trade, investment and tourism, information sharing and liaison. It provided for the establishment of a joint task force of financial experts to explore opportunities to create a favorable environment for trade and investment.

However, the Agreement has yet to be implemented. The communiqué welcomed a proposal to establish Trade and Commercial Offices in each other's territory at the earliest opportunity, to facilitate trade and exchange information on trade issues.

Ethiopia and Kenya are, of course, already working closely on a number of joint development programs in different areas, including road infrastructure, the building of an oil pipeline, port developments, natural resources development and power connectivity. Another point has been the agreement to establish a one-stop border post to facilitate the free movement of people, goods and services, to permit the free movement of commercial vehicles and transit cargo, and to work towards progressive tariff concession. When implemented as planned, this will provide a platform for moving towards economic integration between Ethiopia and Kenya and more widely in the region.

Dr Workneh noted both sides had been working to resolve cross-border problems arising from cattle rustling and use of water points and grazing lands. The cross-border areas are generally characterized by poor infrastructure and weak service provision, low literacy and high poverty levels and a lack of resources. As a result, they have become a source of tension and even conflict. Organization of community-led peace programs have helped to reduce incidents of violence, improving trust among local communities. The comprehensive cross-border integrated Program for Sustainable Peace and Socio-economic Transformation can be expected to foster peaceful co-existence, expand trade and development, and encourage environmental protection in Kenya's Marsabit County and Ethiopia's Borena and Liban Zones.

The drought was, of course, mentioned not least because the situation is likely to worsen. A timely response to prevent famine is very necessary. Dr Workneh pointed out that the recent joint Mogadishu Declaration warned of the severity of the problem and called for regional cooperation and international collaboration for an effective response. Ethiopia and Kenya need to address this urgently and further develop an effective response mechanism. Part of this, he pointed out, should involve the effective use and development of natural resources.

In this context, Ethiopia welcomed Kenya's clear stand on the fair and equitable utilization of natural resources, including the Nile water, by all countries of the Nile Basin. It appreciated the role played by Kenya on the Nile issue and the signing of the Cooperative Framework Agreement. Dr Workneh emphasized the importance of ratification of the CFA. He said that once this had been done there would be unprecedented opportunities to use its advantages for the betterment of all the peoples of the region. Ethiopia, Rwanda and Tanzania had already ratified the Cooperative Framework Agreement. He encouraged Kenya to initiate the process of ratification as a matter of urgency. The communiqué noted that the Ministers "agreed to continue their active roles in "realizing the objectives of the Cooperative Framework Agreement."

The Ministers underlined the importance of further enhancing existing ties in a spirit of good neighborliness based on mutual respect and interest to the benefit of both peoples. They emphasized the value of continued exchanges of high-level visits, and the Joint Ministerial and the Joint Border Commission meetings to consider issues of common concern. The Ministers agreed to hold the 36th Joint Ministerial Commission meeting in Addis Ababa in June, and that this should be preceded by the 3rd Joint Technical Committee meeting on the Special Status Agreement.

Ethiopia at the High-Level Segment of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva....

Mrs Hirut Zemene, State Minister of Foreign Affairs headed Ethiopia's delegation at the high-level segment of the 34th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, last week. The delegation included Dr Addisu Gebre Egziabher, Commissioner for the Ethiopia Human Rights Commission, as well as representatives from the Attorney General's Office and the Foreign Ministry. The Council opened its session on February 27 hearing addresses from UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres; the President of the General Assembly, Peter Thompson, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein; and Didier Burkhalter, the head of Switzerland's Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. Their statements underlined the International Community's strong commitment to the implementation of internationally agreed human rights instruments and the better realization of global peace, development and human rights. A total of 107 dignitaries and high officials attended the Council's High Level Segment, the largest ever participation in the High-Level Segment.

In her address to the Council, Mrs Hirut referred to the current celebrations of the 121st anniversary of the victory of Adwa. Adwa, she pointed out, was a permanent reminder of Ethiopia's strong commitment to self-determination, to the promotion of human dignity, to independence and to equality. The State Minister

stressed that Ethiopia was continuing to attain the full realization of universally recognized Human Rights through the implementation of its successive development policies. These, she pointed out, were reducing poverty significantly and achieving substantial socio-economic progress. She detailed the Government's engagement with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to fulfil Ethiopia's international human right obligations at the national and regional level. In her statement, the State Minister said that in spite of the recent disturbances and unfortunate loss of life in Ethiopia, peace and stability had been restored through the concerted efforts of the people and the Government. She said the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission had conducted a thorough and independent investigation. Ethiopia's House of People's Representatives had adopted the Commission's reports and Mrs Hirut highlighted the measures the Government was now undertaking to address the legitimate concerns identified by the Commission.

...and the State Minister's side-line meetings ...

On the side-lines of the Human Rights Council session, Mrs Hirut held a number of meetings and bilateral discussions. Talks with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad, covered the overall situation in Ethiopia. Mrs Hirut gave details of what was being done in terms of investigating possible human rights violations identified by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and endorsed for action by the Ethiopian Parliament. She noted the Government's commitment to implementation of the results of the ongoing investigations in cases that have not yet been finalized. The High Commissioner said he was much encouraged by developments in Ethiopia and the recent report of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, which had been communicated to his Office. He emphasized that given the progress of the country, challenges had to be addressed properly in a manner that would realize concrete results. This meant, among other things, resolving the communication gap in satisfying the needs of the young and accelerating responses to their demands. They agreed to continue their close consultations on this. They also agreed to work on the opening of the East and Southern Regional Office of the Commission for Human Rights in Addis Ababa.

In bilateral discussions with the South Sudan delegation led by First Vice-President, General Taban Deng Gai, the focus was on intensifying economic and political cooperation between Ethiopia and South Sudan on the basis of the understandings reached last week during the visit of President Salva Kiir to Ethiopia. General Taban Deng emphasized the recent improvements in South Sudan and the restoration of calm in the country. He underlined that Addis Ababa was a second home to the South Sudanese people and said Ethiopia's progress in all spheres was an example not only to South Sudan but also to all developing countries. Mrs Hirut said the recently signed agreements would further strengthen and speed up trade relations and people-to-people cooperation between the two countries. She also stressed Ethiopia's commitment to supporting the South Sudanese people in the spirit of good-neighborliness.

In talks with Arancha González, Executive Director of the International Trade Centre, State Minister Mrs Hirut explained Ethiopia's ongoing efforts to sustain the positive trend of the last decade's economic growth, to eradicate poverty and the emphasis on development. She thanked the ITC for its technical cooperation in the areas of trade facilitation and investment promotion, and in cooperation with India and China. She appreciated the support that it was extending to the coffee sector. She also welcomed ITC activity in poverty reduction, job creation and women-focused activities. Ms González explained what ITC was doing and what it was planning to do in Ethiopia. She emphasized that Ethiopia was among the focus countries of ITC activity in Africa and explained the possibilities of exploring further technical cooperation projects. She also provided details of the on-going process in opening-up ITC's first regional office in Addis Ababa; and they agreed to engage their legal experts to finalize the host country agreement. They also agreed that Ethiopia should initiate a project proposal to launch new areas of technical cooperation.

Other side-line meetings included Mr Alok Sharma MP, UK Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Their discussions covered bilateral relations and cooperation in the work of the Security Council and recent resolutions in the Council. Mrs Hirut also met with Mr Bandar bin Mohammed Alabian, Minister and President of the Human Rights Commission of Saudi Arabia, as well as the heads of the Delegations of Indonesia and Kirgizstan.

...and discussions with the Ethiopian Community in Switzerland

The State Minister met with leaders of the Ethiopian Diaspora in Switzerland on Tuesday (February 28), briefing them on the current situation in Ethiopia, focusing on the state of emergency, its implementation and outcome, envisaged political reforms, and the economy. The State Minister said the government had handled

human rights concerns very carefully throughout implementation of the state of emergency. Currently, almost all detainees had been released and the situation was now calm with the country back to normal. She noted that the measures taken by the government included endorsement of the report of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission whose recommendations were being given due attention. The government was also undertaking reform programs to address the challenges of unemployment, corruption, maladministration and rent-seeking behaviour as well as providing an equitable share of wealth.

She detailed the economic profile of the country, noting the impact of the El-Nino effect, the most severe drought in the last 50 years. This year, with an Indian Ocean Dipole, there were still about 5 million people currently affected by the drought. Despite this, the country achieved a growth of 8% last year. The Government with our development partners and the International Community were working hard together to address the crisis. She detailed measures being undertaken to realize the GTP II goals and the government's efforts to speed up the structural transformation from agriculture to industrialization. It was expanding the industrial parks and these were already showing good results with more to come in jobs. The Government was also working hard to encourage and attract more investment and tourism, enhance remittances, diversify the economy and exports as well as expand infrastructure and push ahead with the construction of GERD. The State Minister encouraged the community to organize events this month to help celebrate the sixth anniversary of GERD's construction of the dam and contribute further to its support.

Following the discussion, she entertained questions and comments on impediments faced by the Diaspora in Ethiopia. These included the need to speed up the issuing of new passports and Yellow Cards for Ethiopians, building a new Ethiopian Cultural Centre in Geneva, addressing illegal transfer of remittances and the importance of dealing with the destructive behaviour of some elements in the Diaspora. Participants commented on the bureaucratic hurdles and corrupt practices they had faced during investment operations and encouraged the government to implement fully Diaspora engagement incentives such as the Diaspora Housing Programme in Addis Ababa.

State Minister Hirut expressed her sincere appreciation for the contributions and participation of members of the Diaspora. She said the government was committed to supporting and facilitating the Cultural Centre and it was already working together with the Diaspora to promote legal money transfers, facilitate investment processes and would continue to deal with extremist groups that challenged the country's national security. The State Minister concluded by expressing her sincere appreciation for the contributions and participation of the Diaspora and encouraged all to continue their support for Ethiopia's development.

A national command post to manage aid to drought-hit areas in Ethiopia....

The National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDMRC) announced on Monday this week (March 6) that it is setting up a national command post to manage emergency food assistance in the drought-affected areas. The below average rains in these areas, caused by the negative Indian Ocean Dipole and La Niña, following on from the El Niño climatic phenomenon last year, have led to another drought. When UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, was in Addis Ababa for the 28th AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government in January, he commended the Ethiopian Government and the humanitarian community for the successful response to the 2016 El Niño-induced drought in Ethiopia. He also called for solidarity with the Government and the people of Ethiopia as the country faced this new drought. Commissioner Mitiku Kassa said the 2016 drought could have been a cause for the loss of countless lives but this had been averted by the combined effort of Government and partners and the country was able to cope with a drought which affected over 10.2 million people. The experience learned from last year, he said, had now helped to create the capacity to deal with the current drought which had hit pastoralists so hard. The most seriously affected areas are in the Somali Regional State; the lowlands of Borena, Bale and Gujji zones in the Oromia Regional State; and South Omo zone of the Southern-Nations Nationalities and Peoples' State.

Deputy Prime Minister, Demeke Mekonnen, in an interview on Wednesday (March 8) emphasized the Government's continued efforts in providing the necessary support to address the drought problem. He said it was currently focusing on delivery of potable water, food and fodder for livestock and the provision of health services for human and livestock populations. The food requirement this year will include a carry-over of population in need from the previous year as well as the new drought affected populations in the southern and eastern part of the country. The Deputy Prime Minister said the government was implementing a strategy that would help to avoid human loss and maintain, as much as possible, the livestock population. It has already allocated 47 million US dollars to mitigate the impact of the drought in the affected areas. The Deputy Prime

Minister added that drought response programmes were being conducted without affecting the ongoing development programs currently underway in the country.

This current drought is also affecting other countries in the Horn of Africa region, resulting in food insecurity and high levels of malnutrition. According to the newly released regional appeal document, some 12.8 million people are severely food insecure and in urgent need of humanitarian assistance in the Horn region, including 5.6 million in Ethiopia, 2.7 million in Kenya, 2.9 million in Somalia and 1.6 million in Uganda. The drought has already resulted in a critical shortage of water and pasture in the drought-affected lowland pastoralist and agro-pastoralist areas leading to a sharp deterioration of livestock body condition, affecting milk production, and an increase in livestock deaths. These have a devastating impact on both the livelihood of pastoralists and their capacity to feed their children who are dependent upon livestock milk for child nutrition.

According to the latest Drought Response Situation Report, protecting livestock therefore plays a major role in helping save lives and protect livelihoods. In addition to livestock feed and destocking, food, nutrition, water, sanitation, shelter and education in emergency are among the most urgent needs in the drought-affected areas. Commissioner Mitiku of the National Disaster Risk Management Commission, noting that the establishment of the command post aimed to address any gaps and occasional delays in the delivery and provision of aid, said the Government had allocated one billion birr in the first round of help, to provide food assistance to drought-affected areas. It had so far spent some 16.5 billion birr to cope with the drought as well as appealing for an additional 948 million US dollars to address the food and non-food needs of the people living in affected areas. The Commissioner underlined that if the international community failed to provide the required aid, the Federal Government, in partnership with the country's regional states would work jointly to avoid loss of a single life from drought.

...the Head of UN OCHA visits drought-affected areas of South Sudan...

Stephen O'Brien, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, (UNOCHA) on a visit to South Sudan at the weekend, warned the international community and South Sudanese government that hundreds of thousands of people in South Sudan, including thousands of children, will starve unless relief workers gain access and unless more funds are available. Mr O'Brien was in South Sudan to see first-hand the critical humanitarian situation. The UN, which declared a famine in parts of South Sudan last month, says about 100,000 people are facing starvation, and an additional one million are on the brink of a famine. The total number of food insecure people is expected to rise to 5.5 million at the height of the lean season in July if nothing is done to curb the severity and spread of the food crisis. In addition, there are some 3.4 million Sudanese who have been displaced and separated from their families. Humanitarian organizations have appealed for \$1.6 billion to provide life-saving assistance and protection to some 5.8 million people across South Sudan in 2017. Mr O'Brien arrived in South Sudan following visits to Kenya and Yemen.

It was on February 20 that the United Nations declared famine in parts of South Sudan and this underlined that people had started dying of hunger on a significant scale. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) have also recently warned that urgent action is needed to prevent more people dying. The UN agencies say "the situation is the worst hunger catastrophe since fighting erupted over three years ago".

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) representative in South Sudan, Serge Tissot said "the recent famine has become a tragic reality in parts of South Sudan and our worst fears have been realized. Many families have exhausted every means they have to survive." He went on: "The people are predominantly farmers and war has disrupted agriculture. They've lost their livestock, even their farming tools. For months, there has been a total reliance on whatever plants they can find and fish they can catch."

During his visit, Mr O'Brien travelled to Ganyiel, one of the areas most affected by conflict and by famine in the south of Unity State. He described the situation as "horrendous," adding that it was the parties to conflict who were preventing millions of people from receiving aid. Posting a number of photos of people who had fled the fighting and sexual violence on social media, he also noted "that humanitarian partners, such as the International Red Cross, are setting up clinics directly in the swamps to reach more people. Some people with nothing to eat survived by chewing on water lilies". "Millions of people prevented from receiving aid by parties to conflict." Mr O'Brien described the situation as "Immoral, unlawful and unacceptable", adding "We need access now."

Speaking after a two-day visit to the country, where he said obstacles to humanitarian assistance included active hostility, access denial and bureaucracy, Mr O'Brien said: "People have been displaced, brutalized and raped. They have been attacked when they sought out assistance. This must stop, and it must stop now." Aid workers have been forced to relocate from Mayendit, one of two counties hit by famine, after a government official informed them there would be fighting in the town. In February, armed groups and members of the local community looted a Save the Children warehouse in northern Jonglei area.

In response to the famine and the need to prevent further escalation of food insecurity, President Salva Kiir has underlined that the key priorities of the Transitional Government of National Unity are addressing the humanitarian crisis and allowing unhindered access to areas most hard hit by starvation and by food insecurity in Greater Equatoria areas, as well as the wider issues of the revival of the economy and implementation of national dialogue initiative.

This week, aid agencies in South Sudan have been urgently seeking clarity from the government after it signaled that it would substantially increase the cost of work permits for foreign aid workers. The Labor Ministry reportedly issued a memorandum increasing the cost of permits from \$100 to \$10,000. Aid groups called this "terrible timing" so soon after President Kiir promised "unimpeded access" to all aid organizations in a country where 100,000 people are starving and a further 1 million are on the brink of starvation. The Minister of Information was quoted as saying that the fee increase would apply to all foreign workers in the country and was aimed at increasing government revenue. However, the status of the memorandum, dated March 2, was unclear, and InterAction, an alliance of 180 NGOs working around the world, suggested that the timing of the measure might have been accidental as some people said it had been in the works for some time. Equally, it pointed out that no organization could afford this, and donors would be reluctant to pay.

The Norway Refugee Council USA, which has an office in Juba, said NGOs were urgently seeking clarity on the status of the measure and to what extent they might be affected. It described it as "the wrong measure at the wrong time. If it does come into effect, it's obviously terrible timing," and the mere fact that it had been put forward was "concerning."

...and the UN Secretary-General Guterres sees the Somali drought crisis at first hand

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres met Somalia's President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed in Mogadishu on Tuesday (March 6) at the start of what he called an emergency visit to Somalia to highlight the country's famine crisis. He said: "People are dying. The world must act now to stop this. We need to make as much noise as possible. Conflict, drought, climate change, disease, cholera. The combination is a nightmare." He said rich countries must do more to stop drought-stricken Somalia from sinking into famine, warning that terrorism would increase without aid. "If you want to fight terrorism, we need to address the root causes of terrorism. We need to bring peace and stability to a country like Somalia ... It's the best way for rich countries to protect themselves," Mr Guterres told a news conference in Mogadishu.

He said: "I'm not appealing to the generosity of the rich, I'm appealing to the enlightened self-interest of the rich. We live in a world with a multiplication of conflicts. Somalia is one of them. Conflicts are inter-related, and they are related to a threat of global terrorism. There is not only terrorism in Somalia or in the neighborhood of Somalia. There are terrorist attacks in Paris, there are terrorist attacks in other European cities, in North American cities. If we want to fight terrorism we need to address the root causes of terrorism. We need to bring peace and stability to countries like Somalia, and to address in an effective way the risk of famine is to support the stabilization of Somalia. It is the best way to address root causes of terrorism. It is the best way for rich countries to protect themselves. So, we are appealing to people to be intelligent enough to understand that to let countries like Somalia perish and to let the Somali people suffer the dramatic impact of the combination of drought, conflict and disease is a danger for everybody."

Mr Guterres said the reason why he had come to Mogadishu and to visit Baidoa was very simple: "to express my deep solidarity with the Somali people in this moment that is at the same time both tragic and hopeful." He said it was exactly because it was both tragic and hopeful that it made sense to make a very strong appeal to the international community to fully support Somalia. He said there was a chance to avoid the worst, to avoid a situation in Somalia like the one there had been in 2011 when 260,000 people had died. Today there was excellent cooperation between the President, the government, and the humanitarian community, the UN family, the NGO movement and the Red Cross Red Crescent. He said "There is a plan of action. There is capacity on the ground. Equally, he added "we need massive support from the international community to avoid a repetition of the tragic events of 2011."

Today, he said "we have 6.2 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in Somalia; that's almost half of the Somali population. We have 333,000 children that are acutely malnourished and there's the risk that it could go up to a million if there's not enough support to avoid it. We have 3.3 million people in need of health support to avoid the impact of diseases and to avoid the circumstances under which it is so easy to lose one's life because of lack of health assistance. Cholera has been developing and making hunger even worse and more dangerous. In the last two months, we had 7,731 cases of cholera with 183 people dying. Just last week - 1,352 cases of cholera and 38 people dying. It's a process in acceleration." According to the World Health Organization, there have also been 2,500 reports of cases involving suspected measles.

The Secretary-General was visibly shocked by the suffering of malnourished Somalis and cholera victims during his visit to a cholera ward and a camp for displaced people in Baidoa. "Every single person we have seen is a personal story of tremendous suffering. There is no way to describe it," he said after visiting the hospital. He also went to a camp for hundreds of families displaced by drought and by the conflict against al-Shabaab extremists.

All this, the Secretary-General said, justifies massive response. He said: "We have things prepared on the ground but we need financial support from the international community. That is why we are appealing for 825 million dollars for the support to 5.5 million people for six months. Without that support we will have a tragedy that is absolutely unacceptable and that the Somali people do not deserve."

This was a moment of tragedy, because people were dying because of famine, because of diseases. But, he added, this was also a moment of hope because the government was ready to act, because the humanitarian community was ready to act. They were cooperating and, with the support of the international community, it will be possible to avoid the worst and it will be possible to launch the pillars, the fundamental basis for Somalia to be able to turn the page and for Somalia to, finally, find the way to stability, peace and prosperity. "We will," he said, "try to help the Somali people come together and build a Somali state of peace and prosperity."

It was also a moment of hope because Somalia was turning the page. A new President had been elected; a new Prime Minister had been appointed; there was a very strong commitment to enhance security and the capacity of the government to start to provide effective services to the population. He said AMISOM forces were doing a job that the world should be grateful for because they were not only protecting Somalis, "they are protecting us all against terrorism." He said the international community was not helping AMISOM effectively. It was important to support AMISOM better and also to support the government to create a true national Somali Army and a true national Somali Police because, only then, could it fully protect the country from terrorism and only then create the conditions that would avoid in the future the kind of tragedies Somalia was facing today.

Subsequently, in Nairobi the next day, the Secretary-General, in a joint press conference with President Kenyatta, urged more funding for AMISOM troops in Somalia. He said AMISOM needed consistent funding in order to meet its objectives in fighting terrorism and stabilizing the country. AMISOM has some 22,000 troops from Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, but it plans to withdraw from the country by the end of 2020 and there are questions over the ability of Somalia's national forces to take over. The European Union has been the primary donor supporting the force, but last year it announced it was cutting its funding by 20%. Mr Guterres said it was his belief that "AMISOM is underequipped in relation to the needs," adding it is doing "remarkable work in very precarious conditions."

The Secretary-General equally emphasized the need for massive investment in the process of support for Somalia, first to address the issue of food security and secondly to combine this with development to build up the resilience of the population to avoid repetition of these crises. Nor must it be forgotten that climate change was becoming an accelerator of these crises, particularly of drought, happening more and more frequently and with more and more devastating consequences. The international community needed to support these countries, build their capacity in order to ensure their own security, build their own armies, their own police forces, support them in building their own institutions in order to be able to fight terrorism in an effective way.

The US and counter-terrorist activities in Somalia

There were reports last week that US Defense Department officials were lobbying the President to allow more aggressive operations against al-Shabaab in Somalia. The current rules guiding US operations in Somalia place strict limits on when military forces can be used, such as if Somali forces are at risk of being overrun by al-Shabaab, or if Somali security forces request assistance during a battle. The Pentagon is now said to be exploring the possibilities of expanding those rules of engagement to widen the options for calling in airstrikes and allowing for pre-emptive attacks if a terrorist operation is about to be launched, instead of having to wait until it starts. It would also like to see US Special Forces and advisers accompany Somali troops to objectives rather than merely just flying them in and out.

Washington's leading conservative think-tank, the American Enterprise Institute, underlined this in a report last week entitled: "US Counterterrorism Objectives in Somalia: Is Mission Failure Likely?" This argued that Al Qaeda was expanding across Africa and suggested that the Obama administration had made fighting the Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham (ISIS) the primary and almost exclusive focus of counterterrorism operations after ISIS' June 2014 seizure of Mosul in Iraq. The result of this was that areas with a large ISIS presence, that is Iraq, Syria, and to a lesser extent Libya, received attention; those with a minimal ISIS element, like Somalia, did not.

The consequence of this, the report says, was that Al Qaeda took advantage of American "disinterest" to expand the size and strength of its affiliates around the world. It, therefore, calls on the Trump administration to reverse this policy, to recognize the present and long-term danger that al Qaeda poses to the US, and to act against al Qaeda groups before the cost of action and the price of inaction rise too high. It says: "A small investment in Somalia today can yield a large return in the future in the form of attacks averted and wars we do not have to fight."

The AEI report goes into considerable detail about al-Shabaab, al Qaeda's affiliate in Somalia, and its activities over the last two or three years. It describes al-Shabaab as "resurgent and set to make additional gains in 2017", following its efforts to rebuild its strength after the losses it sustained in 2012 and 2013. Continued governance and security gaps in Somalia permitted al-Shabaab to rebuild in its strongholds and prepare for a counter-offensive against AMISOM and Somali forces. The Somali Federal Government struggled to secure legitimacy among Somalis because it did not have the resources or capacity to provide basic services outside Mogadishu. It also faced local power conflicts as opposing factions sought to establish themselves as the controlling elements in the federal states. AMISOM and Somali forces were unable to pursue al-Shabaab into more remote areas because of force size constraints and lack of force multipliers. This allowed al-Shabaab to keep access to financial resources, recruit and train new foot soldiers, and operate relatively freely outside of major populated centers.

Another new and complicating factor is the ongoing drought in East Africa which means severe food shortages, and possibly famine, in parts of southern and central Somalia. The major humanitarian crisis is an additional threat to the capacity of the Federal Government and humanitarian organizations to provide, coordinate, and administer relief. This could generate additional grievances that al-Shabaab could exploit. In the past, al-Shabaab has proved adept at exploiting local grievances and conflicts within Somalia and the failures of the federal government to build on AMISOM successes.

Al-Shabaab now aims to operate throughout East Africa and, AEI says, is actively building a support base in Kenya. The report also says it is improving its attack capabilities, quoting the smuggling of a concealed explosive device aboard an airplane last year that detonated, but fortunately failed to bring the plane down. That was an indication of al-Shabaab's change in tactics demonstrating its continued intent to conduct international and not merely local attacks.

Indeed, the report suggests al-Shabaab may now be preparing to launch a significant counter-offensive beyond targeting AMISOM and SNA forces to regain momentum in Somalia in 2017. It says al-Shabaab has developed the ability to conduct complex raids against well-defended AMISOM forward operating bases, causing significant casualties as at El Adde in January last year. It has rebuilt its ability to conduct mass-casualty spectacular attacks in Mogadishu and assassinations of Somali government and security officials. It has also expanded its area of operations into northern Kenya as well as re-emerging in populated centers in southern and central Somalia. The report also says it believes al-Shabaab is poised to exploit regional and local political and security conditions.

The report underlines that al Shabaab sits on a key line of communications between the Middle East and Africa. This, it says, is a link that al Qaeda has sought to maintain over the years. Al-Shabaab interacts with al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in Yemen, as well as with the network of al Qaeda and ISIS groups operating throughout Egypt, Libya, and Sudan and into Mali and Nigeria. Al Shabaab's strength also contributes to the overall strength of the al Qaeda network.

So, the report argues, the US must recognize the risks in Somalia as al-Shabaab 'resurges', and it must invest more energy and resources in the fight against it to prevent it from becoming an even greater threat. Currently, US strategy relies heavily on ground partners, the African Union Mission in Somalia and Somali security forces, to fight al-Shabaab. These partners need support and the US should assist in improving how AMISOM contingents operate on the ground. The report also notes that the Pentagon is recommending increased collaboration between US Special Operations Forces and Somali forces, as well as reduced restrictions on airstrikes against al-Shabaab. It says firmly: "the Trump administration should accept this recommendation."

AMISOM forces have faced serious challenges operating in Somalia. AMISOM divides its area of operations into five sectors, each run by a different national contingent. This is a common practice in multinational operations but it makes for difficulties in moving reinforcements across sectors. Both AMISOM and Somali National Army forces also suffer from operating over a wide area. They have struggled to hold forwards operating bases and lines of communications. They occupy key positions to secure major populated areas but do not hold the territory between these positions. In any case, AMISOM itself can only be a temporary solution, as all participants recognize. Somalia can become stable only when its own military and police forces can secure their own territory. That prospect, the report says, still seems to be a long way off. The US has trained Somalia's elite special force units, Gashaan ("lightning"), which include the elite Dannab (Alpha) brigade. This is a small but effective fighting force but the rest of the SNA is much less combat-ready, despite the continued efforts of AMISOM, the US and other Western partners.

It argues that the US should work more closely with AMISOM forces to improve their operations and ensure that the troop-contributing states do not withdraw troops prematurely from the mission. The troop-contributing states are Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. It says any withdrawal of troops from AMISOM would mean the rapid collapse of the gains made against al-Shabaab. It also points out that the Somali Federal Government and its forces still need considerable assistance to regain legitimacy and address challenges within the Somali border. This, it says, the US should help provide. Supporting Somali Federal Government initiatives and working to expand the authority and control of the Somali state would limit the space in which al-Shabaab has freedom of operations. It emphasizes that there would be no need to deploy American combat forces to Somalia at this time, and "a sound strategy of supporting and encouraging our local partner" would obviate the need for such deployment in the future.

The report emphasizes that the US must recognize the risks in Somalia. It underlines that waning interest in the fight against al-Shabaab would be a mistake. The US must recognize that al-Shabaab's success has come from its ability to hijack local grievances and provide a semblance of stability in a fractured country. It must further recognize that "the UN, EU, and African Union are not willing or able to lead or pay for the efforts required to defeat al-Shabaab", let alone to stabilize Somalia. Finally, it must recognize above all that American national security interests are directly tied to Somalia's fate. Allowing al-Shabaab to regain control of a large safe haven in southern Somalia will provide important resources to al Qaeda movements throughout Africa and the Middle East, as well as a base from which to plan and prepare attacks against Europe and the United States. It is time to move past Black Hawk Down and confront the reality that Somalia matters to America.

So the report argues: "the US should work actively to maintain pressure on al-Shabaab to prevent it from regaining its shadow state in Somalia." Any al Qaeda 'shadow state' anywhere contributes to al Qaeda's global ability to plan, prepare, and execute attacks against the US homeland and Americans abroad. And the conclusion is that: "American national security interests are linked to the strength of al-Shabaab; the US must stay in the fight."

First meeting of the Ethiopia and Malawi Joint Permanent Commission for Cooperation

An Ethiopian delegation led by Mr Metasebya Tadesse, African Affairs Director-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, paid a two-day visit to Malawi this week to participate in the first meeting of the Ethiopia-Malawi Joint Permanent Commission for Cooperation (JPCC) in Lilongwe, Malawi's capital. The

Ethiopian delegation included experts drawn from 7 sectoral offices. Malawi's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Malawi, Francis Kasaila, headed the Malawi delegation.

Discussions covered various political and diplomatic issues of mutual interest as well as how to boost economic cooperation between Ethiopia and Malawi. The Joint Permanent Commission for Cooperation considered the possibilities of sharing experiences on harnessing dividends from Foreign Direct Investment, ways to exploit investment opportunities, and the avoidance of double taxation as well as how to work together in dealing with the issue of illegal human trafficking. Eighteen months ago, Ethiopia, working with the International Organization for Migration and the Malawi government, brought back nearly four hundred migrants who had been detained in Malawi after entering the country illegally. They had left Ethiopia in search of better jobs in South Africa. Once back in Ethiopia, the returnees were given support to return to their home localities where they had further backing from regional offices.

The two sides also exchanged views over expanding cooperation on health, education, tourism and in manufacturing sectors. They also agreed to form a Joint Ministerial Commission offering the prospect of moving their relationship to a higher level.

Minister Kasaila said subsequently that Malawi and Ethiopia had entered into a joint collaboration that would see improved infrastructure development. The meeting was, he said, culmination of the diligent desire of both governments to formalize the very warm, practical and cordial relations that had spanned many decades. Ethiopia and Malawi established diplomatic relations in 1960.

Minister Kasaila said he had been very impressed to see the rate at which Ethiopia was developing when he had attended the African Union meeting in Addis Ababa in January. He said: "One thing I realized is that the infrastructure development in that country is as a result of the many programs that the Ethiopian government was implementing and also because of harnessing remittances from Ethiopians who are in the Diaspora."

Minister Kasaila appreciated Ethiopia's fast dynamic growth and said Malawi would like to share Ethiopia's experience in infrastructural development, investment attraction and urban development. He said the two countries could collaborate on how to foster infrastructure development and harness the capabilities of nationals in the Diaspora. The basis of Ethiopia's fast economic growth was implementation of a policy designed to ensure development. It had been registering significant progress in the transport sector in general and in air transport in particular, he added.

Mr Kasaila, who described Ethiopia as Malawi's main partner in the Horn of Africa, also said that he would like the two countries to cooperate in defense and security. "We need", he said, "to cooperate to work closely in order to fight human trafficking" and irregular migration of Ethiopians through Malawi. He noted that Malawi had made several advances in the agricultural field, especially in crop breeding and that the government was also developing expertise in irrigation agriculture and agro-processing, agricultural input subsidies, and social efforts in human development especially in child survival. He thought Ethiopia could benefit from Malawi's progress in these areas.

Director-General Metasebya praised Malawi's achievements in the field of agriculture and in particular its use of advanced technology in crop breeding, irrigation and agro-processing, from which Ethiopia could learn, he said. He noted Ethiopia and Malawi have been working very closely together in various areas and said the joint meeting allowed them to identify areas of cooperation beneficial for both sides and to establish instruments to allow for cooperation in the selected areas. This would strengthen the relationship between the two countries, he said.

During their stay in Malawi, the Ethiopian delegation held talks on the release of Ethiopian citizens detained in Malawi and on ways to repatriate them to their homeland. The delegation also held discussions with Ethiopian citizens who reside in Lilongwe, Malawi's capital, on current development in Ethiopia and on the role that members of the Diaspora can play in Ethiopia and in national affairs.

GERD's 6th anniversary preparations continue apace

The preparations for the celebration of the 6th anniversary of the commencement of the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) in a few weeks' time are multiplying nationwide, with the Office of the National Council for the Coordination of the Public Participation on the Construction of the Dam regularly announcing details of various programs and festivals.

In connection with the preparations, the Minister of Communication and Information Technology, Dr Debrezion Gebremichael, reaffirmed yet again that the Dam would not cause any significant harm to the lower riparian countries. Indeed, from the outset, Ethiopia has demonstrated that the benefits of GERD would accrue to downstream countries and the Northeastern African region as well as to its own citizens. The construction of GERD is fully based on international standards and extensive environmental impact assessments as well as the principles of equitable and reasonable use of the water and of no significant harm. Among its efforts to demonstrate this, Ethiopia proposed the setting up of the International Panel of Experts to review the project and help resolve the concerns of Sudan and Egypt as well as ensure transparency. The Panel concluded GERD was being constructed to international standards and would benefit all three countries.

Dr Debrezion commended the Ethiopia people who have continued to show their full support for the construction of the dam through environmentally sound conservation activities and the purchase of dam bonds. Speaking about the financial contribution of the people, the Minister noted that they had so far contributed 9.4 billion birr. The construction of the Dam is being fully funded by the people and the government of Ethiopia; and various fund raising programs will be carried out in connection with the 6th anniversary of the commencement of the construction of GERD.

Last week, President Dr Mulatu Teshome, speaking about the 121st anniversary of the victory of Adwa over the Italians, emphasized that the victory held lessons for Africa and for Ethiopia, offering today's generation an example of the importance of the maintenance of sovereignty, the strength of commitment to overcome poverty and achieve Ethiopia's renaissance. It was a victory that resonated with the spirit of cooperation and determination for success. The President noted that the people have made huge sacrifices to safeguard the sovereignty of the country and pass it down to the existing generation. The current generation, and the youth in particular, should follow their example in engaging in building up the national image; and the President called on the nation to support the country's ongoing development projects, notably the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.