

A Week in the Horn

12th June 2015

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News in Brief

Africa and the African Union

The African Union Summit opened in Pretoria on Sunday (June 7) with a two-day meeting of the 30th ordinary Session of the AU's Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC). This is being followed by the 27th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council (of Foreign Ministers) on Thursday and Friday (June 11-12). The 25th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union, the Summit of Heads of State and Government, will be held on Sunday (June 14) and Monday (June 15). The theme is "The Year of Women's Empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063." (See article)

The 27th ordinary Session of the Executive Council opened on Thursday (June 11). This followed the Council's second Ministerial Retreat which took place at the Sandton Convention Centre, in Johannesburg, South Africa on Tuesday and Wednesday this week (June 9-10). The meeting addressed the theme: "Towards the First 10-Year implementation Plan of Agenda 2063," discussing priorities for the first 5-10 years. (See article)

The Heads of State and Government of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) Tripartite met on Wednesday (June 10) in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt to launch the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area (Tripartite FTA). (See article)

The Nile Basin Council of Ministers held its 23rd meeting in Dodoma, Tanzania on Thursday and Friday last week (June 4-5). The chairman of the Council for the last year, Sudan's Minister of Water Resources and Electricity, handed over to Tanzania's Minister of Water. The NBI member countries are Burundi, DR Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. Egypt resumed attendance at NBI meetings this year after the signing of the Declaration of Principles by Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia in February.

Ethiopia

President Dr Mulatu Teshome told the Chinese news agency Xinhua in an interview that Ethiopia was keen to further strengthen cooperation with China in the manufacturing sector. He said the economies of Ethiopia and China could complement each other: while production costs were rising in China, they remained low in Ethiopia. He welcomed the contribution of Chinese companies in infrastructure development in Ethiopia, in roads, railways and telecom sectors.

Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn attended the G7 Summit in Germany on June 7 and 8. Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Japan, the United States of America and Canada make up the G7. Seven other countries were invited to attend: Ethiopia, Iraq, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Tunisia. Key topics for the Summit included the global economy, energy security and UN conferences on climate protection and the post-2015 agenda.

Prime Minister Hailemariam accepted an award from FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva in recognition of Ethiopia's achievements in the fight against hunger at a ceremony held last weekend in Rome. The Prime Minister said Ethiopia had come a long way from being the poster child of hunger and food insecurity, to become one of the few countries in the world to have turned the corner in the fight against hunger and extreme poverty.

Prime Minister Hailemariam and President Ismail Omar Guelleh attended the ceremonial laying of the last stretch of track for the new 752-kilometre (481-mile) railway between Djibouti and Addis Ababa on Thursday this week (June 11). The first scheduled train is expected to use the line in October. The new railway will reduce the transport time to less than 10 hours.

Foreign Minister, Dr Tedros attended the 10th Northern Corridor Integration Projects summit in Kampala, on Saturday (June 6) with the Heads of State of Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda in attendance as well as and representatives from Burundi, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania and other stakeholders. (See article)

Minister of Finance, Sufian Ahmed, presented a record 223.4 billion birr (US\$11 billion) budget for the next fiscal year starting on July 8 to Parliament on Tuesday (June 9). It breaks down as capital expenditure (37.4%); recurrent expenditure (22.6%); regional state subsidies (34.7%); and sustainable development goals (5.4%). The Minister said the budget aimed to provide robust, rapid, equitable and sustainable development and enhance the structural transformation of the country's economic and social growth.

The Government is preparing new legislation to safeguard migrant workers from abuse in the Middle East. It is also planning to start free vocational training in six regions, including Addis Ababa, for job seekers to Middle East countries and also equip travelers with the necessary skills and training. The draft law will require the Government to reach bilateral agreements with other countries to make authorities there accountable for problems affecting Ethiopian workers.

Ethiopia plans to launch additional hydropower dams and other renewable energy projects during the next Growth and Transformation Plan II (2015-2020) adding an additional 12,000mw of electricity when complete. Under GTP 1 work started on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, and the Gilgel Gibe 3 which will start to generate power next month. Together these will raise generating capacity from 2,400mw to more than 10,000mw.

State Minister Dewano Kedir held talks with a visiting Zambian delegation led by Dr Roland Msiska, Minister and Secretary of the Cabinet, Office of the President on Wednesday (June 10). They agreed to devise a mechanism for the Zambian Embassy in Ethiopia, the Japan Embassy, JICA, and Ethiopia's Foreign Ministry to establish a forum for best experience-sharing.

Ambassador Girma Birru, Ambassador of Ethiopia to the United States, participated in the launch in Washington of President Obama's Initiative to establish Public-Private Partnership to empower Climate-Resilient Developing Nations on Tuesday (June 9). Ethiopia was one of three countries selected to receive tailored and targeted climate services for the initiative.

Djibouti

Djibouti Prime Minister Mohamed Kamil Abdoukade presided last Friday (June 5) over the celebrations of the 38th anniversary of the establishment of the Djibouti Armed Forces together with Minister of Defense, Mohamed Hassan Darar Houfaneh and Chief of the General Staff, Major General Zakaria Sheikh Ibrahim.

The African Union and the Republic of Djibouti signed a Memorandum of Understanding that provides for the deployment of a second Djiboutian battalion of 900 troops in AMISOM. The MoU was signed on Thursday (June 4) at AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa.

Eritrea

President Isaias started an official visit of several days to Sudan on Thursday (June 11). He will be holding talks with President Omar Al-Bashir on bilateral ties and on the latest developments in the region. President Isaias was notably absent from President Al-Bashir's swearing-in ceremony last week despite Sudanese officials casting he was expected.

The Report of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea was released on Monday (June 8) in Geneva. It said the Government of Eritrea is responsible for systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations that had created a climate of fear in which dissent is stifled, subjecting a large proportion of the population to forced labor, "a practice similar to slavery" and driving hundreds of thousands of refugees to flee the country. (See article)

Norway's State Secretary in the Ministry of Justice, Jøran Kallemyr returned to Norway on Saturday (June 6) after what he described as a satisfactory visit to Eritrea. He said he went to Eritrea "to obtain confirmation that it intended to comply with the maximum limit of 18 months of national service, and ensure access for observers from Norway". The State Secretary said Norway now had a green light to send experts and observers to assess the situation in Eritrea.

Kenya

The Cabinet Secretary for Treasury, Henry Rotich presented his budget proposals to the National Assembly on Thursday (June 11). They include a Sh27 billion increase for the security sector. Sh112 billion goes to the Ministry of Defense and the National Intelligence Service; and Sh102.4 billion to the Ministry of Interior with emphasis placed on enhancing and modernizing police mobility and numbers.

Somalia

A joint statement issued by IGAD, the European Union, AMISOM, the U.S. and Britain on Tuesday (June 9) expressed concern over the dispute between the Somali Federal Government and the Interim Jubaland Administration. President Mohamud earlier called for dialogue on over the crisis. The Federal Parliament in Mogadishu declared the Jubaland State Assembly illegal last week; and the Jubaland Administration responded by saying it was cutting off all ties with the Federal Government.

The United Nations Security Council held an informal interactive dialogue with Prime Minister, Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke; the AU Commission's Special Representative for Somalia, Ambassador Maman Sidikou, and Nicholas Kay, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) on Monday (June 8).

The US Deputy Defense Secretary, on Tuesday (June 9) met Prime Minister, Omar Ali Sharmarke and Defense Minister General Abdulkadir Sheikh Ali Dini in Washington to discuss U.S.-Somali security assistance and counterterrorist operations including the activities of the new Danab Special Forces' units.

The United Arab Emirates Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Abdallah Bin Zayed Al Nahayan, visited Somalia on Sunday (June 7). During a one day visit he held talks with President Mohamud as well as meeting the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Health, Education, Internal Security, and Land and Air Transportation. He said his government was currently considering a number of additional development projects including hospitals and police stations.

The United Nations Aid Coordination Office, OCHA, warned this week that Somalia's humanitarian situation was still fragile with 3 million people in need of assistance and 731,000 were in an emergency situation. The crisis was compounded by floods, forced evictions of IDPs and people fleeing from Yemen.

Somaliland President Ahmed Mohamed "Silanyo" on a visit to the UAE held talks with Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, and the UAE Minister for the Presidency Mansour bin Zayed on Tuesday (June 9) to discuss strengthening bilateral issues and the UAE funded projects in Somaliland. President Silanyo is accompanied by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Interior and the Presidency.

The Government of the United Arab Emirates delivered a consignment of armored vehicles, 4WD's, motor bikes and Truck-Tanks to the Federal Police this week. Last week the UAE delivered a similar package of vehicles to the Interim Jubaland Administration.

South Sudan

The Government and the SPLM-in-Opposition rebels both endorsed the IGAD-Plus initiative on Wednesday (June 10) at the end of three days of consultation meeting in Addis Ababa. This will allow involvement of the African Union, the UN, EU, China and the Troika (UK, US, Norway) as well as South Africa, Nigeria, Algeria, Chad, and Rwanda in the peace process. The timetable for the resumption of talks and the peace process is expected to be set at the AU Summit in South Africa.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said on Wednesday (June 10) that hundreds of thousands of people were at risk of starvation in South Sudan following the resurgence in fighting and deepening food shortages. The ICRC said urgent action needed to be taken.

Sudan

Sudan President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, following his inauguration as President for a new five-year term, announced a number of government changes on Saturday (June 6). Ibrahim Ghandour, previously presidential advisor, becomes Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohamed Zayed is Oil Ministry and Lieutenant-General Mostafa Osman Abeed acting Defense Minister.

The National Bureau for Investments announced this week a United Arab Emirates corporation, Al-Dahra Holding, which specializes in crop production, said it wanted to acquire 2.4 million acres of land in one of the valleys east of the River Nile in northern Sudan. The company is planning to invest a billion dollars in the first phase of the project and US\$10 billion in total.

The AU Summit: the meeting of the Permanent Representatives Committee....

The 30th Ordinary Session of the African Union's Permanent Representatives Committee was held June 7-8 in Pretoria, South Africa. The PRC meeting was the opening element of the 25th Summit of the African Union which is taking place between June 7 and June 15, under the theme: **"2015 Year of Women's Empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063."** The PRC is made up of the countries' permanent representatives to the African Union as well as other plenipotentiaries of member states. The PRC meeting is the first of three statutory meetings to be held under the mantle of the 25th Summit of the African Union. The Permanent Representatives Committee's report goes to the meeting of the Executive Council (of the Foreign Ministers) which is being held June 11-12. The Executive Council gives the report further consideration before adopting it. The final meeting of the summit is the Assembly of the Union, the meeting of the Heads of State and Government taking place June 14 to 15. It is this body, under the AU Chairperson, President Mugabe of Zimbabwe, which declares the final outcome of the Summit.

In opening the PRC session, the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Erastus Mwencha, called for a greater drive to deliver prosperity to Africans. He highlighted developments being undertaken by the African Union under its 50 year framework, Agenda 2063, to achieve integration, prosperity and peace. The Deputy Chairperson mentioned that progress was being made in the high-speed train project. A task force has been designated to follow up implementation. He spoke of the continental effort, led by the AU, to fight the Ebola virus disease, noting that the continent could now see hope of defeating the disease. He particularly commended the African volunteer health workers who went to the affected countries as well as the private sector for its contribution of resources. Mr Mwencha also highlighted progress in the implementation of the **Continental Free Trade Area**, saying that the CFTA would be launched during the Summit. He described this as a project having the capacity to bring industrialization and prosperity to the continent.

The Deputy Chairperson said Africa did not have the time to do things slowly: "We cannot wait for another two decades" to emerge out of poverty, adding that "it is for this reason that the first ten-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063 has agreed to fast track a number of initiatives that will transform the continent." These

will include poverty eradication, undertaking a skills revolution, expanding the continent's economies, modernizing agriculture and agro industries, connecting the continent, doubling intra-African trade, mainstreaming women and youth, silencing the guns, enhancing Africa's voice on the global stage and strengthening domestic resource mobilization.

On the issues of peace and security, the AU Deputy Chairperson said, "We will be looking at the reports on the challenges in Burundi, South Sudan and other places." He said the Summit would also take a close look at the rise of terrorist incidents in Kenya, Nigeria and Somalia, pointing out that Africa was now facing the "new challenges of terrorism, radicalization and extremism." He also said that with thousands of African migrants losing their lives in the Mediterranean Sea while trying to seek greener pastures in Europe, the issues of migration and human trafficking would also be high on the agenda. He said, "Our young people drown each day. Africa should look at the root cause of this challenge, a challenge that has scared the continent so badly."

On the economic front, inter-regional trade will be discussed to ensure Africa moves towards sustaining itself, he said. Also on the agenda will be possible measures to stop the illicit financial activities of multinational companies that have seen Africa losing over US\$50 billion a year.

The Chairperson of the Permanent Representatives Committee, Ambassador Albert R. Chimbindi, urged the PRC and the African Union Commission to lead the process of improving the working practices of the African Union and facilitating the smooth functioning of the AU's policy organs. He said the PRC had the responsibility to ensure the judicious use of the resources of the Union and to follow up on implementation of the decisions taken by the policy organs of the Union. Ambassador Chimbindi described the theme of the summit as pertinent and opportune, pointing out that "we must remember that women constitute more than half of the African Union population, and that they make up 75 percent of our agricultural workforce." He challenged African countries to implement the many decisions already taken by the continent to attain gender equality. "Time is with us", he said, "and we should make that extra effort to ensure the empowerment of the African woman in order to achieve the vision that is enshrined in our 2063 blueprint."

The representative of South African Government, Ambassador Jerry Matjila, Director General of International Relations, noted that the summit is taking place at a critical moment as it is expected to adopt the first 10-year implementation plan for Agenda 2063. The African Union must streamline its working methods, he said, respond to the challenges of peace and security and carve out a participatory role for Africa in the international governance system.

The Ministerial Retreat of the AU Executive Council

The second Ministerial Retreat of the Executive Council of the African Union took place on Tuesday and Wednesday this week June (9 and 10) at the Sandton Convention Centre, Pavilion Foyer-Plenary, in Johannesburg, South Africa. The meeting addressed the theme : "Towards the First 10-Year implementation Plan of Agenda 2063."

The delegates were welcomed by Ms Nkoana-Mashabane, Minister for International Relations and Cooperation of the Republic of South Africa, and Dr Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, who said the success of the first ministerial retreat, held in Bahr Dar, Ethiopia, in January 2014, had encouraged the idea of holding such an occasion on a regular basis. She noted that a ministerial follow-up committee had been established at Bahr Dar to oversee implementation of the decisions of the retreat and of Agenda 2063. It had met twice last year and had submitted reports to the Executive Council. Dr Dlamini-Zuma said the objectives of the second Ministerial Retreat were to discuss inputs for Agenda 2063, the First 10-Year implementation plan, including the priorities for the first 5 to 10 Years; allocation of roles, responsibilities, capacity and distribution of Agenda 2063; and the priorities for Agenda 2063 and the risks and opportunities. The discussions would also cover recommendations for improving the work of the AU Commission, as well as consider key integration issues including the movement of people, goods and services. Ethiopia's delegation to the Executive Council was headed by Dr Tedros Adhanom, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and included Ambassador Dr Tekeda Alemu, Ethiopia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ms Fienesh Mekuria, State Minister for Women, Children and Youth Affairs and other senior Foreign Ministry officials.

Following the opening session, the discussions moved on to various issues: free movement of goods and services and people; harmonization of qualifications and Higher Education in Africa; the streamlining of the African Union Summits and the working methods of the African Union; the first 10-Year implementation plan

of Agenda 2063; and the 70th anniversary of the United Nations and the state of multilateralism and related matters. On the free movement of goods and services, the Deputy Chairperson of the AUC, Erastus Mwencha, gave an account of the AU Ministers of Trade meeting held in Addis Ababa where the Ministers had met to finalize the draft technical documents that will enable the Assembly to launch the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) negotiations at this Summit. He also referred to other consultative meetings on the subject that should encourage Member States, the Regional Economic Communities, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and regional Private Sector organizations. He noted that the CFTA aims to establish a continental market for goods and services as well as provide for the free movement of persons by 2017.

Dr Donald Kaberuka, President of the African Development Bank, and a representative from COMESA outlined the challenges, lessons and experiences on the subject. Participants agreed that the establishment of the CFTA would significantly boost intra-African trade and investment, making it easier to move goods, services, and people around the continent. They emphasized that the CFTA would support sustainable development, create jobs and empower women, as well as strengthen the geopolitical position of Africa vis-à-vis the rest of the world. They stressed that the commitment and political will to dismantle tariff barriers that hampered intra-trade on the continent and achieve the Vision was what mattered most. They also appreciated the importance of infrastructure development and industrialization and economic integration in strengthening RECs.

Concerning the streamlining of the African Union Summits and the working methods of the African Union, Dr Zuma presented a proposal on “How can the AU as an organization be made efficient and effective so as to deliver on the adopted Agenda 2063”. She said this was being done following the decision of the 24th ordinary session of the Assembly in Addis Ababa, in January 2015. This directed the Commission to “make proposals on the streamlining of the AU Summits, including but not limited to: the number of invitees; the length of the agenda and the opening ceremony; the number of decisions and parallel events; and methods of work and rules of procedure”. The Assembly further requested the Executive Council to consider the proposals from the Commission during their Retreat and make appropriate recommendations to this Summit in June.

After discussion, the meeting agreed it was important to clearly identify those issues that should be handled at the level of the Commission, as this would enhance the overall efficiency of the way the Commission supports the work of the Policy Organs. It also said clear delineation of responsibilities and delegation of decision-making should be designed so as to determine what is considered by the Executive Council and by the Assembly, to avoid duplication in the process of handling the matters of the Union. In this regard, the Executive Council should provide recommendations to the Assembly, which in turn should consider delegating some of the decision-making to the Executive Council to take final and binding decisions. The Executive Council said the Assembly should focus its attention on the strategic policy issues that will drive the integration agenda, and the peace and security matters of the continent, as well as deal with contentious issues that require discussion at the highest level. It suggested that the Executive Council should be mandated by the Assembly to take final and binding decisions on issues that did not need to be taken up in the Summit agenda. It would, therefore, be important to clearly identify those issues that should be handled at the level of the Commission level.

Dr Anthony Mothae Maruping, AU Commissioner of Economic Affairs and Professor Emmanuel Nnadozieth, the Executive Secretary of the African Capacity Building Foundation, presented papers on “The first 10-Year implementation plan of Agenda 2063 and Risks”; and “Opportunities, Capacities for Implementation and Division of Roles.” Dr Maruping explained the purpose, challenges and risks of the First 10-Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063. This builds upon the Agenda 2063 framework document, adopted in January 2015, and seeks to accelerate Africa's political, social, economic and technological transformation, while continuing the Pan-African drive for self-determination, freedom, progress and collective prosperity. Covering the period 2014-2023, it is the first of a series of five ten-year Implementation Plans to be developed to realize the vision of Africa 2063.

Professor Nnadozieth underlined the necessity for developing the capacity, skills and knowledge to implement the plan. He emphasized that Agenda 2063 needed capacity imperatives and the division of roles, risks and opportunities. He explained that the African Capacity Building Foundation had conducted stakeholder consultations before presenting its preliminary findings to the AU Commission, to the RECs, UNECA and the AfDB Coordination Committee in Addis Ababa last month. A Stakeholders Feedback Workshop had taken place at the beginning of June. Professor Nnadozieth recommended the importance of organizational restructuring to accommodate the spirit and content of Agenda 2063. He said decentralization of responsibilities was necessary for speedy action and results, and suggested consideration should be given

to having five RECs instead of eight, one for each AU region. He said the role of stakeholders in Agenda 2063 should be encouraged and they should take ownership of the Vision. Professor Nnadozie emphasized that Agenda 2063 was sensitive to changing continental and global environments and successful implementation could be hampered by developments. There was a need to identify and analyze internal and external risks and provide proper measures of risk management.

The meeting also discussed the 70th Anniversary of the United Nations and the state of multilateralism. They agreed that Africa should be an active member of the “global club” and set up mechanisms to take part and establish its own common position. It should also actively participate in the way decisions are made and in the reform of the United Nations.

...the 27th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council opens in Johannesburg

The 27th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council opened on Thursday (June 11) with an address by Dr Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the AU Commission, who underlined that the eyes of African women, young and old, from all walks of life were on this Summit, held under the theme: “Women’s Empowerment and Development for the realization of Agenda 2063.” Dr Zuma stressed that women and girls pinned their hopes on the African Union to act decisively, together with governments, civil society, faith-based organizations, businesses and workers associations, and women’s and youth movements, to ensure that women everywhere in Africa could have access to land, to capital, to clean and affordable energy, to water and sanitation, to jobs and sustainable livelihoods and to health-care. They expected to participate in all areas of human endeavor. The women and girls of Africa, she said, yearned for equal opportunities for education, whether vocational or in the areas of science, engineering, technology, research and innovation: “If we deny the African child an education, we deny them a life.”

The mobilization by the women’s movement on such issues as access to land, to capital, financial inclusion and on representation of women in all areas was, she said, already becoming apparent during the first part of the year. She noted that women in Somalia, Central African Republic, eastern DRC, South Sudan, Darfur, northern Mali and the north of Nigeria wanted peace, for themselves, for their children, their families and communities. They wanted to live normal lives, to plough their fields, and to educate their children. “We must silence the guns”, she said. She said during the last year, the Year of Agriculture 2014, women farmers across the continent had called for the handheld hoe to be consigned to museums and demanded access to modern technology, land, credit and extension services.

While these issues are highlighted by women, they are already contained in AU instruments such as the Maputo Gender Protocol, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality. But if people continued at the same pace of gender transformation as had happened since the 1995 Beijing Women’s Conference, it would take another 80 years to reach full gender parity! This was unacceptable: “We can’t wait for another 80 years. We have to do more to ensure that the continent operates at its full capacity, by including women, so that we can implement our Agenda 2063 effectively.” She noted that the Commission would be launching the inaugural African Gender Scorecard at this Summit. This would provide an instrument to monitor progress, share best practice, and hold each other accountable. She reminded the meeting that a pre-Summit conference on “**Gender is my Agenda**” was held June 8-9; and that the 2nd AU High-Level Panel on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, jointly organized by the AU Commission and the South African Government, was in progress under the theme “Financial inclusion of women in Agribusinesses”. The first High-Level Panel, organized at the Fiftieth Anniversary of the OAU/AU in 2013, provided contributions from African intellectual women to the African Common Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Dr Zuma referred to the Executive Council’s just finished two-day retreat about the first 10-Year Plan of Action for Agenda 2063. The meeting also strategized on the challenges of integration, with the focus on free movement of people and goods, as well as the harmonization of higher education in Africa. Dr Zuma stressed that trade between African countries remained below global standards although, she said, a number of regions through their Regional Economic Communities [RECs] were making progress, in particular the ECA, SADC, ECOWAS and COMESA. She noted the **Tripartite Free Trade Area** agreed by COMESA, ECA and SADC this week, and the proposed launch of the African Continental Free Trade negotiations this year. These, she said, are all aimed at growing intra-African trade amongst ourselves and thereby creating jobs and wealth. She said the Council retreat had recognized that Agenda 2063 priorities, including a skills revolution and continental connections through transport, energy and ICT infrastructure, were critical enablers for increasing economic integration and shared prosperity.

Our discussion on the harmonization of higher education, she underscored, was prompted by the calls from across the continent by students and young professionals and entrepreneurs, expressed forcefully during the Agenda 2063 consultations - that they want to be able to study, work and have their qualifications recognized everywhere on the continent. We must therefore move faster to ensure that higher education in Africa is comparable and compatible, with recognition of credentials that facilitate transferability of skills, knowledge and expertise. We want to ensure that African citizens, especially our young people, can use their qualifications to work anywhere in Africa.

Dr Zuma also emphasized the importance of speeding up the free movement of people and goods. There has been progress in the RECs but it was necessary to duplicate best practices between and among RECs. She said the Summit should keep in mind the concerns of the majority of our continent's population, our young men and women, for access to opportunities. She referred to the challenge of xenophobia and the tragedy of thousands of young Africans undertaking perilous journeys across the seas to look for greener pastures. This should provide the motivation to speed up the implementation of our Agenda 2063 so that Africans can develop skills within Africa, have jobs in Africa so they only leave because they wanted to, not because they had to. She said "We have to move on the skills and vocational revolution, especially in the areas of science, technology, innovation, engineering and mathematics," adding "we must empower our young people to contribute as innovators, entrepreneurs, manufacturers, traders, scientists, inventors, professionals, workers, farmers, to become the drivers of our transformation."

Dr Zuma said she had just returned from the World Summit on the Ocean, but although the matters discussed there impacted on Africa, there had been very few Africans present. The "Blue" Economy includes economic aspects as well as environmental concerns for marine life and pollution of the oceans. She said the first ever **Women in Maritime Africa Conference** was held in Luanda a few months ago to mobilize women and look at Pan-African cooperation to ensure greater African ownership and participation in this sector. She reminded the audience that **July 25 will be the start of the Decade of African Oceans and Seas**. This would be an important step towards Africa reclaiming ownership of this part of its natural resources and managing them in the interest of all Africans. Dr Zuma concluded by noting that the adoption of the First Ten-Year Plan of Action for Agenda 2063 would take Africa to the next step of implementation. This would help the continent move forward in its "unstoppable quest for a peaceful, integrated, prosperous and people-centered Africa that will take its rightful place in the world."

The Executive Council session was then officially opened by Zimbabwe's Foreign Minister, Mr Shimbaradze, the Chairperson of the Executive Council. In its two days of debate, the Executive Council is also deliberating on the different reports of the ministerial meetings organized by the AU Commission over the last six months, as well as discussing the agenda items in preparation for the Assembly of Heads of State and Government. The report of the Executive Council will be submitted to the Assembly for adoption.

The Assembly will hold serious discussions behind closed doors on security challenges across the continent, including the continued threat of terrorism in Kenya, Nigeria and Somalia, the South Sudan peace process, Libya, and whether the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC) have a future now that the African Standby Force is getting close to full deployment. Another area that will feature in debate will be human trafficking, the issue of migrants crossing the Mediterranean and the treatment of migrants and refugees. A report from the AU Peace and Security Council said the Summit would be an occasion for the South African government to explain its position and indicate what steps are being taken to prevent incidents happening again. The AU position on proposed changes at the United Nations, with particular attention to the role and level of representation of African states in the U.N. system, will also be discussed. Elham Ibrahim, AU Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, said infrastructure and energy will also be given a great deal of attention as part of the AU's New Partnership for Africa's Development [NEPAD] economic cooperation program. The Heads of State and Government will also focus on improving the continental infrastructure.

COMESA, the ECA and SADC launch the Tripartite Free Trade Area

The Heads of State and Government of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) met on Wednesday (June 10) in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt to launch the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area (Tripartite FTA), as we previewed last week. This will be composed of **an integrated market of 26 countries with a combined population of 632 million people, 57% of Africa's population, with a total GDP of USD\$1.3 trillion, over half of Africa's GDP**. The establishment of TFTA will bolster intra-regional trade by creating a wider market

that will increase investment flow and enhance regional infrastructure development. Once the TFTA comes into force it will address such concerns as management of trade disputes and protection for small manufacturers. The ultimate goal is to ensure easy movement of goods in all 26 countries without payment of duties.

The Agreement, five years in the making, is seen as a decisive step towards achieving the African vision of establishing the **African Economic Community** as laid down in the Lagos Plan of Action, the Abuja Treaty of 1991 and the resolutions of the AU Summit in the Gambia in 2006. The meeting was attended by the Presidents of Egypt, Malawi, Namibia, Sudan, and Zimbabwe, Ethiopia's Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn and numerous vice-presidents and other ministers representing all 26 countries. Mr Sindiso Ngwenya, Secretary General of COMESA and Chairperson of the Tripartite Task Force, Ambassador Dr Richard Sezibera, Secretary General of the EAC, and Dr Stergomena Lawrence Tax, Executive Secretary of SADC were also present. Attending as observers were the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank, the World Bank, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Development Program, Global Rights Network for Development, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the Trade and Development Bank of Eastern and Southern Africa.

President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi of Egypt, in his opening remarks, commended the progress made in implementing programs in the three key pillars of market integration, infrastructure and industrialization. He underscored the importance of the member states working together to continue to deliver on the objectives of the Tripartite FTA, in light of the fact that the region is endowed with abundant resources required for development. President Mugabe of Zimbabwe officially opened the Summit and called for the expeditious conclusion of negotiations on outstanding issues, and for due prioritization of industrial and infrastructure development to support trade. He then handed over the Chairmanship of the Summit to Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn of Ethiopia, Chairperson of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), who welcomed the conclusion of the negotiations and stressed the importance of infrastructure and industrial development as drivers of economic and structural transformation across the Tripartite region. He emphasized that the Agreement paved the way for a Continental Free Trade Area that would combine the three largest regional communities.

The final communiqué emphasized that the establishment of a Tripartite FTA would bolster intra-regional trade by creating a wider market, increase investment flows, enhance competitiveness and encourage regional infrastructure development, as well as pioneer the integration of the African continent. It said the tripartite integration process was based on a developmental approach, anchored on the three pillars of: "Market Integration symbolized by the Tripartite FTA; Infrastructure Development to facilitate and enhance connectivity, communication and movement of goods and persons and reduce the cost of doing business; and Industrial Development, which will enhance competitiveness and address supply and productive capacity constraints." It said the initiative was a decisive step to achieving the African vision of establishing the African Economic Community envisioned in the Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos of 1980, the Abuja Treaty of 1991 and the Resolution of the African Union Summit in Banjul in 2006, which directed the AU Commission and the Regional Economic Communities to harmonize and coordinate policies and programs as part of the strategy for rationalization, increasing intra-Africa trade and investment, and integration of tripartite economies into the global economy.

The Sharm El Sheikh Declaration, which launched the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area, adopted the Implementation Plan detailing activities to be taken at national and regional level to fulfil the provisions of the Agreement. It directed negotiations on outstanding issues from Phase 1 to operationalize the FTA, should be concluded expeditiously, and said the Phase II negotiations covering trade in services, cooperation in trade and development, competition policy, intellectual property rights and cross-border investment should now start. It also instructed that the programs for work and the roadmaps developed for the Industrialization and Infrastructure Pillars should be well resourced and prioritized.

There is still much to be done. The Tripartite Free Trade Area still needs to be fine-tuned and ratified. The timeline for bringing down trade barriers has yet to be worked out and national parliaments have to ratify the deal within two years. Boosting intra-African trade will also depend upon the capacity of states to make what each other want and at competitive prices, rather than just lowering or scrapping tariffs. The details of the agreement and its implementation will also be important.

President El-Sisi said at the conclusion of the meeting: “We have told the world today of our desire to adopt practices that are necessary to increase trade among ourselves. We will do whatever is possible to activate this agreement.” World Bank President, Jim Yong Kim, said the TFTA would allow Africa “to make tremendous progress and move the entire continent forward,” adding “Africa has made it clear that it is open for business.” He welcomed the progress made and emphasized the importance of reducing transactional costs. He said that in order to reduce poverty the Tripartite FTA must be complemented by measures to improve education, access to finance and infrastructure. He reaffirmed the World Bank Group’s commitment to mobilization of the necessary resources for the effective implementation of development programs through the participation of both the private and public sectors. Mukhisa Kituyi, the Secretary General of UNCTAD, also stressed the need for Africa to enhance its competitiveness in international markets. He emphasized the importance of deployment of infrastructure as an enabler for efficient productivity and trade. He called upon the leaders to focus on action and to expedite implementation of the Tripartite FTA, building on the long-term vision of building the African Economic Community.

The launch of the Tripartite Free Trade Agreement was welcomed in advance by business leaders at the World Economic Summit for Africa in Cape Town last week, with participants highlighting the fact that just 12 % of African countries’ total trade is with each other, compared to 55% percent or so in Asia and 70% in Europe. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development said in a 2013 report that one reason for weak intra-African trade is that the focus has been more on the elimination of trade barriers than the development of capacity. It said “If African governments want to achieve their objective of boosting intra-African trade, they have to create more space for the private sector to play an active role in the integration process”, adding that the best way to boost African trade was to concentrate on developing local capacity so that African states would be able to sell to each other at prices that are more competitive than outsiders can provide.

The next Tripartite Summit will be held in Rwanda.

Ethiopia’s Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) on Climate Change

Ethiopia has submitted its new climate action plan named Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This is well in advance of a new universal climate change agreement, which is expected to be reached at the UN climate conference in Paris, in December this year. UNFCCC Executive Secretary, Christiana Figueres, has been encouraging countries to come forward with their INDCs as soon as possible in order to underline their commitment and support for a successful outcome in Paris. Governments have agreed to submit their INDCs in advance of Paris, and countries have agreed that there will be no back-tracking on the national climate plans, which means that the level of ambition to reduce emissions will increase over time, not diminish. Ms Figueres also noted that “To deliver this plan, **international climate finance will be essential. This shows why it is imperative that rich countries deliver on their existing commitments on climate finance, including to the Green Climate Fund, and prepare to make new ones in Paris for the post-2020 period.**”

According to its action plan, Ethiopia intends to limit its net greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 145MT CO₂e or lower by 2030. The total GHG emissions of the country in 2010 were 150 MT Co₂e, of which 42% came from livestock-emitted methane and nitrous oxide. The emissions’ reduction, excluding the 19MT CO₂e from the export of electric power to the neighboring states, will constitute a reduction of 255 MT CO₂ (64%) compared to what “business-as-usual” (BAU) emissions would produce in 2030. Ethiopia also intends to undertake adaptation initiatives to reduce the vulnerability of its population, its environment and its economy to the adverse effect of climate change. This will be on the basis of Climate Resilient Green Economy Strategy (CRGE).

The document also identifies the priority gases to be considered in the Ethiopian Green Economy strategy, as well as the sectors contributing most to GHG emissions, along with four mitigating plans. The intended pillars of mitigation are: improving crop and livestock production practices for greater food security and higher farmer incomes while reducing emissions; protecting and re-establishing forests for their economic value and ecosystem services, sequestering significant amounts of carbon dioxide and increasing the carbon stock of the landscape; expanding power generation from renewable energy; and providing modern and energy-efficient technologies for the transport, industry and building sectors of the economy.

The Ethiopian Intended Nationally Determined Contribution has been through an inclusive process and it is also aligned with the national Growth and Development Plan as well as the Climate Resilient Green Economy vision and country strategy. Carbon credit selling is mentioned as one means of achieving the country’s Green

Economy strategy. Adaptation to climate change is being fully mainstreamed into development activities and sector adaptation plans. These are the long-term and near-term goals of the INDC. Also detailed are ways to improve livelihoods and the landscape under three approaches, dealing with drought, flood and other cross-cutting interventions, which are detailed under the medium- and long-term actions laid out in the document. The INDC document identifies major areas for future research: quantifying and assigning shares of unsupported and supported contributions; and identifying the technical support needed to introduce new and additional policies and actions.

The Ministry of Environment and Forest will be responsible for organizing the monitoring and evaluation of these adaptation plans, which are also subject to consultative dialogue to review their implementation. **The country has already removed fossil fuel subsidies to enable enhanced generation and use of clean and renewable energy.** If Ethiopia's planned activities are fully implemented, it will reduce per capita emissions to 1.1 TCO₂e by 2030. This will exceed any expectations on the basis of either fairness or ambition while contributing largely towards the achievement of the objective of the Convention. This fairness is underlined by the fact that for more than 80% of the abatement potential, the costs will be less than US\$1 per ton CO₂e.

While pinpointing the means of implementation, the document asserts the necessity of predictable, sustainable and reliable support in the form of finance, capacity building and technology transfer. Indeed, this is of paramount importance as the estimate of required expenditure for the implementation of the Climate Resilient Green Economy Strategy by 2030 is US\$150 billion.

The submission of Ethiopia's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) to the UNFCCC was welcomed by Laurent Fabius, French Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development and COP21 President, and by Oxfam's international climate adviser, Tim Gore. M. Fabius said the goals set by Ethiopia reflect its determination to become a carbon-neutral economy over the long-term, and welcomed the fact that the Contribution included "adaptation measures aimed at reducing the vulnerability of the Ethiopian people and economy to the impact of climate disruption." Tim Gore said "Oxfam welcomes the ambitious INDC from Ethiopia, as it sets both far-reaching short-term and long-term goals on adaptation and reducing emissions." He said the emission reduction target of at least 64% by 2030 underpinned the country's strategy which, he noted, counted on the active participation of all citizens in achieving the planned goals, in particular farmers and pastoralists. He said "Ethiopia's INDC also aims to integrate actions that improve the status of women and the welfare of children." Mr Gore added: "Ethiopia's strategy to build a climate resilient green economy is showing the way to rich countries - from Australia to Japan - which have yet to announce their final country commitments ahead of the critical climate summit in Paris in December." Agreement reached in Paris will come into effect in 2020, empowering all countries to act to prevent average global temperatures rising above 2 degrees Celsius and take advantage of the many opportunities that arise from the necessary global transformation to clean and sustainable development.

The Africa Progress Panel Report 2015

The 2015 document of the Africa Progress Report has been released. The Report is issued annually by the Africa Progress Panel, chaired by Kofi Anan, a Nobel Laureate and former Secretary-General of the United Nations. The panel, which is dedicated to ensuring equitable and sustainable development for Africa, brings together an extensive network of policy analysts and think tanks across Africa and the world, operating in an independent policy space and offering the capacity to influence decision-makers. This year's Africa Progress Report stresses that "eradicating poverty, building more inclusive societies and meeting the energy needs of the world's poorest countries and people" is the defining international cooperation challenge of the 21st century. The Report capitalizes on the link between energy, climate and development and says the fact that Africa is well placed to lead the world on low-carbon and climate-resilient development is central to this year's Africa Progress Report.

The Report is issued at an opportune time with the **Third International Conference on Financing for Development due to be held in July in Addis Ababa** and the United Nations General Assembly taking place in New York in September. The Report emphasizes that global leaders should take the opportunity to reach accord on a financing framework as a central element in their efforts to adopt a new set of sustainable development goals.

This year's Africa Progress Report document consists of three key sections. These include Africa's energy imperative: challenges, opportunities and the continent's energy transformation; Africa's opportunity on

climate: the continent's stake in the global deal, international action and securing a better deal for Africa; and the road ahead and recommendations.

Reflecting on Africa's energy challenge, the report maintains that "nowhere are the threads connecting energy, climate and development more evident than in Africa." It notes that the continent's energy systems are underpowered, inefficient and unequal. This poses challenges to the efforts of enhancing economic growth, job creation and poverty reduction, and so reinforces inequalities of wealth and gender and within rural-urban demographic areas. In the context of promoting universal access to energy systems with the potential to provide adequate and reliable supplies of power, the Report admits that Africa's energy systems are far from able to cope. The report says the energy gap between Africa and the rest of the world is widening and particularly so in Sub-Saharan Africa. According to the Report, the 2015 per capita energy use in Sub-Saharan Africa is no more than 24% of the level of South Asia, and fifteen years ago it stood at 30%. Electricity consumption for the whole of Sub-Saharan Africa is way below that of Spain. The Report claims two out of every three people in Africa have no access to electricity. The figures with regard to access to clean, non-polluting cooking facilities are even gloomier, with nearly four out of five people depending for cooking on solid biomass, with wood and charcoal providing much of this. Some 600,000 Africans die each year of household air pollution, nearly half of whom are children under the age of five.

Consequently, the Report says, although "the international community has set the goal of achieving universal access to modern energy by 2030; Sub-Saharan Africa is not on track to achieve that target." Similarly, on matters of expanding power generation and financing energy for all, the panel estimates that US\$55 billion a year are needed until 2030 in order to meet the demand and achieve universal access to electricity. The greatest barrier to this, it says, will be the failure of African governments to build credible tax systems. Increasing Sub-Saharan Africa's tax-to-GDP ratio by just 1% of GDP could cover half of the financial gap, with additional revenues from domestic finance mobilization and sources from the international community providing the rest necessary.

The Report says that governance of power utilities remains at the heart of Africa's energy crisis, adding that power shortages, restricted access to electricity and dependence on biomass for fuel cost the region annually 2-4% of its GDP. This continues to put brakes on efforts for job creation and investment, despite the evidence of the fifteen years of economic growth. On the continent's energy potential, the report underlined that "Africa's energy deficits stand in stark contrast to the region's potential," noting that in light of urbanization, population surge and economic growth as pull factors of a rising energy demand, African leaders should forge sustained political leadership to boost power generation and thus meet the Universal Access to Energy goal by 2030.

At the same time, the Report maintains that "after decades of neglect, a powerful current of energy reform is [now] sweeping across Africa." Among encouraging efforts towards energy transformation, the report notes that "renewable energy is at the forefront of the changes". It points to Ethiopia, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa. **With reference to Ethiopia, the Report states that hydropower generation projects in Ethiopia have been working to maximize closer regional cooperation, which in turn could greatly reduce the costs of meeting the goal of sustainable energy for all.** According to the report, other notable changes taking place include the 4% annual increase of net electricity generation witnessed across 33 countries, with most aiming to target a doubling of capacity by 2020; rising domestic and foreign investment; President Barack Obama's Power Africa initiative; energy cooperation between Africa and the European Union; the emergence of China as the game-changer; and the emerging partnership between governments and the private sector.

The second key section of the Africa Progress Report deals with "**Climate change: challenges and opportunities in Africa.**" The Report describes the risks associated with climate change as substantial in Africa, where even without global warming high levels of background poverty, dependence on rainfall, weak infrastructures and limited provision of safety nets aggravate vulnerability. According to the Report, Africa's rural poor will experience the most severe and immediate damage as rising sea levels may threaten coastal areas, reduced rainfall or increased evaporation compromise hydropower systems, and possible new health threats emerge. So, the Report argues "Climate justice demands international cooperation and basic human solidarity to contain these risks." At the same time, the Report says climate change offers African governments the opportunity "to put in place policies that are long overdue" and "to demonstrate leadership on the international stage."

In this regard, the Report notes that countries like “Ethiopia, Kenya and Rwanda have already developed climate-resilient development strategies aimed at reducing poverty, raising productivity and cutting greenhouse gas emissions.” The Report holds that the risks associated with climate change have shifted attention from opportunities to build more climate-resilient approaches to development. It therefore asserts these approaches can offer “triple-win” benefits: boosting agricultural productivity, reducing poverty and strengthening international efforts to combat climate change. It also emphasizes that land use should become a focal point for strategies aimed at unlocking these benefits. The Report also underlines that “No region has made a smaller contribution to climate change [than Africa] and yet will pay the highest price for failure to avert a global climate catastrophe.” It therefore notes that from the African perspective there are two urgent priorities for the Paris climate summit in December 2015. The first is the need for a thriving deal that delivers on the commitment to keep global warming within the 2°C threshold; and the second is that the climate agreement must address the financing and capacity-building challenges that Africa faces in responding to the climate challenge.

The third and the last key section of the Africa Progress Report sets out the actions expected from African governments, the international community and the private sector. The Report urges African leaders to be more ambitious in Africa’s energy strategies, to prioritize the development of balanced public-private partnerships and create conditions for expanded private investment, seize the low carbon opportunity, leave no one behind, cut pro-rich subsidies, deepen reform of energy governance, adopt new models of planned urbanization, and develop and act upon an African strategy for the Paris climate summit. The Report also urges the international community to create a “global connectivity fund” under the auspices of the Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) partnership, unlock private finance, strengthen the role of the African Development Bank and World Bank financing, overhaul the climate finance architecture, demonstrate their serious intent at the Addis Ababa Financing for Development Summit in July 2015, phase out fossil fuel subsidies, raise the level of ambition at the Paris climate summit, and redouble efforts to combat tax evasion. The Report further calls on private investors and multinational corporations to demand an ambitious Paris climate agreement, accelerate the exit from carbon through divestment, encourage innovation for greater access and stop the secrecy, disclosing beneficial ownership structures, and report transparently on all energy related contracts.

The 10th Northern Corridor Integration Projects Summit in Kampala

The Northern Corridor’s Integration Projects was established by Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda, with the aim of expanding integration of the region, facilitating competitiveness in the global market and expediting development. The Northern Corridor is the transport corridor linking the landlocked countries of Uganda, Rwanda, South Sudan and Burundi to Kenya's Port of Mombasa. The Northern Corridor Integration Projects were first established as a tripartite initiative at a meeting of President Yoweri Museveni (Uganda), President Uhuru Kenyatta (Kenya) and President Paul Kagame following concerns over the length of time taken for cargo to travel from Rwanda and Uganda to and from Mombasa. The three leaders agreed the infrastructure along the Corridor had to be improved, and in a coordinated manner, to lower the cost of doing business.

In addition to Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda, South Sudan is now a member state, Burundi has applied to join and Ethiopia and Tanzania are observers. The Northern Corridor Integration Projects (NCIP) now covers and coordinates some 16 integration and development projects in several categorized clusters. Uganda is coordinating the projects of the Standard Gauge Railway, ICT Infrastructure, Oil Refinery Development, Fast Tracking Political Federation and Financing. Kenya’s cluster of projects are Power Generation, Transmission and Interconnectivity, Crude Oil Pipeline Development, Refined Petroleum Products Pipeline Development, Commodities’ Exchange, Human Resource Capacity Building and Land. Rwanda is responsible for coordinating Immigration, Tourism, Trade, Labor and Services (ITTLS), Single Customs Territory, Defense Cooperation, Peace and Security Cooperation and Air Space Management.

Last week’s meeting, the 10th Summit, on Saturday (June 6) was attended by the Heads of State of Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda and South Sudan’s Defense and Veterans Affairs Minister, Kuol Manyang Juuk, as well as Ethiopia’s Foreign Minister, Dr Tedros Adhanom and Burundi’s Minister for External Relations and International Cooperation, Alain Aime Nyamitwe, and representatives of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania and other stakeholders. President Museveni, reviewing the progress of implementation of projects said much had been done since the last meeting but “a lot more should have been done”. He welcomed the establishment of the Northern Corridor Initiatives Authority, based in Kenya which, he said, would help in the coordination of project implementation. Rwanda’s President Kagame reminded the meeting of the importance

of continuing momentum on coordination and implementation; and President Kenyatta of Kenya said further commitment was needed to organize the clusters of projects.

Ethiopia's Foreign Minister Dr Tedros welcomed the practical steps being taken towards regional integration and praised the progress he had noticed since the last meeting. He said the progress on implementation of the Northern Corridor Integration Projects demonstrated the commitment of the parties towards greater integration in the region as well as across the whole of Africa. Dr Tedros described this "as Pan-Africanism in practice". Sharing similar experiences, he mentioned the matrix of regional integration being implemented between Ethiopia and Djibouti and also referred to the Lamu Port Southern Sudan-Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor project that Kenya has launched. He said these partnerships were bearing fruit and he also emphasized that the Horn of Africa countries could take part in some of the specific projects of the Northern Corridor Integration Projects.

Dr Tedros suggested the projects could be more productive if the Political Federation Project was given further emphasis. He called for the root causes of any challenges to implementation of any projects to be identified so that causes, not symptoms, could be dealt with. He said the strengthening and diversification of financing mechanisms for the projects should also be an area for priority. Dr Tedros praised the engagement of the private sector for the first time in the meetings of the Corridor and stressed the importance of engaging the private sector in inter-country integration projects and infrastructure development commitments. He said private sector engagement could be crucial for the realization of transforming the region's economy and completing flagship projects by strengthening the private-public partnership. He pointed out that Ethiopia was incorporating the private sector in various areas including infrastructure and energy development.

The Summit considered the reports of the preceding meetings of the Technical Committee (June 4) and the Ministerial Committee (June 5) and endorsed the recommendations forwarded to it. The communiqué of the summit outlined updates on the projects and the directions given at the meeting. It reached a consensus on the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) Development, and noted that Uganda had signed a US\$3.32 billion Engineering Procurement and Construction contract with China Harbor and Engineering Company for the Northern and Eastern Route of the Standard Gauge Railway. The Summit reviewed the progress made in the construction of the Mombasa-Nairobi Section of the Standard Gauge Railway and said details should be submitted to the EXIM Bank of China before the next Summit. Concerning Political Federation, the communiqué said the Summit had decided to refer the process to the East African Community organs and to report on this during the EAC Summit in November 2015. On a Single Customs Territory, the Summit called upon revenue authorities and other stakeholders of the partner states to make continuous efforts to improve performance on cargo clearance times and costs and work towards the minimum indicators identified. On Human Resource Capacity-building, the Summit directed the Ministers to prioritize funding for the Centers of Excellence during the next financial year 2015/2016 and to offer scholarships to students from partner states who were enrolled in the Centers.

With regard to power generation, transmission and interconnectivity, the summit reiterated the urgent need to observe the agreed timelines for the completion of infrastructure developments that would facilitate power trade between the partner states. In a consensus on Commodities' Exchange, the Summit directed ministers to ensure value addition in agricultural products and develop regional trading platforms in commodities. On Defense, Peace and Security Cooperation, the summit noted the operationalization of the Joint Intelligence Center in Nairobi and reaffirmed the commitment to jointly address the security threats, including terrorism, in the region. It also noted, in regard to Air Space Management, the challenges facing national carriers and directed the relevant sector ministers to strategically address the issue of competition and expedite the establishment of a Northern Corridor Airspace bloc.

A number of agreements between member states were signed, covering the total liberalization of professional labor and services; cyber security; for coordinated foreign policy; and for mutual defense.

The UN Commission of Inquiry: another damning report on Eritrea

The report of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea was released at the end of last week and distributed on Monday (June 8) in Geneva. It is an impressive documents, with detailed testimonies to support its unequivocal conclusions that the Government of Eritrea is responsible for "systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations;" and that these have created a climate of fear in which dissent is stifled, and where that a large proportion of the population is subject to forced labor and imprisonment, and hundreds

of thousands of refugees have fled the country. Some of these violations, it adds, may constitute crimes against humanity. The report details the way information is collected on people's activities, their supposed intentions and even their thoughts and is used to rule through fear in a country where individuals are routinely arbitrarily arrested and detained, tortured, disappeared or extra-judicially executed. It also provides details of the exploitation of national service conscripts and forced labor. It identifies the main perpetrators of all these violations as the Eritrean Defense Forces, in particular the Eritrean Army; the National Security Office; the Eritrean Police Forces; the Ministry of Information; the Ministry of Justice; the Ministry of Defense; the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ); the Office of the President; and the President.

The report strongly urges continued international protection for Eritrean refugees and warns against sending refugees back to danger in a country that punishes anyone who tries to leave without permission. It says that to ascribe the decision of people to leave Eritrea solely to economic reasons is "to ignore the dire situation of human rights in Eritrea and the very real suffering of its people. Eritreans are fleeing severe human rights violations in their country and are in need of international protection." The majority of those who have been forced to return have been "arrested, detained and subjected to ill-treatment and torture."

The Commission of Inquiry was established by the UN Human Rights Council in June 2014 to conduct an investigation of all alleged violations of human rights in Eritrea, including: extrajudicial killings; enforced disappearances; arbitrary arrest and detention; torture and inhumane prison conditions; violations of freedom of expression and opinion, of freedom of association and assembly, of religion and belief, and of movement; as well as forced military conscription. The three-member commission, chairman Mike Smith (Australia), Victor Dankwa (Ghana), and Ms Sheila B. Keetharuth (Mauritius) the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Eritrea, was appointed by the president of the Human Rights Council in September 2014. The Eritrean authorities ignored repeated requests by the Commission for direct access to the country as well as for information, so the Commission travelled to eight other countries and carried out some 550 confidential interviews with Eritrean witnesses who had fled the country. It also received some 160 written submissions. It noted a widespread fear of reprisals with many potential witnesses residing outside Eritrea "afraid to testify, even on a confidential basis, because they assumed they were still being clandestinely monitored by the authorities and therefore feared for their safety and for family members back in Eritrea." The report also describes the repressive systems used by the Government including an "all-embracing domestic surveillance network" in which neighbors spy on neighbors and even family members mistrust each other. It says the Government is bent on controlling Eritreans with a "pervasive control system used in absolute arbitrariness to keep the population in a state of permanent anxiety, a vast security apparatus that has penetrated all levels of society. "It is not law that rules Eritreans - but fear."

The Commission finds "that systematic, widespread and gross human rights violations have been and are being committed by the Government of Eritrea and that there is no accountability for them...The enjoyment of rights and freedoms are severely curtailed in an overall context of a total lack of rule of law." It says "violations in the areas of extrajudicial executions, torture (including sexual torture), national service and forced labor may constitute crimes against humanity." It describes the judicial system as lacking independence and the administration of justice is "completely deficient." Violations of the right to fair trial, or even any trial or due processes of law, are commonplace. The Government frequently interferes in the administration of justice, not least through the Special Courts. Eritreans are unable to move at will, to express themselves freely, to practice their religion without undue interference, enjoy unrestricted access to information or to have the liberty to assemble and associate. The Government uses enforced disappearances and extrajudicial executions to crush any real or perceived opposition. Arbitrary detention is ubiquitous and "arrests are often unjust, unpredictable unreasonable and disproportionate." Conditions of detention in the country's network of jails are extremely harsh and the practice of keeping detainees in incommunicado detention or in isolation is widespread. Persons arrested or detained are routinely subject to forms of ill-treatment amounting to torture. The Commission says the use of torture is so widespread that "it can only conclude that it is a policy of the Government to encourage its use for the punishment of individuals perceived as deviant and for extorting confessions." Monitoring of detention centers is non-existent.

The report notes numerous extrajudicial executions and arbitrary killings. Before 1998, war veterans with disabilities, political opponents, and Muslims scholars were subject to summary execution or extrajudicial killing. Soldiers accused of cowardice or desertion during the 1998-2000 war were systematically executed as were Eritreans and Ethiopians suspected of being "collaborators of the enemy" after the war, in particular members of the Kunama who were accused of having supported the Government of Ethiopia. Since then, extrajudicial executions have continued to punish perceived critics, suspected smugglers or ordinary citizens

for arbitrary reasons. Mass killings have also been perpetrated against ethnic groups. The Government implemented a shoot-to-kill policy for those trying to cross the border after 2000 and while it accepts this policy might have been revised it also notes that as recently as late 2014 people were still being shot at while trying to cross the border.

The report goes into detail of the way the Government, under what it calls the pretext of defending the integrity of the State and ensuring national self-sufficiency, has subjected much of the population to open-ended national service, either in the army or through the civil service. National service is supposed to last 18 months: in reality conscripts end up serving for an indefinite period, often for years in harsh and inhumane conditions. The report notes that women conscripts are at extreme risk of sexual violence during national service. Indeed, this is "widespread and indeed notorious in military training camps", and can amount to "sexual slavery". A majority of these conscripts are subjected to forced labor that effectively abuses, exploits and enslaves them. Indeed, "the use of forced labor is so prevalent in Eritrea that all sectors of the economy rely on it and all Eritreans are likely to be subject to it at some point in their lives." The report concludes that "forced labor in this context is a practice similar to slavery in its effects and, as such, is prohibited under international human rights law."

The Report provides evidence for the use of forced labor in the construction of the Bisha Mine. The Commission details the evidence it collected of the use of forced labour in the development and exploitation of the Bisha mine run by the Canadian company, Nevsun, which started the extraction of gold in February 2011 and switched to copper extraction in 2012. It concludes that the majority of the "workers" employed between 2008 to 2011 by the main Eritrean company involved in developing the site, Segen, "were in fact conscripts performing their national service" and had been put at the disposal of Segen by the army. They constructed the transport infrastructure, housing compounds for mining company officials a few kilometres away from the mine, and all of the mine infrastructure. Testimonies collected by the Commission show conscripts were used by Segen to construct the underground network of tunnels for future mining operations. The Commission points out that compulsory labor underground is totally prohibited under international law.

As a result of all this, approximately 5,000 people leave Eritrea each month, mainly to neighbouring countries. The trend has been upwards, with a marked spike during the latter months of 2014. In October 2014, the registered refugee population was 109,594 in the Sudan and **106,859 in Ethiopia**. The total Eritrean population of concern to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in mid-2014 was 357,406; making up between 6 and 10% of the population in Eritrea.

The Commission makes a considerable number of recommendations including implementation of the Constitution of 1997 and suggesting a separation of powers between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary, the creation of political parties and the holding of free and fair elections, as well as the closure of the Special Court. It calls for an end to all religious persecution, to enforced disappearance, arbitrary arrest and detention, all forms of torture and extrajudicial executions. It wants to see conditions of detention improved and an independent media allowed to operate. National service should be firmly limited to 18 months for all current and future conscripts and [there should be an] end of forced recruitment of children under 18.

In the absence of any tangible progress in these areas, the Commission calls on the international community to "continue to provide protection to all those who have fled and continue to flee Eritrea owing to severe violations of their rights or fear thereof; and respect the principle of non-refoulement and end bilateral and other arrangements that jeopardize the lives of those who seek asylum". It would like to see stronger international solidarity to share responsibility to care for Eritrean refugees and migrants, and the promotion of channels of regular migration from Eritrea to reduce clandestine channels and counter human smuggling and trafficking.

The Eritrean Government responded to the report dismissing it as offering no more than "outrageous claims," "vile slanders," and "wild accusations" aimed at undermining Eritrean sovereignty. A Foreign Ministry statement claimed "These accusations are simply a continuation and an escalation of the politically motivated campaign to undermine the political, economic and social progress the country is making, including in the area of human rights." It added "There are those who will hide behind these outrageous claims to whitewash their transgressions against Eritrea and to seek pretexts for their acts of destabilization."