

A Week in the Horn of Africa

15th May 2015

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News in Brief

African Union

The African Union said it renews its commitment to continue to work with IGAD leadership with a view to finding a peaceful and lasting way out of the present conflict in South Sudan; and intends to expedite the operationalization of the ad hoc Committee of Heads of State and Government established by the Peace and Security Council last December, to enhance Africa's support and input to the peace process.

The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) has extended a US\$3 million grant to the African Union (AU) in support of its 3-year capacity building program. The grant aims to strengthen the Commission's collaboration with AU organs such as the NEPAD Policy and Coordinating Agency, the Pan African Parliament (PAP) and strategic partners.

Ethiopia

An Ethiopian delegation headed by Foreign Minister Dr Tedros Adhanom, including Minister of Finance and Economic Development Sufian Ahmed and other high-level officials visited Morocco at the beginning of the week. It held talks with Morocco's Foreign Minister Salaheddine Mezouar and Minister of Economy and Finance Mohamed Boussaid, on strengthening economic and political relations and implementing previously signed agreements and memoranda. (See article)

Dr Tedros and Minister Sufian briefed members of the Moroccan business community on business opportunities, priorities and benefits of investing in Ethiopia at a dinner hosted by Morocco's Foreign Minister on Monday (May 11).

Dr Tedros said Ethiopia and Morocco needed to expedite business and investment ties. He said Ethiopia had decided to open an embassy in Rabat in order to raise business relations with Morocco to a higher level. Foreign Minister Mezouar said both countries had shared responsibilities in Africa and had a role to play on the continent.

The Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Delegation led by Abadula Gemedo, Speaker of the House of Peoples Representatives arrived in Sudan, Khartoum (May 8, 2015), for a five-day official visit. Upon arrival, the Delegation was welcomed by Dr Elfatih Ezzaldin, Speaker of the National Assembly of Sudan, Abadi Zemu, Ethiopian Ambassador to Sudan, leaders of the Ethio-Sudan Friendship Association, and members of the Ethiopian community. (See article)

The World Bank has extended a US\$350 million loan for financing the agricultural sector in Ethiopia. State Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Ahmed Shide, said the loan would be used to increase the production and productivity of farmers, technology, research, irrigation development and expansion, selected seeds and market access. The project will benefit 1.6 million farmers from 157 woredas in Amhara, Oromia, SNNP, Tigray, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella and Harari Regional States as well as Dire Dawa.

Djibouti

President Ismail Omar Guelleh said in an interview on Sunday (May 10) in Djibouti that China was negotiating for a military base in Djibouti. The President, who said Beijing's presence would be "welcome", said discussions were ongoing. Djibouti currently hosts the US Camp Lemonnier as well French and Japanese bases.

Eritrea

An Eritrean diplomat, Mohammed Idris, who is seeking asylum in Ethiopia citing rights abuses in the country, said "A people that for a long time fought for justice and freedom are now being subjected to injustice."

Kenya

Tourist arrivals in Kenya in the first three months of this year were down by 31% compared to the comparable period last year following the attacks from Al-Shabaab, though numbers started to rise again in March. There was concern that the renewed fighting could prevent farming communities from planting during the imminent rainy season.

Somalia

President Mohamud, during a teleconference on Sunday (May 10), publicly confirmed for the first time that he would "never seek any term extension." During the conference he urged Somalis to work with him and his Government to restore peace and order.

Prime Minister, Omar Abdirashid Ali, on Monday told Parliament the Government was focused on ways to restore security including the training of special forces against terrorism. He said the process of establishing a new central region state showed the Government's commitment to federalism. He called on the parliament to approve appointment of the Electoral, Boundaries and Judicial Service commissions as a necessary preview for implementation of Vision 2016 and next year's election.

The inauguration of the Interim Jubaland Parliament took place in Kismayo on Thursday (May 7) attended by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, Dr Tedros, Foreign Minister of Ethiopia, Ms Amina Mohamed, Foreign Minister of Kenya, and Puntland Vice-President Abdhakim Abdullahi Haji Omar. Dr Tedros said IGAD fully supported Somalia's development to achieve, "what we all deserve: peace, development, prosperity and democracy."

The Interior Ministry has announced that a conference to forge a regional government for Middle Shabelle and Hiiraan regions should start next month, June. In recent months, the Government has been holding separate reconciliation meetings to try and resolve inter-clan problems in these states.

The United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, Philippe Lazzarini, said at the end of last week that Somalia remains one of the largest and most complex emergencies in the world,” with three million people needing humanitarian assistance or livelihood support, among them 740,000 unable to meet food needs, and 200,000 severely malnourished children, and one million internally displaced persons. There was a post-conflict situation as well as existing conflict and different stages of recovery and development.

The European Union has announced the opening of an EU Delegation office to Somalia. The announcement was made on Sunday (May 10) in Mogadishu during celebrations to mark Europe Day and follows the signing of an agreement between President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and the EU Head of Delegation in Somalia, Ambassador d’Urso.

Members of Somaliland’s Upper House of Parliament (the Guurti) on Monday (May 11) unanimously extended the tenure of the President, his deputy and members of the House of Representatives by a year and ten months until 27 April 2017.

The United Nations refugee chief António Guterres visited Kenya and Somalia, met the Presidents of both countries and discussed issues related to refugees and returnees. A common understanding was reached on the need to ensure voluntary, safe and dignified return from Dadaab, in accordance with the Tripartite Agreement; on cooperation to boost security in Dadaab; and on the expansion of additional areas for people to return to in Somalia.

South Sudan

UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, said that UN agencies have assessed “the option of assisted voluntary relocations of internally displaced persons from protection of civilian sites in Wau and Bor.” Tens of thousands of Nuer sought UN protection after killings in late 2013 and early 2014. He said local authorities in these Nuer-inhabited areas had expressed willingness to receive and support these people.

Sudan

Mutaz Musa Abdalla Salim, Sudan’s Minister of Water Resources and Electricity told the Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Delegation that visited the Sudan this week that it was high time that the two countries developed their resources in an equitable and responsible manner. Speaking of the Ethiopian Grand Renaissance Dam (GERD), he said, “any challenge over this great dam is now over,” and he praised the strong spirit of cooperation and partnership among the governments of Ethiopia, Egypt and the Republic of Sudan over utilization of the Nile waters as demonstrated in the signing of the Declaration of Principles. (See article)

The Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Delegation in Sudan

The Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Delegation, led by Abadula Gemed, Speaker of the House of Representatives visited the Republic of Sudan for five-days from May 8, 2015. The Delegation was drawn from all walks of life - Members of Parliament, representatives of political parties, religious leaders, ambassadors as well as diplomats, intellectuals, farmers, the business community, journalists, artists, and students from higher institutions. Upon arrival, the Delegation was welcomed by Dr Elfatih Ezzaldin, Speaker of the National Assembly of Sudan, Abadi Zemu, Ethiopian Ambassador to Sudan, leaders of the Ethio-Sudan Friendship Association, and members of the Ethiopian community.

Abadula Gemed, in his opening remark, expressed his appreciation and gratitude, on behalf of the Government and People of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and the Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Delegation, for the warm welcome and generous hospitality accorded to the delegation since its arrival in Khartoum. He also said that “we have come to the city that we Ethiopians commonly consider as our second home,” adding that the warmth and kindness that the Sudanese people and government accorded to

the delegation is a clear testament to the strong brotherhood and friendship that sustained between the two friendly nations. Hailing the longstanding relations of the people to people and government to government bonds between the two countries, he remarked that Ethiopia and Sudan have enjoyed a legacy of relations based on brotherhood, mutual trust and confidence. “In the course of that long history, Abadula said, we have managed to establish “deep spiritual and social bonds linking our two peoples together.” He also remarked that it is the strong belief of the peoples and government of Ethiopia that the presence of the Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Team in the Republic of Sudan will further strengthen the historic relationship between the two countries, and provide more opportunities to further enhance the existing excellent relations.

Expressing Ethiopia’s strong commitment to cooperation and partnership, Abadula further maintained that these excellent bilateral relations between Sudan and Ethiopia have, in practical terms, enabled the two countries to embark on the signing of many bilateral agreements on mutual cooperation in a number of cases. Accordingly, he noted that the two countries have been able to link up in various economic areas. Moreover, Abadula noted that the defense cooperation between the governments of Ethiopia and the Republic of Sudan has been clearly demonstrated by joint efforts put in place with a view to ensuring sustainable peace and security within a common border, during which a lot of work has so far been done in order to tackle both internal and regional conflicts in a coordinated manner.

However, he underlined the fact that much remains to be done in the years ahead, emphasizing the critical need to enhance the level of implementation of previously signed Agreements, noting that both Ethiopia and Sudan need to look for ways of efficiently exploiting the immense potential of sustainable cooperation in areas such as trade and investment, agriculture and other related fields.

Taking note of the growing challenge international terrorism poses in the Eastern African region in particular and the continent at large, Abadula called for continued extensive co-operation and enhanced joint activities. Reflecting on the growing concerns of human trafficking, which is now particularly rampant in the sub-region, he urged paying close attention and scaling up the level of cooperation and joint commitment between the peoples and governments of both countries, to disrupt the network of human traffickers thereby bringing them to justice. In this regard, he noted, “it is my hope that the issue would certainly be one of those matters that our strengthened partnership would deal with.”

Reflecting on the long course of shared destiny attached to water resources, Abadula maintained that the Nile has contributed a great deal in defining the nature of the relationships between the two countries that has endured for centuries. He reminded those present that the two countries may not have been active in nurturing the positive aspects of this relationship in the past. But since recently, Abadula said, “relations between the two countries showed some notable achievements towards cooperation in the utilization of the Nile River.” According to Abadula, the ever growing partnership and cooperation in the utilization of the waters of the Nile is evidenced in the commendable support that Ethiopia has enjoyed from the Sudanese people and government in its endeavor to build the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, which indeed is something beyond what words can explain. Expressing his gratitude on behalf of the people and Government of Ethiopia, Abadula, therefore, said “your support will always remain in the hearts and minds of Ethiopians.” Abadula further noted that the Nile is an eternal bond between the peoples of both Ethiopia and Sudan, which in fact should always be an instrument of cooperation rather than an object of competition and mistrust. “It is a gift from which all the peoples along its banks can benefit,” he added.

Abadula also expressed his belief that Sudan remains Ethiopia’s natural partner, in all spheres of socio-economic and political development. He thus noted that the Declaration of Principles signed between Sudan, Egypt and Ethiopia last March, and the ongoing tripartite negotiations all stand to be strong attestations for the remarkable solidarity between the peoples and governments of both Ethiopia and Sudan. The current official tour of the Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Delegation to the Republic of Sudan is targeted at reassuring the People and Government of the Republic of Sudan that the construction of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam will not cause significant harm to the downstream countries, he said. Similarly, Abadula called for the People and Government of the Republic of Sudan to lend their continued support to such a landmark project that will benefit the peoples of both countries and beyond. Furthermore, Abadula called for the need to build

the achievements gained so far and thus step up efforts towards cooperating in the areas of environmental protection, particularly along the banks of the Nile River basin.

Recalling several instances where both Ethiopia and Sudan have established multiple platforms of partnership and cooperation, the Speaker noted that various arrangements have so far been set up which, among others, include the High-Level Commission meetings, Joint Ministerial Commission meetings and Joint Border Development Commission meetings and many others. In this regard, “the close working relationship between our leaders, the prevailing favorable atmosphere and exemplary relations, as well as the strategic partnership already existing between our two countries, have inspired us to explore new avenues of cooperation,” he added. Accordingly, Abadula further noted that it is the strong belief of both the people and Government of the FDRE that the current official visit of the Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Delegation to the Republic of Sudan, will greatly help to improve the people-to-people relations and enhance the already rock-solid trust and confidence between the peoples of the two countries.

Upon receiving the delegation, Dr El-fatih Ezzaldin, Speaker of the National Assembly of Sudan, on his part, maintained that the Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Delegation visit showcases the strong and multi-faceted relations between the peoples of Ethiopia and Sudan. Dr El-fatih further noted that Ethiopia and Sudan have a conjoined destiny, in which he said, “you have just landed at Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, your second home.” He further noted that the delegation’s visit would pave the way for distinguished relations between the two nations and reflects a message of the will of the peoples of Sudan and Ethiopia to further cement their ties and realize the renaissance of the two countries.

Mutaz Musa Abdalla Salim, Sudan’s Minister of Water Resources and Electricity, while meeting the Delegation, expressed the spirit of solidarity between the peoples of Ethiopia and Sudan. Reminding the legacy of sharing common goals, aspirations and hopes, the Minister emphasized that it is now high time that the two countries join hands to develop and make use of the resources in an equitable and responsible manner. To such end, forging a political common will and enhancing the ongoing integration scheme remain a priority, he noted. Speaking of the Ethiopian Grand Renaissance Dam (GERD), the Minister said, “Any challenge over this great dam is now over.” The Minister thus lauded the strong spirit of cooperation and partnership among the governments of Ethiopia, Egypt and the Republic of Sudan over utilization of the Nile waters.

The Minister further noted that “the whole world was just taken by surprise following the signing of the Declaration of Principles,” adding that it is indeed remarkable that the three countries managed to move forward with a new chapter ably, independently and of course without international intervention. During the event, Abadula Gameda, Speaker of the House of Representatives and Head of the Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Delegation, noted that Ethiopia and Sudan have shared a history of brotherhood for thousands of years. Abadula also underlined Ethiopia’s commitment to the Declaration of Principles, noting that “we are here to reaffirm our partnership as dealt with previously by leaders of the two countries. The Deputy President of the People’s Movement Party, Tabitha Boutros, in her keynote speech, also expressed the long-standing relations and solidarity between the peoples and Governments of Ethiopia and Sudan. The Deputy President also said that the people and Government of the Republic of Sudan are always committed to enhancing the brotherhood and the bilateral relations between the two countries; reaffirmed the strong commitment of her government towards realizing the equitable and fair utilization of the waters of the Nile.

The Public Diplomacy Delegation also met the Ethiopian community in Khartoum. Ambassador Abadi Zemo, Ethiopian Ambassador to the Republic of Sudan, upon welcoming the delegation, remarked that the current visit of the Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Delegation is instrumental in enhancing the existing strong relations between the two countries and sustaining the sense of brotherhood among the peoples of Ethiopia and Sudan. On behalf of the Public Diplomacy team, Head of the delegation, Speaker Abadula Gameda expressed his appreciation to members of the Ethiopian community in Sudan for taking their time to discuss national and regional matters with the team.

Abadula briefed members of the Ethiopian community about the all-round national efforts the people and Government of the FDRE are exerting in the fight against poverty. He also noted that the national efforts alone

are not sufficient in the fight against poverty, as the role of peace and stability with our neighboring countries remains to be instrumental for the same end. Accordingly, Abadula noted that Ethiopia has excellent relations with countries in the sub-region with the exception of Eritrea. He briefed the community on the progress in the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, the government's commitment in ensuring the spirit of partnership and cooperation with its neighbors, especially with the lower riparian countries. According to Abadula, the Ethiopian government has been working a great deal on ensuring fair and equitable utilization of the waters of the Nile, to which the signing of the Declaration of Principles by Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan serves as a showcase. Nonetheless, Abadula said "government to government relations alone could not maximize the benefits of the spirit of cooperation, as people to people relations among the countries are also significantly vital." In this regard, Abadula maintained that the role of the Ethiopian community in Sudan remains useful in terms of enhancing the existing excellent relations among the peoples of Ethiopia and Sudan. As the Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Delegation visit lasted for only a handful of days, Abadula reminded "members of the Ethiopian community [that they] need to serve as Ethiopian ambassadors in people to people relations" in order to scale up the already strong spirit of brotherhood and solid mutual coexistence between the peoples and governments of the two countries.

Following Abadula's briefing, members of the Ethiopian community were offered the opportunity to reflect their views. Accordingly some members of the Ethiopian community raised on-going concerns with regard to human trafficking in the sub-region. In this regard, the Ethiopian community expressed their strong desire to live and work back home on condition that some arrangements are made with respect to working in Ethiopia in micro and small business engagements, into which they showed their readiness to return and invest their savings. As regards concerns of illegal migration, members of the Ethiopian community related that they are more than willing to cooperate with the Ethiopian government in terms of disrupting the networks of human trafficking. Expressing his respect for the concerns raised by the members of the Ethiopian community, Head of the Delegation, Abadula, underlined the nefarious impacts of pursuing the dangerous paths of illegal migration, stressing that the Ethiopian government is ready to cooperate with the Ethiopian community in Sudan in tackling human trafficking, adding that Ethiopia offers ample opportunities for all of its citizens who are bent on working hard to change their livelihood.

The Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Delegation also met with Youth unions, Women's Associations, Musicians' Associations and Sports Associations of Sudan. The Delegation made fruitful deliberations in inter-political parties' joint session, which is organized by the Council of African Political Parties; in an inter-religious leaders' joint session and inter-parliamentary meetings, of both the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Republic of Sudan.

During the tour, The Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Delegation visited the Merowe Dam; located 350kms north of Khartoum with a capacity of generating 1,250 megawatts, the Pyramids of Jebel Barkal and the Merowe Museum, best known for its historical and cultural antiquities, wherein one can find living testimonies to the historical Nubia Civilization.

...a Symposium on GERD held in Khartoum

A scientific symposium was organized jointly by Sudan's Council for International People's Friendship and the Sudanese Businessmen Association in Khartoum. The symposium, which was held under the theme: **Ethiopia and Sudan: A Journey of Win-Win Cooperation**, brought together Ethiopian and Sudanese experts to reflect their expertise on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.

Ambassador Abadi Zemo, Ethiopian Ambassador to the Republic of Sudan, opening the symposium, noted that "we are now at an opportune moment" where stronger common understanding is held more than ever on the significance of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. Accordingly, "as we now move on diplomatic engagements with our brothers and sisters in Sudan," the Ambassador noted that "we do not need to get tied in assumptions, misunderstandings and rumors any more" since countries in the Nile Basin have come to a common platform of understanding with respect to the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. Ambassador Abadi thus underlined that the current scientific symposium on the fair and equitable utilization

of the Nile Waters becomes instrumental in taking such a strong spirit of partnership and cooperation one step further.

Following the Ambassador's keynote speech, Dr Osman Al-Tom, Advisor to the Ministry of Water Resources and Electricity of the Republic of Sudan, presented a study, entitled, "**The Eastern Nile Economic Block with GERD paving the way.**" Dr Osman Al-Tom began his presentation by emphasizing the strong bond between Ethiopia and Sudan, in terms of cultural ties, common peoples in both countries, the ever increasing border trade, the establishment of Ministerial Committees since the year 1992, cooperation platforms in the management of water, shade, flood control and irrigation schemes, the facilitation of the Metema-Gallabat electric power interconnection works, the exercises of the Border States Joint Commission, and the growing spirit of partnership evident in the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. Apart from these vibrant schemes of cooperation, Dr Osman underscored that the two countries are closely intertwined in a number of additional platforms of opportunities, which lay the potential to foster socio-economic and political development of their respective nations, thereby enhancing regional integration. According to Dr Osman, these additional platforms of opportunities, among others include the development of infrastructural networks, like the construction of roads, the building of railways, the construction of more power supply projects and maximization of power trade, enhancement of trade and investment, the promotion of sustainable development, the creation of added value in the Agro-Industry sectors, boosting navigation projects, scaling up capacity building networks, enhancing agricultural development and ensuring regional security.

Poverty, drought and minor instances of disputes abound across countries of the Eastern Nile Basin, Dr Osman said. However, he underlined that these countries have so far managed to have reduced tensions amongst them, paving the way for viable conflict resolution mechanisms on the basis of such a strong potential for partnerships, and through cooperation and coordinated efforts. He stressed that "the possibility of the realization of economic integration upon the exploitation of Ethiopian electric power, the Sudanese water resources and the Egyptian food industry" could serve as a strong unifying force behind the promotion of peace and stability in the sub-region. In a manner of extending his expert analysis into making the best out of such commendable platforms of cooperation and partnership, Dr Osman finally suggested that it is high time for countries in the Eastern Nile Basin to establish a **joint economic unit**.

The second session of the presentation was made by Dr Asfawossen Asrat, a scientist at the School of Earth Sciences, Addis Ababa University, under the topic, "**Geological and geo-morphological setting of the Abay (Blue Nile) Basin and the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam Site.**" In a bid to evaluate the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and its reservoir safety, Dr Asfawossen's scientific work was principally aimed at analyzing the regional and local geological/geo-morphological, as well as regional seismic and climatic conditions of the Dam site. Dr Asfawossen thus briefed the participants of the symposium on the nature of the site in which the Dam is located, noting the GERD site is located in the lower reaches of the Blue Nile Basin, some 30kms east of the Ethio-Sudanese border. His analysis thus showed that the site on which the Grand Renaissance Dam is being constructed has been found to be resistant against the possibilities of erosion and dissolution. Moreover, he noted that the Dam site is located in low seismicity (possibilities of earthquake eruptions), thus providing an "ideal site for concrete dam construction." Accordingly, Dr Asfawossen ascertains that "the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam is therefore being constructed on a naturally safe and ideal foundation and abutments." Reminding his listeners of the fact that the future reservoir area is almost entirely underlain by well-exposed crystalline basement rocks, he maintains "the underlying geological and geo-morphological conditions indicate that common reservoir issues, including leakage, abutment, groundwater and channel-section problems are negligible," adding that concerns of siltation over the reservoir walls are also minimal.

Reflecting on the possible impacts, he cautioned his participants that possibilities of siltation/sedimentation from upstream sources outside the reservoir boundaries could be a challenge, given the big catchment area of the Blue Nile Basin across various geological zones and the intense upstream land degradation. In response to this possible challenge, Dr Asfawossen thus argues that the inclusion of "integrated and sustained

management of water, soil, and forest at the upstream zones,” is crucial to prevent any potential siltation in the reservoir.

Dr Asfawossen’s analysis was solidly supported by Dr Elias Lewi, a scientist also from School of Earth Sciences, Addis Ababa University, who took on the third session of the scientific symposium on **“Assessment of Geo-hazard Vulnerability in Ethiopia and the surrounding countries, with a special focus to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.”** Dr Elias’ scientific study was made using relevant data from the seismic monitoring stations of the Institute of Geophysics Space Science and Astronomy of Addis Ababa University. The results of his scientific research therefore showed that “the nearest activities that are related with rifting occur either along the Main Ethiopian Rift, or in South Sudan, which are over 500 kms away from the dam site,” without, however, ruling out the possibilities of rift caused by the reservoir, “just like any other dams located elsewhere, including the Egyptian Aswan High Dam.”

Expressing the benefits of the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam to countries in the basin, Dr Elias pointed out several benefits, which include the reduction of silting in the Sudanese dams, minimization of evaporation, and an increase in the volume of water storage. On top of boosting crop production and the fishery industry, Dr Elias further noted that the provision of clean energy could best work out as the foundation for the acceleration of economic integration among countries in the Nile Basin. The scientific symposium was further developed through a number of question and answer sessions and thorough discussions, upon which participants, who ranged from scientists, experts, senior officials, university students and instructors, members of the business community of both Ethiopia and Sudan, had the opportunity to exchange scientific information and other relevant data with regard to the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and its subsequent instrumentality for regional economic integration.

...the Ethio-Sudan Business Forum

Organized and facilitated by the Sudanese Businessmen Association, the Ethio-Sudan Business Forum was held in Khartoum, Republic of Sudan (May 11, 2015). The Forum was aimed at enhancing business-to-business bilateral relations, speeding up mutual trade and investment and opening doors for economic integration.

The Secretary General of the People’s International Friendship Council, Abdul Moneim al Sunni, addressing the opening session of the Ethio-Sudan Business Forum, noted that the current visit of the Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Delegation and the convening of the Forum is “one of the means and ways of boosting the social, economic, cultural and political contacts between the peoples and governments of the two countries.” The Secretary General noted that Ethiopia and Sudan share longstanding relations, a bond which, in his view, has witnessed tremendous achievements over the last few years, adding that the Ethiopians Public Diplomacy Delegation’s visit to the Republic of Sudan is a testimony to the growing brotherhood between the two friendly nations. Taking note of the significance of such forums, the Secretary General thus expressed his strong belief that the Ethio-Sudan Business Forum will serve as a cornerstone for the establishment of more vibrant bilateral relations and the formulation of a strong and sustainable joint block for economic integration among the two countries.

Ambassador Abadi Zemo, Ethiopian Ambassador to the Republic of Sudan, on his part, stressed that the business to business relations between the two brotherly countries has been registering huge developments, as evidenced by the growing number of Sudanese companies and members of the business community already investing in Ethiopia, while the same goes for the Ethiopian business men and women who keep investing in Sudan. To this end, the Ambassador noted that the current Ethio-Sudan Business Forum will surely lay significant foundations for spotting further potential opportunities for trade and investment. Stressing the fact that both the governments of Ethiopia and Sudan have so far signed several trade agreements, the Ambassador further noted that the recent Forum will help actors and partners of both countries identify the possible challenges in the course of doing business and investment, explore additional areas of engagement in the value chain, and sort out appropriate inputs for the way forward.

Commending the already strong relations in trade and investment, the Ambassador noted that “the current Ethiopian Public Diplomacy Delegation visit to Sudan is a significant step and an impetus in taking up these excellent relations, with a vision for full integration among the peoples of Ethiopia and Sudan.”

Similarly, the Chairman of the Investment Department of the International People’s Friendship Council, Dr Mahmmmed Al-Nayer remarked that the economic and political relations between Ethiopia and Sudan have shown remarkable development, especially over the last few years, which, in practical terms, “will open the chapter for economic integration and establishment of Free-Trade Zones between the two countries.” Al-Nayer further underlined that the recent Ethio-Sudan Business Forum calls for intensifying investment, an increase in the volume of trade exchange between the two countries and making use of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam benefits, particularly in the fields of power trade.

Presentations were also made on the current status and future prospects of trade and investment relations between Ethiopia and Sudan. Mr Abdalmoniem Bashre, from the Sudanese Department of Trade, presented an overview of the trade relations between the two countries, particularly on the current standing of the bilateral border trade. However, though the bilateral trade relations have shown remarkable developments, Mr Bashre noted that a lot remains to be done in view of enhancing the exchange of trade.

Mr Nigus Kebede, from the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on his part, dealt at length with the nature and prospects of investment opportunities and relations between Ethiopia and Sudan. Stressing the fact that the economic policy pursued by the government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia focuses on maximizing regional integration, Mr Niguse underlined that economic stability comes as an offshoot of political stability. Reflecting on the bilateral relations, Mr Nigus underscored that the on-going infrastructural projects are evolving as key elements of investment and economic integration. These infrastructural interconnection projects comprise power connectivity, one that has been driven by growing industrialization, rapid urbanization and the rising energy demand on the part of neighboring countries. He further noted that the infrastructural interconnection schemes also include **telecom connectivity**, as the transmission lines are already installed, **port utilization connectivity**, and **roads and railway connectivity**. He also emphasized that all these interconnection projects and the various agreements in place between Ethiopia and Sudan are catalysts for economic integration. Mr Nigus, therefore, recommended the expansion of the **Trans-Boundary Economic Zone**, along with enhancement of the **Two-Way Investment focus**.

The third and final presentation was made by Mr Yishaq Tekalign, from [Ethiopia’s] Ministry of Trade, who delivered a brief sketch on Ethio-Sudan trade relations. Mr Yishaq primarily dealt with the strategic direction of the Ethiopian Government as regards to strengthening international trade, integrating the country into the multilateral trading system, strengthening regional trade integration and improving bilateral trade relations, where mutual advantages are identified. Highlighting Ethio-Sudan trade relations, Mr Yishaq noted that Ethiopia and Sudan entered a high-level Preferential Trade Agreement which allows a duty-free and quota-free import and export arrangement for all products produced in both countries.

Despite the excellent and long standing relationship and political will existing between the two countries, as well as the achievements so far, Mr Yishaq holds that trade relations have not developed as they should. According to Mr Yishaq, some of the problems with trade and economic cooperation agreements center in areas which include bank to bank transaction, issues related to customs matters, poor promotional activities, problems in relation to the quality of products, and an inability to jointly combat contraband. Accordingly, Mr Yishaq suggests that [there be] some key actions for future intervention, which include amending the Preferential Trade Agreement, adjusting the border trade protocol in a comprehensive manner, establishing a Joint Technical Committee, establishing sustained mechanisms for exchange of trade and investment information, and other relevant arrangements.

At the end of the Ethio-Sudan Business Forum, trade agreements were entered between Mr Oman Omer, representing the Sudanese Businessmen Association, and Mr Solomon Afework, Chairman of the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce. In addition, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Ethiopian Business Women’s Association and their Sudanese counterpart.

A Delegation led by Foreign Minister Dr Tedros visits Morocco

An Ethiopian delegation, headed by Foreign Minister Dr Tedros Adhanom, including Minister of Finance and Economic Development Sufian Ahmed and other high-level officials, paid (May 11) an official visit to the Kingdom of Morocco.

Dr Tedros, meeting Morocco's Foreign Minister Salaheddine Mezouar and Minister of Economy and Finance Mohamed Boussaid, stressed the need to strengthen economic and political relations and to turn previously signed General Cooperation Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding into concrete action to expand and give vitality to the bilateral ties of the two countries. Towards this end, Dr Tedros disclosed, Ethiopia has planned to open an Embassy in Rabat as a vehicle to renew the historic ties. The Minister said intensifying the commercial ties of the two countries is a case in point to make life better for the peoples of the two countries. He expressed his hope that the two Embassies would become a lynchpin to usher in stronger economic links and to learn innovative ideas driving the development of the two nations. He reiterated that the historic ties between the two countries should be confirmed by stronger economic cooperation as huge opportunities were not utilized to the fullest potential. He said there was immense potential for cooperation and this should be put in a fast lane for development. Dr Tedros also extended an invitation to high-level government officials of the Kingdom of Morocco to participate at the **Third International Conference on Financing for Development**, which will be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in July, 2015. The Minister, who reflected on the need to independently own the destiny of the two countries, added that Ethiopia had charted the course for its peace and prosperity founded on sound policies and strategies. To cause an unrestrained cycle of economic benefits, he stressed that both countries needed to work closely and nurture it regularly. He also affirmed the importance of developing business-to-business and government-to-government ties as well as cultural exchanges to increase the bonds of brotherhood.

Foreign Minister Salaheddine Mezouar, on his part, dubbing the relationship of the two countries "historic and natural", underscored that Morocco was eager to build a forward-looking cooperative partnership with Ethiopia with firm economic bridges through the engagement of private companies. The Foreign Minister, who reiterated that the Ethiopian delegation's visit carried quite a lot of symbolism in terms of politics and economy unleashing meaning and substance for Ethio-Morocco relations, expressed his hope that it would give impetus for a firmer and closer partnership between the two countries. He also went on to say that the visit was revealing in triggering "something that is very positive" within the ambit of the bilateral ties of the two friendly countries. He added that both countries were endowed with an important history and a wealth of experience and knowledge on development dynamics, underlining the need to frame the methodology to build the partnership in areas where both countries exploit the maximum benefit from the already existing comparative advantage and value addition. He also said that both countries had no inferior complexity as they knew where to head so as to make real their goals, and noted that it was also possible to build a new history and future as both countries were stable polities, had independent development thought, practical action and a clear vision. The Foreign Minister, who indicated that the visions of the two countries were built on firm conviction and beliefs, said Morocco was resolved on building together a focused engagement built on a future-oriented and forward-looking cooperative partnership. He said Ethiopia and Morocco have a shared responsibility to build economic links for the benefit of all, and should shoulder a responsibility to promote development and peace in Africa within the framework of South-South cooperation. Mr Mezouar also disclosed that Morocco was ready to share experiences and information with Ethiopia in the fight against terrorism and religious extremism. It would also cooperate with Ethiopia in the areas of human development, investment and security.

Speaking to journalists on the same day in Rabat, the Foreign Ministers disclosed that their discussions were fruitful and [that they] had agreed on the need to work on avoidance of double taxation and investment protection to enter into a new chapter of economic partnership. Dr Tedros, noting that both countries had a lot in common, underlined that Ethiopia had a lot to offer to Moroccan investors who were interested to come and invest in priority areas of investment and trade. He said both countries needed to expedite business and investment ties, emphasizing that nurturing economic ties would provide tangible results. He said Ethiopia's

plan to open an embassy in Rabat is aimed at raising business relations with Morocco to a higher level. He said he had asked Mr Mezouar to pay an official visit to Ethiopia and sign agreements to tighten the bonds of partnership. Foreign Minister Salaheddine Mezouar said both countries had shared responsibilities in Africa and a role to play on the continent. They would continue political dialogue and discussions on sharing experiences and expertise, as well as engaging in sector based cooperation. He said this historic visit by Ethiopia's Foreign Minister was an indication of strong commitment and profound interest in the creation of strong relations, and that their meeting was an opportunity to discuss the methodology and content of partnership with a view to charting a new course of practical cooperation.

Following bilateral talks between the respective Foreign and Finance and Economic Development Ministers, the Ethiopian delegation exchanged views with members of the Moroccan business community in Rabat. Ethiopia's Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Sufian Ahmed, briefed members of the business community on business opportunities, priorities and benefits of investing in Ethiopia. Minister Sufian stressed that the Government of Ethiopia prioritized agriculture development and infrastructure improvement as key for the structural transformation of the Ethiopian economy. He explained the country's development vision and the policies and strategies that have been implemented to encourage economic expansion. He said the engagement of Moroccan investors would contribute to further consolidate the political relations between the two countries and underlined that participation in manufacturing, agriculture and tourism, for example, would unlock greater returns for investors. Dr Tedros also stressed the need to deepen business-to-business, people-to-people and government-to-government ties to boost all-round cooperation between Ethiopia and Morocco. He emphasized that Moroccan investors could use the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia as an entry port to participate in Ethiopia's investment and trade landscape, and suggested the paramount importance of organizing an **Ethio-Morocco Business Forum** to explore business and investment opportunities. Members of the private sector, expressing their readiness to work in concert with Ethiopian counterparts and the Government of Ethiopia, shared their experience and future plans for various business and investment fields including housing, hospitality, industry and banking.

On Tuesday, Dr Tedros Adhanom concluded an official visit to the Kingdom of Morocco, after holding bilateral discussions with Mohamed Boussaid, Minister of Economy and Finance; and Minister of Agriculture and Fishery Aziz Akhannouch. Minister Mohamed Boussaid detailed Morocco's successes and challenges in the economic field as well as the country's commercial relations with other countries, underlining the need to cooperate to rise to the challenges and ultimately maximize the benefits for the peoples of the two countries. He emphasized that his country believes strengthening the partnership between Morocco and Ethiopia will have paramount importance in fast-tracking economic transformation on the African continent.

Ethiopia's Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Sufian Ahmed, said Ethiopia's plan to open an Embassy in Rabat aims to usher bilateral ties into a new stage of development. This demonstrates Ethiopia's commitment to cooperating with Morocco for more progress. He also extended an invitation to high-level government officials of the Kingdom of Morocco to participate at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which will be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in July, 2015. Both Ministers agreed to organize and facilitate an Ethio-Moroccan Business Forum in July this year on the sidelines of the Third Financing for Development Conference in Addis Ababa. The two sides also identified tourism, infrastructure and agriculture as key areas of cooperation. Minister Mohamed Boussaid promised to make the Business Forum a success and agreed to visit Ethiopia and proactively engage at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in July. Dr Tedros said the proposed Business Forum will offer a bigger platform to pursue win-win economic cooperation and share best experiences through the business communities of the two countries. He also went on to note that the planned official visit of Foreign Minister and other high-level officials of Morocco in July this year will serve as an opportunity to establish a Joint Ministerial Commission, sign draft agreements on strategic sectors of cooperation, and map out the road ahead to turn those agreements into concrete action.

In a meeting with Morocco's Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Aziz Akhannouch, Foreign Minister Dr Tedros, expressing his appreciation of the Green Morocco Plan and its positive results on rural and small-holding farmers of Morocco, said Ethiopia regards agriculture as an engine for growth, focusing on the improvement of small-holding farmers. He also said that Morocco's strategies are similar to Ethiopia's

development strategies and underlined the need to share innovative and home-grown development ideas with a view to building on strengths to transform the economies of the two countries. Ethiopia's Minister of Finance and Economic Development Sufian Ahmed on his part noted that Ethiopia is making shifts in the way it does business, capitalizing on the urgency to build a climate-resilient green economy. Minister Sufian indicated the importance of organizing expert meetings to learn best experiences in the agriculture sector in the years to come. Minister Aziz Akhannouch affirmed that his country is ready to share and draw best lessons in the said sector. The Green Morocco Plan is Morocco's strategy to promote agricultural development, focusing on enhancing output of rural population and smallholder farming through providing better technical support. Minister Aziz Akhannouch highlighted the progress and successes made in implementing the strategy in the agriculture sector and its concrete results, namely, job creation, adaptation of agriculture to climate change, increasing productivity, income improvement, poverty reduction and food security, to the people of Morocco. This strategy has enabled the Kingdom of Morocco to achieve most of the Millennium Development Goals. This success is attributed to the fact that the leadership of the country recognizes agriculture as the major growth driver of the economy.

The outcome of the bilateral meetings held between the officials of the two countries epitomized the importance of updating the historic and natural ties with a cooperative partnership in all areas of common interest so as to make certain that transformation reaches new highs in both countries and indeed across the African continent. Giving rise to the call for change in the significance of capitalizing on the urgency of turning the private sector into bridge-building actors in the sphere of the commercial relationship of the two countries, was another such case point exhibited in this visit. The officials reached consensus on making economic partnership the key ingredient for helping the two countries keep abreast of the trends of the times in jointly fast-tracking development and ensuring peace and stability in Africa on a bilateral basis and within the framework of South-South cooperation.

Panel discussion held on pre-election preparations

A panel discussion organized by the Ethiopian National Electoral Board (NEBE), the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), and the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority, which focused on various aspects of pre-election preparation, was held on Monday this week (May 11, 2015). It brought together representatives from political parties, from the Coalition of Ethiopian Civic Associations, from academia, from research institutes and officials of NEBE, EBC, and Ethiopian Broadcasting Association. Dr Negeri Lencho, a lecturer at the Graduate School of Journalism and Communication at Addis Ababa University, describing the role of the media in the election process, said the mass media has so far been playing a positive role in terms of creating better awareness to the public. The impartial role the media was playing and the wider coverage it gives on electoral activities should be appreciated, since it was vital for the general public to come to an informed decision and the contestant parties to explain their policies.

Deputy Chairperson of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE), Dr Addisu Gebre-Egziabher said the preparations for the upcoming national election have demonstrated improvements in a number of ways, compared to the previous elections. More voters have been registered and more airtime has been allotted, he noted, in addition to more extensive preparations by observers and candidates compared with previous elections. The deputy chairperson reminded those present that 94% of those eligible to vote registered to cast their votes within just two weeks. He further clarified that 58% of the political parties have fielded more than 5,000 candidates, highlighting an increase in political participation. The number of female candidates also showed a major increment, he stated. With regard to capacity building, he noted that more than 30 million Birr had been granted to competing political parties, and dispute resolution mechanisms were installed so that efforts to resolve disputes have been greatly improved. Representing the Coalition of the Ethiopian Civic Associations (CECA), Taddle Yimer, expressed his satisfaction at both the NEBE's efficient preparation and to the political parties for the peaceful way they had engaged in the election process.

Televised debates between competing political parties were continued this week on health policy with the participation of EPRDF, Medrek, Kinijit, the Ethiopian Democratic Party (EDP), the All Oromo People Democratic Party (AOPDP) and the Ethiopian Visionary Party (EVP).

EPRDF presented its health policy, which aimed at prevention, and said it has brought significant changes to the lives of the people. The contending parties however raised problems related to accessibility and fairness in the health service. Dr Kesetebirhan Admasu, representing the ruling party, argued that since the ruling party considers the health service as a human right issue, his party has done a commendable job in expanding the accessibility and outreach of the service. He emphasized that the policy has considerably reduced maternal mortality and had increased the number of beneficiaries of family planning programs. Dr Kesetebirhan stated that Ethiopia's successes in the health sector were internationally recognized and explained that WHO and the World Bank have approved the improvements in both communicable and non-communicable disease prevention and treatment.

Representing Medrek, Semeles Temesgen argued that lack of skilled labor and medical equipment still remained bottlenecks and thus the health institutions were not providing proper health services for the public. Representing the Coalition for Unity and Democracy (Kinijit), Sasahulih Debede argued that the health policy lacks due attention to the elderly. He also noted the low salary paid for professionals and said it forced them to leave the country. Banteayigegn Tamirat, from the Ethiopian Democratic Party (EDP), stated that compared to the number of population that needs the service, his party does not believe that the policy brought success.

Yesterday (May 14), the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) briefed all diplomatic communities residing in Ethiopia on the preparations undergone so far. Dr Addisu Gebre Egziabher, Deputy Head of the NEBE, explained about the Federal system of Ethiopia, the establishment of the NEBE and the general preparations for the conduct of the upcoming national and regional elections. Election arrangements have been carried out to ensure the equality of all nations, nationalities and peoples of the country, considering their democratic and human rights, he said. The Deputy Head further noted that pre-election undertakings were underway effectively, in a manner that will ensure a free, fair, democratic and peaceful election. He further detailed NEBE's activities in all aspects including the training, schedule preparation, and logistics distribution.

Dr Addisu briefed the diplomatic community that efforts were made for the trainings to be inclusive, and major segments of the population, such as election officials, the media, the justice sector, women, youth and teachers associations and civic societies had participated. Similarly, the manual preparations and translations into all regional languages and into English were part of the exercise in creating understanding within the wider public in the preparation process. The Board has used a range of media channels including television, national radio stations, the print media, the cable media as well as physical presentations, to create understanding and awareness among the public. Criteria were set to allocate public funding to all competing parties, in consultation with various stakeholders, based on the number of seats the party won in the previous election (35%), on the number of candidates fielded (40%), on the participation of women (15%) and on equality (10%).

Chairman of the Board Professor Merga Bekana stated that the Board has been engaged for the past two years in making this year's election peaceful as well as successful. He said the preparations were conducted based on the post-2010 election evaluation.

The Third International Conference on Financing Development

The UN Millennium Development Goals have embodied the development objectives of the international community since 2000. These goals have galvanized the efforts of the global community to reduce poverty and address other development challenges. Of the eight MDGs, seven focus on challenges such as poverty reduction and the eradication of hunger, as well as measures to improve access to health and education services, improve the position of women and preserve the environment. The eighth MDG recognizes that developing countries will need an enabling international environment to have the best chances of success. This includes more generous development aid, especially for the poorest countries. Despite the progress made over the last 15 years in tackling the development bottlenecks, there are still millions who are suffering from

the menace of poverty and other multifaceted development challenges. To address the multi-pronged development challenges that require financial resources, the UN has launched a new approach that is aimed at mobilizing finance at the dawn of the millennium. Two important conferences were held in Monterrey, Mexico in 2002 and Doha, Qatar in 2008.

Since its adoption, the Monterrey Consensus has become the major reference point for international development cooperation. The document embraces six areas of Financing for Development: mobilizing domestic financial resources for development; mobilizing international resources for development: foreign direct investment and other private flows; international Trade as an engine for development; increasing international financial and technical cooperation for development; external debt management; addressing systemic issues: enhancing the coherence and consistency of the international monetary, financial and trading systems in support of development.

The 2008 Doha Declaration on Financing for Development outcome document called a “Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus” reaffirmed the Monterrey Consensus and calls for a United Nations Conference at the highest level to examine the impact of the world financial and economic crisis on development. Following intense intergovernmental negotiations, the Conference concluded with the adoption of the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development. The two key messages included in the document were a strong commitment by developed countries to maintain their Official Development Assistance (ODA) targets irrespective of the 2008 economic and financial crisis, and a decision to hold a UN Conference at the highest level on the impact of financial and economic crisis on development. Officials from more than 160 countries, including nearly 40 Heads of State or Government, attended the four-day conference.

Currently the international community has, more or less, agreed on the relevance of the holistic financing for development agenda, and the mobilization of resources from a variety of sources and the effective use of financing required for the achievement of sustainable development. Considering this, the UN General Assembly resolution 68/279 has decided that the Third International Conference on Financing for Development to be held in Addis Ababa from July 13 to 16, 2015.

The Third International Conference on Financing for Development is expected to discuss: the progress made in the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus and the Doha Declaration; reinvigorating and strengthening the financing for development follow-up process; identifying obstacles and constraints encountered in the achievement of the goals and objectives agreed therein, as well as actions and initiatives to overcome these constraints; addressing new and emerging issues, including in the context of the recent multilateral efforts to promote international development cooperation, taking into account the current evolving development cooperation landscape; and most importantly, assessing the inter-relationship of all sources of development finance, the synergies among financing objectives across the three dimensions of sustainable development, as well as the need to support the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015.

Expected to come up with an outcome dubbed **the Addis Ababa Accord**, the Conference is highly expected to mobilize resources for the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, by drawing a lesson from the implementation of the MDGs and its follow up mechanism. The ambitious Sustainable Development Goals that have 17 goals and 169 targets would not be realized unless bold political decisions are taken in Addis Ababa’s Conference. It is important for the Conference to reach at an outcome that includes a comprehensive financial framework with concrete deliverables and initiatives. Equally important is the attendance at the highest political level of all member states to demonstrate their commitment for the success of the Conference.

Ethiopia is painstakingly working to make the Conference a success and is ready to host more than 5,000 participants from around the world. The government has set up a Ministerial National Committee led by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, and other sub-committees are drawn from various governmental and non-governmental bodies. “Despite the late announcement”, said Mr Wu Hongbo,

Undersecretary General of UN Economic and Social Affairs, in his recent discussion with Ethiopian Foreign Minister, Dr Tedros, “Ethiopia has interestingly accomplished most of the preparation stage.”

The Conference is a linchpin to implement the Post-2015 Development Agenda. It is also expected to solidify global development cooperation and advance a transformative development agenda that could eradicate poverty in all its forms. For this, Ethiopia is working hard to handle all specific arrangements with the aim of making the outcome of the Conference beneficial to achieving the objectives set in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.