

A Week in the Horn

16th January 2015

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News in Brief

Ethiopia

Italy's Foreign Minister, Paolo Gentiloni, arrived in Addis Ababa for an official visit to Ethiopia (January 14). Dr Tedros Adhanom and Paolo Gentiloni held discussions focusing on ways to promote trade, investment and strengthen partnership in regional peace and security matters. Ethiopia and Italy also signed a cooperation agreement involving three development programs – worth a total of 16.1 million euros. (See article)

The Ethiopian Roads Authority has signed agreement with Ethiopia Road Construction Corporation for the construction of a high way connecting Gambela and the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional States with South Sudan. The 927 million birr project is expected to be completed within 2 years and five months.

Japan and Ethiopia are holding the 15th Round of the Policy Dialogue on Industrial Development in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 12 to 17 January 2015. Professor Kenichi Ohno and Professor Izumi Ohno, from the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS), have led the Dialogue since June 2009.

Dr Tedros Adhanom met with a high-level US delegation led by John Podesta, Counselor of President Obama. Their discussion focused on the upcoming Conference on Finance for Development, which will be held in Addis Ababa. Dr Tedros assured John Podesta that Ethiopia will provide the necessary support to ensure successful conduct of the Conference. The Conference will discuss finance management, debt repayment, debt cancellation, trade facilitation and related issues.

In a press conference held at the conclusion of a six-day visit to Egypt, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Abune Mathias said Ethiopia and Egypt are "united by nature" through the Nile river and should overcome challenges through dialogue. Abune Mathias held talks with President Al Sisi, Prime Minister Ibrahim Mahleb and Pope Tawadros, Patriarch of the Egyptian Coptic Church. (See article)

Eritrea

British Members of Parliament backed a motion condemning the abuse of human rights in Eritrea and the role of mining companies in exploiting the forced labor that results from compulsory military service. The motion accused international mining companies, involved in mining activities in Eritrea, of using forced labor in

conditions which have been described as “abject slavery”. (See article)

Djibouti

In the past few years, tremendous achievements have been gained in connecting Ethiopia and Djibouti through road, power, and railway, paving the way for increased benefits and changing the lives of the peoples of the two nations. (See article)

Somalia

Somalia has hosted the 53rd IGAD Council of Ministers Meeting in Mogadishu. The Council of Ministers deliberated on the achievements and challenges for Vision 2016. Opening the Ministerial meeting Dr Tedros Adhanom said that "Somalia gradually but surely is coming out of chaos, instability and violence." (See article)

Somalia’s newly appointed Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Sharmarke has named a 25-member Cabinet that includes some incumbent Ministers who have either retained their former posts or have been given new portfolios in addition to the new ones. President Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud endorsed the nominations. (See article)

South Sudan

A one-day special consultation meeting in support of the IGAD-led South Sudan peace process and security situation was held on Monday [Jan 12] in Khartoum. The consultation, which was organized by China and hosted by Sudan, was aimed at supporting the IGAD-led mediation process and encourages warring parties to recommit to observing agreements with a view to bringing durable peace in South Sudan. (See article)

A battalion of 700 Chinese soldiers will be deployed to South Sudan in the coming weeks to boost the U.N. Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). Apart from the new battalion, 350 Chinese non-combat personnel are deployed at the U.N. base in Western Bahr el Ghazal.

Sudan

Sudan's electoral body has pushed back the deadline for applications to run in presidential and legislative polls in April, saying just two candidates have so far won approval to stand. The two candidates running for presidency are incumbent President Omar Hassan Al Bashir and Fadl el-Sayed Shuayb, head of the Federal Truth Party.

The ninth meeting of the Implementation Follow-up Commission (IFC) of the Doha Document for Peace in Darfur (DDPD) was held yesterday in Nyala, South Darfur. The Commission discussed the progress made and the challenges faced in the implementation of the DDPD since its last meeting, which was held on April 28, 2014.

Ethiopia and Italy strengthen cooperation

Italy’s Foreign Minister, Paolo Gentiloni, at the head of a high-level delegation, paid a two-day official visit to Ethiopia this week (January 14 to 15) at the start of an African tour. Foreign Minister Dr Tedros extended a warm welcome to Paolo Gentiloni on his arrival on Wednesday afternoon and following the welcoming ceremony, the two Ministers discussed a range of matters concerning multilateral, regional and bilateral issues of common interest.

The two Ministers underlined the strong bilateral relations between Ethiopia and Italy. They emphasized the need to further deepen and broaden areas of cooperation for the mutual benefit of both peoples. They noted, in particular, the importance of increasing trade, investment and boosting economic cooperation. The trade and investment flow from Italy to Ethiopia has been increasing recently and Italian companies are engaged in various sectors including infrastructure building and power dam construction. Dr Tedros noted that direct investment from Italy to Ethiopia between 1992 and April 2014 had reached 6.23 billion birr, and Italian investors had registered nearly 200 investment projects in Ethiopia. Of these 71 were at a pre-implementation stage; 35 were being implemented and 90 were operational.

The general trend of Italian foreign direct investment flows towards Ethiopia is seen as encouraging and it has been increasing in recent years. The interest of Italian investors in the opportunities that exist in Ethiopia is also mounting. Since 1999, the Italian Government has disbursed an estimated 200 Million euros in various phases of development cooperation agreements to assist Ethiopian development in a range of sectors. In May 2013, during the visit of the Italian Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Lapo Pistelli, the third phase of the Ethio-Italian development cooperation framework for the years 2013-2015 was signed, covering a grant of 48 Million Euros. At the same time, Dr Tedros said, there was still further room for increased trade and investment. He explained that enhanced economic, trade and investment links would further compliment the excellent bilateral relations that existed in other areas of cooperation between the two countries.

Foreign minister Paolo Gentiloni said his visit was aimed at further strengthening of bilateral relations. He said Italian firms had carried out infrastructure projects in Ethiopia worth a total of 100 million Euros between 2013 and 2015. He again extended the invitation to Ethiopia to participate in Milano International Expo this year and to participate in the coffee cluster of the Expo. He also welcomed the fact that Italy would be hosting the Ethiopian Business Forum in Rome this year. Dr Tedros said Ethiopia was ready to take part in the Expo and assured Mr Gentiloni that the preparation process was underway.

Mr Gentiloni said he was visiting Ethiopia "because Italy attaches great importance to its relations with Ethiopia." He described Ethiopia as "crucial to eastern Africa and the continent." He welcomed its stability and governance and appreciated Ethiopia's role in the fight against terrorism. He said the two countries would be working more closely to curb illegal migration, smuggling and human trafficking.

In this context, the two ministers highlighted the need for strengthening their partnership in realizing regional peace and stability. Dr Tedros expressed his appreciation to Italy for its significant and valuable role in supporting the peace and stability efforts in Somalia and South Sudan and the region as a whole. Italy is the current chair of IGAD's International Partners Forum (IPF). The Italian Foreign Minister, in turn, expressed his admiration for Ethiopia's dynamic role in helping to stabilize the Horn of Africa and its active support to the IGAD-led peace process in South Sudan, as well as its involvement in defeating Al-Shabaab in Somalia. He also noted Ethiopia's significant role in fighting terrorism within the Horn of Africa. Mr Gentiloni also emphasized that Italy would be continuing and extending its commitment to supporting the IGAD-led South Sudan peace process and the stabilization and reconstruction of Somalia.

After the discussions between the two Ministers, cooperation agreements covering areas of culture and arts, education, publishing, archaeology, conservation and protection of cultural heritages and landscapes, among others, were signed.

During his visit, the Italian Foreign minister met with Prime Minister Hailemariam and a number of other officials, including officials from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

Patriarch of Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Abune Mathias visits Egypt

His Holiness Abune Mathias, Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was on a six-day visit to Egypt this week at the invitation of His Holiness Tawadros II, Patriarch of Egypt's Coptic Church. During his visit Abune Mathias visited several churches and monasteries in Cairo and Alexandria. He performed the Divine Liturgy at a church on Sunday and attended the weekly sermon by Pope Tawadros II at St Mark's Cathedral in Cairo. The Ethiopian church, until it became autonomous in the 20th century, was an archdiocese of the Church of Alexandria.

Abune Mathias also had a meeting with Egyptian President, Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi, and discussed ways of deepening the historical, cultural and religious relations of the two countries. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam Project was also discussed. The Patriarch stressed that The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) should bring Egyptian and Ethiopian people together to discuss its benefits, rather than become a source of conflict and lack of trust as it has been in the past. The Patriarch said negotiations based on mutual respect between Ethiopia and Egypt should be the order of the day to reach a win-win solution for any differences that might arise between the two countries. He said the experts and studies have shown that GERD had many potential benefits and would not significantly harm downstream countries. The Patriarch said Egyptians should be comfortable with the development of Ethiopia. He said: "As people who drink the same Nile River water from time immemorial, we have many reasons to live in harmony and cohesion, and this

ancient relationship must prevail over any destructive agenda from either side". Patriarch Mathias also expressed his satisfaction with the results of the Ethiopian Public Diplomacy delegation which visited Egypt in mid-December for four days, meeting officials, religious figures and intellectuals, including Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi and Pope Tawadros II.

President El-Sisi said that Egypt will not hinder the right to development of the Ethiopian people and he expressed his confidence in a viable future for relations between Egypt and other African countries.

Pope Tawadros II, who attended the meeting, said that the two churches are linked geographically through the Nile River. He spoke of the projects the Coptic Church carries out in the name of Egypt in Ethiopia, to contribute to development there and to strengthen cooperation between the people of the two countries. Patriarch Mathias said that relations between the two churches had been at a standstill during the communist regime in Ethiopia. Now, in this new era, the need to continue and develop the relations between churches in Africa is paramount as they all share a common destiny of fighting poverty and backwardness on the continent. He said the churches of Ethiopia and Egypt, with their long-standing relationship, could take the lead in solving the social, economic and religious problems Africa is facing today. Patriarch Mathias also noted that: "the relationships between the two churches have to be documented so that the coming generations do not forget them."

Abune Mathias and Pope Tawadros II held a press conference on Wednesday (January 14). The Patriarch told the journalists that Ethiopia and Egypt were "united by nature" through the Nile river and should overcome challenges through their bilateral relations. He added that journalists "should help building bridges that transfer truths without distortion." Tawadros II told the press conference that the Ethiopian and Egyptian churches should "surely play a role" in pushing talks forward, asserting that "dialogue can solve any problems." The Pope said it was "important that everybody works toward building bridges, not only with Ethiopia but with everybody else, a policy we are witnessing with President Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi and the government."

Ethiopia's Ambassador to Egypt, Ambassador Mohamoud Dirir, said the visit "will further strengthen existing relations between the churches of the two countries and enhance people-to-people ties." He said: "the two churches have an ancient history and have played a big role in peace and development efforts in Africa," adding that "the relationship between Ethiopia and Egypt is not new. They have a long and historic relation." The Ambassador noted that the relationship between Ethiopia and Egypt was being strengthened and building trust. "The Ethiopian Public Diplomacy delegation recently sent to Egypt "contributed to building trust between the two countries," he said.

A digital diplomacy conference held in Addis Ababa

A four-day conference on the conceptualization and practice of digital diplomacy concluded on Tuesday this week (January 13) in Addis Ababa. The conference, and the accompanying training, aimed at enabling Ethiopian diplomatic practitioners to acquire the skills and know-how of digital diplomacy, to complement the normal diplomatic tools with more advanced and modern techniques to encourage the nation's foreign policy goals and objectives. The conference also aimed to encourage digital participation by diplomats at the Ministry and in Ethiopian Missions and Consulates abroad, to help showcase the true image and development of the country, as well as improving diplomatic services to the Ethiopian Diaspora, business communities and others. The Ministry's Public Diplomacy and Communications Directorate-General organized the conference which brought together all the officials and staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as experts drawn from Addis Ababa University and Ethiopia's Information Network Security Agency.

Opening the conference, Dr Yinager Dessie, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, stressed the significance of employing digital diplomacy as a tool to promote the country's image, investment opportunities and its rich historic, cultural and natural resources. He said it was timely to provide such training and it would be important for promoting the nation's values, cultures and diplomatic activities in the region and beyond. He said it would also strengthen the ability of Ethiopian diplomats to deliver solid facts and meaningful diplomatic, political, social and economic activities across the world. The training, he emphasized, would also offer new modes of communication for ambassadors and diplomats, with the provision of timely information helping Ethiopian Missions abroad to reach Ethiopian Diaspora communities, friends and partners more effectively. The State Minister said the experience of diplomatic personnel in the use of social media had been limited. Digital diplomacy would promote the national interest and help clarify misconceptions of the nation's foreign policy and national development goals.

Ambassador Ababi Demissie, A/Director-General of Public Diplomacy and Communications Directorate-General at the Ministry, noted that the conference and training will create awareness and encourage officials and staff of the Ministry to participate in digital diplomacy. This would inject new impetus into expression of the country's foreign policy goals and objectives. Ambassador Ababi, who underlined the importance of using digital diplomacy as an innovative tool to achieve the diplomatic goals of the nation in a networked world, said the training would enhance skills and abilities as well as create social media awareness. He said the Directorate-General of Public Diplomacy and Communications was making preparations to set up a digital diplomacy unit to bring the Ministry fully into the digital age.

The discussions of the first day of the conference were accompanied by extensive question and answer sessions on the nexus between diplomacy and communication, and the challenges of digital diplomacy in a changing world. This was followed by three days of training for staff and officials of the Ministry on the use of digital diplomacy and the practice of social media.

IGAD Council of Ministers meeting in Mogadishu

IGAD's Council of Ministers held a council meeting at the SYL Hotel in Mogadishu on Saturday (January 10). This was the first time the Council of Ministers held a meeting in Somalia for 24 years, and this the 53rd Extraordinary Meeting of the IGAD Council of Ministers, was officially opened by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of Somalia; and Somali Prime Minister, Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmake, presided over the closing session. Dr Tedros Adhanom, Foreign Minister of Ethiopia and current Chair of the IGAD Council of Ministers, chaired the session which was attended by Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, Foreign Minister of Djibouti; Ambassador Amina Mohamed, Foreign Minister of Kenya; Abdirahman Duale Beyle, Foreign Minister of Somalia; Kamal Ismail, Foreign Minister of the Sudan; Barnaba Marial Benjamin, Foreign Minister of South Sudan; and Asuman Kiyin, Foreign Minister of Uganda; as well as Engineer Mahboub Maalim, Executive Secretary of IGAD; Ms Lydia Wanyoto, Deputy Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission; Nicholas Kay, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General; Ambassador Fabrizio Marcelli, Italian Ambassador to Somalia, Michele Cervone d'Urso, the Special Representative of the European Union to Somalia, and delegations from Iran and China.

President Mohamud said that as recently as two years ago there was skepticism that such a meeting could take in Somalia, and this session was an indication that Somalia had moved away from its previous status as a failed state. The joint operations of IGAD and the Somali National Army had weakened Al Shabaab and movement of goods and the population's access to aid had increased. The creation of the Interim Jubba and the South West Administrations showed momentum towards the country's Vision 2016. He noted that insecurity and economic capacity were still Somalia's major problems and integration of security forces remained a major government's priority. President Mohamud, who emphasized the need for African solutions to Africa's problems, said the session was a milestone as this was the first time Somali issues were being discussed in Somalia. He invited IGAD to hold an IGAD Heads of State Summit in Somalia.

Dr Tedros, who also underlined the historic nature of the occasion, said it clearly showed that Somalia was gradually but surely coming out of the chaos, instability and violence of the last two decades. He congratulated Prime Minister Sharmarke on his appointment and assured him that IGAD was ready to work with him and his Government. He emphasized that the purpose of the Extraordinary meeting was to review and assess the gains made so far and the challenges still facing the Government of Somalia in the fields of peace and stability, economic and social development, the formation of regional administrations and the way forward for Vision 2016 and for a peaceful, prosperous and united Somalia.

Dr Tedros welcomed the positive results in the formation of regional administrations, citing Jubaland Interim Administration and the Interim Administration of South West Somalia as success stories, and noting that the two states had agreed to work in concert in political, security and economic development in addition to federalism and constitutional review. He also appreciated the agreement made by the Federal Government and Puntland Administration to work in collaboration and the process being undertaken for the formation of regional administrations in Central Somalia, and in Benadir and Hiiraan regions. He said IGAD would render support to both the Federal Government and the regional actors to speed up the formation of regional administrations. He underlined the need to consolidate political developments and the importance of devoting time to the revision and endorsement of the constitution. He also emphasized the need to take over the

remaining areas under the control of Al-Shabaab and conduct stabilization efforts including setting up inclusive institutions and creating key enabling conditions for the furtherance of peace, stability and reconciliation.

Engineer Mahboub M. Maalim said the **IGAD Partners Forum** would hold its first meeting in Somalia later this year. He also reaffirmed IGAD's commitment to strengthening its office in Mogadishu and its commitment to ensuring all its programs should benefit Somalia. Ms Lydia Wanyoto stated that the Council meeting in Mogadishu fully represented IGAD's pivotal role, and underlined that the changing landscape was being realized with contributions from Somalia's neighbors. Somalia, she said, needed IGAD and she noted the importance of AMISOM prioritization of the degradation of Al-Shabaab capabilities. She thanked IGAD for its sustained and unwavering commitment to establishing a stable Somalia. Ambassador Kay saluted the Council for its leadership, commitment and courage and he highlighted the partnership between the UN, AU, IGAD and other international partners, and their unity of purpose and partnership, courage and commitment to Somalia. He also, as the members of the Council did, paid tribute to the soldiers from AMISOM and SNA who had given their lives for peace. He declared 2015 as the **Year of Federalism and Delivery for Somalia** and congratulated the Federal Parliament for passing the Boundaries and Federations Commission Bill and ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Ambassador Marcelli, Chair of the IGAD Partners Forum, accepted the invitation to hold an IPF in Mogadishu, and also praised the role of the Special Envoy and the IGAD Facilitator in Somalia. Ambassador d'Urso, who noted that events in Paris last week showed what Somalia regularly faced, said security must remain a priority; he reiterated the EU's commitment to Somalia.

Participants noted that the integration of security forces would be difficult and called on member states to support the capacity building of the SNA, the construction of barracks and provision of logistical support. They said AMISOM should shoulder the responsibility of expanding security and the meeting urged the Government of Somalia to be more specific in its vision to meet the challenges. Participants called on the Government and international partners to expand their efforts as time was running out for Vision 2016. Benchmarks for progress must include formation of interim administrations in Central Somalia, and other areas. The process of formation and consolidation of the Somalia National Army should be speeded up. They urged the strengthening of the government's 'give up your guns go to school' project, and the necessity of building a political system that was inclusive in character.

The Council, which was briefed by the Federal Government of Somalia on the implementation of Vision 2016, security and the integration of forces, stabilization and access to recovered area, and by the IGAD Special Envoy on the activities of the IGAD Office of the Facilitator for Somali Peace and Reconciliation in line with the priorities agreed at previous IGAD Heads of States and Government meetings, issued a final communiqué. In this, the Council reaffirmed its respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence, and unity of Somalia. It welcomed the resolution of the recent political crisis and "looked forward to a stable political environment between now and 2016." It commended progress on state formation and looked forward to the establishment of Regional Assemblies in the Interim Jubaland Administration and Interim South West Administration. It urged the Government to conclude the state formation processes in the remaining Central regions, Middle Shabelle and Hiraa as soon as possible. It also underlined the importance of establishing inclusive Interim Federal Regional Administrations and Assemblies in line with the Provisional Constitution. It welcomed the November 2014 Memorandum of Understanding between the Federal Government of Somalia and the Interim Jubaland Administration and pledged IGAD's continued support to the state formation process.

The Council reiterated the Somali Government's ownership of the priorities for its stabilization and reconstruction in an all-inclusive manner. It vowed to fight Al-Shabaab until lasting peace was achieved, and appealed to AMISOM troops and the Somalia Security Forces to expand their operations. It urged the Government of Somalia to rapidly engage with federal states and interim administrations to agree on modalities and timelines for integration of forces. It encouraged the Government to expedite the outstanding legal and administrative processes required to deliver an electoral process within the Constitutional timeline, and agreed to provide all necessary technical support. It also welcomed the Strategic Action Plan of the IGAD Office of the Facilitator for Somali Peace and National Reconciliation, and directed it to establish its presence outside Mogadishu.

The Council reaffirmed the strong solidarity of IGAD member states and their commitment to continue supporting Vision 2016 and the key reforms and appreciated the international partners and organizations providing financial, material and technical assistance to Somalia. It appealed for an increase in the level of

support through the New Deal Compact Financial architecture, the Somali Development and Reconstruction Fund. It commended the on-going dialogue between the Government of Somalia and Somaliland. It strongly condemned those seeking to destabilize the security, peace and stability of the country and the state-building of Somalia and the region. In conclusion, the Council, which also expressed its thanks to the Government and the people of Somalia for hosting the session, recommended holding the next IGAD Summit in Mogadishu in 2015.

Somalia's Prime Minister nominates his new cabinet

At the beginning of the week, after nearly a month of discussions, at a ceremony in the Villa Somalia presidential compound in Mogadishu, Somali Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke, on Monday (January 12) announced the names of 26 Ministers as well as 25 Deputy Ministers and 9 State Ministers. The sixty-member government has five more names than the previous administration. The names will now be subject to parliamentary approval.

Prime Minister Sharmarke said he had held consultations with President Mohamud and Parliament Speaker Mohamed Sheikh Osman Jawari, as well as other stakeholders before making his choices. The new government is made up of both former ministerial and parliamentary supporters of the President and of Prime Minister Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed, who lost a vote of no confidence in parliament in early December after disagreements with President Mohamud. Observers said they hoped that both groups could now unite to "lead Somalia" towards achieving the vital Vision 2016 goals.

Among the ministers who have kept their posts are Defense Minister Mohamed Sheikh Hassan Hamud, Finance Minister Hussein Abdi Halane and Foreign Minister Abdirahman Duale Beyle. Farah Sheikh Abdulkadir, has also been reappointed to the Ministry of Justice and Abdiqadir Abdi Hashi "Gabane" taking the post of Minister of Constitutional Affairs. Abdikarim Husen Guled was Minister of Interior and Security from November 2012 to January 2014, and was then appointed Minister of National Security by Prime Minister Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed. In May 2014 he resigned after Al-Shabaab's attack on the Parliamentary Building. He has now been appointed as Minister of Interior and Federal Affairs. Abdullahi Mohamed Ali was Director of the National Intelligence and Security Agency from July to September 2014 has now been appointed Minister of Internal Security.

Other officials who kept their posts included Mustaf Ali Dhuhulow, Minister of Information and Khadijo Mohamed Dirie, Minister for Women's Affairs and Human Rights. Ms Dirie and Engineer Nadifo Mohamed Osman, Minister for Public Works and Reconstruction are the only two women in the cabinet, though there are another two women holding deputy/state ministerial posts. A number of posts went to former holders of positions in the previous Puntland administration of President Dr Abdirahman Mohamed Farole, including Daud Mohamed Omar as Mineral Resources and Petroleum.

President Mohamud welcomed the nominations and it was now "up to the Parliament to make its decision, as per the Provisional Federal Constitution." The President said he was delighted that momentum had not been lost, and that government activities had continued during the previous weeks. He said "several important and urgent issues have been resolved, including the nomination of the Boundaries and Federation Commission and the nomination of the Oversight Committee members of the Independent Constitutional Review and Implementation Commission." He also noted that Somalia successfully hosted the first IGAD meeting to be held in Mogadishu in 24 years at the weekend. The President said that in the last two years there had been much 'behind the scenes' work to create a functioning government. Now, he said, "we must urgently deliver on priority legislation, the establishment of the remaining commissions, and facilitate the public consultations that will enable us to achieve the three intertwined strands of Vision 2016: the revision of the Constitution, state formation and preparing for national elections."

The President stressed the Government "must deliver improvements that impact the lives of Somalis. This means we must ensure the roll-out of stabilization initiatives that connect the government to citizens, finally defeat al-Shabaab, root out corruption, build mechanisms to capture revenue to provide schools for our children, to create jobs for our young people and ensure healthcare for our families." The new Government, he said, had a long list of priorities ahead "priorities that will require robust decision-making and a commitment to making things happen quickly. To that end, I look forward to the proposed Council of Ministers and the Ministers and their ministry teams swiftly getting down to business." The Deputy Speaker of the Parliament announced later in the week that Parliament would consider the names and vote on the members of the cabinet on Saturday (January 17). The Deputy Speaker urged MPs to attend and vote.

Consultation in Khartoum to support IGAD South Sudan mediation....

A one-day special consultation meeting in support of the IGAD-led South Sudan peace process was held at the beginning of this week in Khartoum. The meeting was initiated by the Government of the People's Republic of China and hosted by the Government of Sudan, and it was intended to highlight the urgent necessity to end the conflict in South Sudan and the need for a re-commitment to the peace process by the representatives of the Government of the Republic of South Sudan and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (SPLM-IO). The six-party conference, of representatives from China, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement-in-Opposition and IGAD discussed the way for a political settlement to realize stability and security and reviewed the efforts exerted to end the conflict in South Sudan. It also sent a clear signal of the opportunity of giving peace a chance over war for the people of South Sudan, underlining the aim of helping the warring parties make the IGAD-led peace process the only realistic way out of the still ongoing violence.

As a 'force-multiplier' of the IGAD mediation and peace process, the consultation brought together Sudan's Foreign Minister, Ali Karti; Ethiopia's Foreign Minister and current Chair of the IGAD Council of Ministers, Dr Tedros Adhanom; and China's Foreign Minister, Wang Yi. Barnaba Marial Benjamin, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation represented the Government of South Sudan, and Taban Deng Gai, Chief Negotiator of the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement-in-Opposition at the Addis Ababa talks, the SPLM IO. Also present were the IGAD Special Envoys, Ambassador Seyoum Mesfin of Ethiopia, General Lazaro Sumbeiywo of Kenya and General Mohammed Ahmed Moustafa El Dabi of Sudan.

In his keynote address, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi offered the Chinese proverb: "a bright future will emerge as long as concession is offered", underlining the need for cultivation of a culture of dialogue, trust and compromise as well as for a demonstration of will and resolve to make peace happen. This, he said, would enable a better tomorrow for the people of South Sudan. Minister Wang Yi also quoted another saying: "If the brothers are of the same mind, the force gathered can cut through metal", emphasizing that "no conflict in the world is beyond resolve, let alone the internal divergences between brothers". South Sudan, he said, could enjoy its superior natural conditions and abundant reserve of resources, if the parties to the conflict valued a genuine outcome and engaged in practical terms in peace talks. This, he added, would inevitably stop the continued violence and ultimately lead to the narrowing down of disagreements, and present a positive trajectory for South Sudan.

At a post consultation press briefing, Sudan's Foreign Minister, Ali Karti, noted that this special consultation in support of the IGAD-led South Sudan peace process had opened up new horizons in which the two parties had recommitted themselves to uphold the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and work jointly within the auspices of IGAD-led mediation process so as to silence the guns and put a stop to the war. The Sudanese Foreign Minister said the conference gave a window of opportunity to the conflicting parties to look into the way forward to seek and pursue a durable peace. He also said the consultative dialogue helped the parties to give due consideration to the significance of facilitating the safe delivery of humanitarian and relief services as well as improving the security situation for the needy and conflict-affected communities. Mr Ali Karti said the consultative dialogue enabled the parties to remain on the same page regarding the importance of maintaining cooperative interaction with the IGAD Cessation of Hostilities' Monitoring and Verification Mechanism Team, adding that both parties also pledged to work for the safety and security of foreign personnel and interests. The Minister, who commended the constructive initiative taken by the Government of China, also noted that "China has no hidden agenda or purpose, therefore its initiatives are normal and acceptable by all parties."

Ethiopia's Foreign Minister Dr Tedros Adhanom pointed out that the consultative dialogue could be regarded as "an important milestone" for the prompt resolution of the crisis through IGAD-led negotiation. The Foreign Minister described China as "a reliable friend and vital partner to Africa and the Republic of South Sudan".

Foreign Minister Wang Yi noted that China had remained seized of the IGAD-led peace mediation process since the outbreak of the conflict in South Sudan. He pointed out he had held talks with representatives of the two conflicting parties of South Sudan on three occasions. The Chinese Foreign Minister affirmed that his country would also continue to provide sustained support to IGAD-led peace talks and its Monitoring and Verification Mechanism. He said that China would send personnel to engage in the Mechanism with the view to bringing in a new era of peace in South Sudan. Mr Wang Yi emphasized that the Khartoum consultative meeting did not mean to propose a new mechanism to resolve the conflict in South Sudan, but it was rather, he said, directed

at encouraging parties to fix the crisis within the framework of the IGAD-led mediation process, to support the IGAD process to reach a peaceful settlement, and to prepare for the upcoming IGAD Heads of State and Government summit. China, he said, had, at the UN Security Council and other global events, consistently placed emphasis on the need for an immediate and peaceful resolution of the crisis in South Sudan.

Mr Wang Yi further added that China was appealing to the international community to stand on the side of the IGAD-led mediation process. He expressed his thanks to IGAD's efforts and to the "courageous" steps boldly taken by the conflicting parties, noting that "the solution moves forwards, and any setback at this stage would lead to the collapse of the process." He pointed out that lack of stability in South Sudan created great confusion, and impacted on regional stability, adding that "this is what the international community does not want to see happening, and we are in China, as friends, do not like to see this happening." He also disclosed that his country was intending to dispatch a combat infantry battalion of 700 troops to the South Sudan within the framework of the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission. The Chinese Foreign Minister also announced the intention of China to send, a combat infantry battalion of 700 troops to the South Sudan within the framework of the United Nations peacekeeping mission, and pointed out it will be the first force of its kind that China sends abroad.

This regional consultative conference will also give impetus to the conclusions of the 474th meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, held on December 5, 2014 in Addis Ababa which opened up new possibilities of support to the IGAD-led mediation and peace negotiations. The decision aimed to urgently establish "an AU High-Level Ad-hoc Committee of Heads of State and Government" to re-energize and re-establish the IGAD-led process as the driver for an immediate end to the conflict and for a successful and peaceful conclusion of the crisis.

....and Dr Tedros meets President Al-Bashir and China's Foreign Minister in Khartoum

On the side-lines of the special consultation dialogue in Khartoum, Foreign Minister Dr Tedros Adhanom met with President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir of Sudan on Monday (January 12). Discussions focused on issues related to the significance of maintaining the momentum of the continued cooperation of the two countries in all-round bilateral relations, and further strengthening their partnership in regional peace, security and development. Both sides underlined the importance of expediting the expansion of the cooperative partnership of the two countries to new heights for the mutual benefit of their two friendly peoples. Both sides also reiterated the importance of a negotiated political settlement of the crisis in South Sudan in the best interests of the people of the world's newest state. They underlined that embracing a peaceful means to end the conflict by the parties would set the course for the creation of a secure, harmonious and prosperous region. President Omar Hassan al-Bashir emphasized that the Sudan would support a stable, unified and secure South Sudan which would benefit all.

Prior to the special consultation meeting, Dr Tedros also held talks with China's Foreign Affairs Minister, Wang Yi, in Khartoum. The two Ministers exchanged views on the strengthening of relations at bilateral, regional and international levels to advance regional peace and mutual interests. They recalled that **the visit of China's Prime Minister last year to Ethiopia and to other African countries, had a significant place in pushing forward Ethio-China and Afro-China engagement**, and stressed the need to build on the results of those high-level consultations in order to make them the driving force for the greater development of bilateral ties. Dr Tedros emphasized that Ethiopia was fully satisfied with its practical cooperative partnership with China. He said it had been continuing on a win-win basis and was bringing about a series of meaningful outcomes, and he applauded China's tangible support to Ethiopia's march towards the realization of its renaissance. In the discussions, Foreign Minister Wang Yi emphasized that China was content with its all-round cooperative partnership with Ethiopia for the common development of the two peoples. He underlined that the bilateral ties that existed between the two countries would be consolidated in the years ahead as China continued to offer support to Ethiopia's development.

Another subject discussed was the Special Consultation on South Sudan. Foreign Minister Wang noted that his visit to the region aimed to encourage the efforts for the achievement of peace and stability in South Sudan to better serve the interests of the South Sudanese and advance the common interests of Sudan, the region, China and the international community. Both sides agreed on the importance of the "Special Consultation in Support of the IGAD-led South Sudan Peace Process" as a vehicle to move the IGAD-led South Sudan peace process forward, to encourage resolution of the crisis through a negotiated political settlement. Ambassador Seyoum Mesfin, Chairperson of the IGAD South Sudan Mediation, Barnaba Marial Benjamin, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of South Sudan and SPLM/SPLA-in Opposition Chief Negotiator, Taban Deng

Gai, attended the bilateral talks of the two Foreign Ministers.

With regard to the regional consultation, Dr Tedros, extending his gratitude for China's initiative and its constructive role aimed at the speedy end of the war in South Sudan, expressed his hope and expectations that the consultation meeting in Khartoum would act as an engine to fast-track the IGAD-led mediation efforts. The parties exchanged views on the issue of the "Special Consultation in Support of the IGAD-led South Sudan Peace Process." They also expressed their thanks to China for its firm stance and continued support to the IGAD-led mediation process and to the early end of the conflict in South Sudan. Dr Tedros, the Chair of IGAD's Executive Council, welcomed Foreign Minister Wang Yi's commitment of US\$1.2 million to support the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism in South Sudan.

Ethio-Djibouti infrastructural integration projects progressing well

Ethiopia and Djibouti infrastructural integration has been witnessing unprecedented growth over the past few years, and the growing infrastructure connections in turn have been opening up new opportunities for both peoples as they expedite the integration of the economies of Ethiopia and Djibouti.

One notable effort is Ethiopia's launch of the construction to expand the road connecting Dire Dawa and Dewaleh, a distance of over 210 kilometers, at a cost of 3.7 billion birr. The project, financed by a loan from China's Exim bank, started in December last year. It is expected to be finalized within three years. The road is intended to facilitate the movement of goods to and from the Dire Dawa Special Economic Zone, which is also expected to be constructed within the next [5-year] GTP period. Another road is also under construction to connect the port of Tajourah in Djibouti to Semera, the capital of Afar Regional State. A second area of increasing infrastructure connectivity is shown by the second power transmission line agreement between Ethiopia and Djibouti. This allows Djibouti to import about 70mw of power, in addition to 50mw already exported. This will cover 60% of Djibouti's power needs.

The third dimension of increased infrastructure development is in railways. Ethiopia and Djibouti have, of course, a long history of rail links dating back to the 1890's. The century-old Ethio-Djibouti Railway was built during the reign of Emperor Menelik by a French company Chemin de Fer, following an agreement signed between Ethiopia and France. The old single-track rail way remained an important artery for decades and the major link for goods and peoples between the two countries. It has suffered, however, from both age and damage at various times, limiting its effectiveness. With Ethiopia's dynamic economic growth over the last decade and longer, and its growing use of Djibouti ports for up to 90% of its imports, the necessity for a new standard gauge rail connection between the two countries has been growing. Djibouti also responded to Ethiopia's growing import demands by opening two additional port facilities, the Dorahleh container terminal and the oil port. In addition, it also plans the construction of a new port at Tajourah to ease congestion at Djibouti port and provide an additional facility to serve Ethiopia. Tajourah will also include facilities for the export of potash from deposits in the Afar Regional State.

Ethiopia has also embarked on a massive expansion of rail links with an ambitious plan to build some 5,000 kilometers of rail, an important part of its long-term plans to make industry the mainstay of the economy. The GTP (2010/11-2014/15) gave priority to the rail line to Djibouti to replace trucks as these were inefficient, costly and unable to cope up with the growing quantities of imports and exports. Some 2,000 kilometers of the planned 5,000 kilometers of railway are dedicated to connecting Ethiopia to Djibouti. This was partly informed by the need to increase Ethiopia's trade competitiveness by decreasing the time lost in logistical challenges to imports and exports. This was underlined by the decision to build dry ports in the Mojo area to shorten demurrage payments and the time lost in customs clearance. The multi-modal transport system was introduced for the same reason. The Growth and Transformation Plan therefore incorporated standard-gauge rail projects, Sebeta-Meiso and Meiso-Dewalleh, at a cost of US\$3.4 billion. These developments are making significant progress. 65% of the Sebeta-Meiso project has been completed and the project is on schedule according to Nestanet Hussen, the project manager. It has also been reported that 70% of the Meiso-Dewalleh project has been finalized.

The Djibouti government complimented Ethiopia's efforts by launching a 94 kilometer project from Ethiopia's border town Gelele to Negad. The project includes 12 kilometers of rail to link to the container and oil ports and will also include the new terminal being erected at Negad, on the outskirts of Djibouti city center. Two additional terminals will be built in Holhol and Ali Sabieh in Djibouti. Djibouti has also started to install part of the track to the Ethiopian border and it is scheduled to be complete before the end of 2015. The Chinese

Civil Engineering Construction Company is responsible for the project. When the project was launched, Djibouti President Ismael Omar Guelleh noted that the rail connection would have an immense role in strengthening bilateral economic and social cooperation between the two peoples. He said the project would significantly change the lives of people living in towns along the railway, and underscored the importance of the rail connection projects to regional economic integration in East Africa.

The total length of the project from Sebeta, on the western outskirts of Addis Ababa to Djibouti is 750km. Arkebe Equebay, board chairman of the Ethiopian Railway Corporation and Special Adviser to Prime Minister Hailemariam, recently told *Capital* newspaper that the project would be completed before the end of 2015. On the Ethiopian side, track-laying for the 210 kilometers from Dire Dawa to Gelele district is complete and a start has been made in installing electric and communication lines. This part of the project has significantly benefited the local population with more than 8,000 acquiring jobs. The Chinese Civil Engineering Construction Company managing director, Yuan Li, has said construction is being taken to the same standards as the Meiso-Dire Dawa-Dewalleh project. He said the train will take seven hours between Addis Ababa and Djibouti port, running at a speed of 120 kph. The other railway line connecting Ethiopia with Djibouti will be the Mekele-Woldiya/Hara Gebeya-Semera-Dicheto-Elidar project. This will eventually connect Tigrai, Amhara and Afar Regional States with the port of Tajourah in Djibouti. This project has secured a US\$300 million loan from the Indian Exim Bank.

British MPs condemn human rights abuse and forced labor in Eritrea

Last month, over forty British Members of Parliament, from all political parties, backed a motion condemning the abuse of human rights in Eritrea and the role of mining companies in exploiting the forced labor that results from compulsory military service. The motion accused international mining companies from the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia, involved in mining activities in Eritrea, of using forced labor in conditions which have been described as “abject slavery”. The MPs condemn Eritrea’s human rights abuses, which include “arbitrary arrest and detention and compulsory military service imposed on all able-bodied men, women and even children”. They point out that this has led to an “unprecedented exodus of Eritreans, now reaching 5,000 a month, fleeing their country as refugees to Europe on a precarious journey, including the recent tragedy at Lampedusa, which is costing hundreds of lives”. Over the last decade nearly ten percent of the Eritrean population, which now stands at a little over six million, have fled the country.

The Early Day Motion (544) said in full: “That this House condemns the human rights abuses perpetuated by the government of Eritrea, including arbitrary arrest and detention and compulsory military service imposed on all able-bodied men, women and even children, which has led to an unprecedented exodus of Eritreans, now reaching 5,000 a month, fleeing their country as refugees to Europe on a precarious journey, including the recent tragedy at Lampedusa, which is costing hundreds of lives; notes with concern the collusion between the government of Eritrea and the international mining companies from the UK, Canada and Australia, which is using the forced labor of Eritreans for work in extractive industries in conditions which have been generally described as slavery.”

The bill’s primary sponsor, Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn, said: “The mining companies that so happily work with the Eritrean government need to look at themselves – as do other governments who are well aware of the situation there – and insist on the special rapporteur visit as the beginning of the international awareness of the level of human rights abuses.” The Liberal Democrat MP Sarah Teather, who co-sponsored the motion, said: “The situation for Eritreans is appalling, with ongoing human rights abuses forcing thousands to leave every month. I’m particularly worried about the extremely vulnerable position that those fleeing find themselves in.” She noted that “[Eritrean migrants] are disproportionately represented in the boats crossing the Mediterranean, with almost half of all arrivals via this route in 2014 from Eritrea and Syria. Many fall into the hands of human traffickers on the way. Tragically, many others have drowned. That’s why the Eritrean government must honor its international human rights obligations – allowing a visit from the UN would be a good first step.”

Four stories in the international press over the previous month gave added point to the Early Day motion: “Eritreans sue Canadian mining firm Nevsun over human rights abuses”; “Press freedom body [Reporters without Borders] highlights plight of Eritrea’s jailed journalists”; “Italian police arrest Eritrean gang who smuggled migrants”; and “Number of Eritreans seeking asylum in Europe increases threefold in a year.”

The Eritrean refugees who filed the lawsuit against Nevsun Resources claimed the company had conspired

with the Eritrean government to force them, and other conscripted workers, to work in the copper mine while receiving little pay and living in atrocious conditions. They worked for the Bisha Mining Share Company, operated by Nevsun Resources and Segen Construction, an Eritrean state-owned contractor. Similar accusations of forced labor have been made against South Boulder Mines, an Australian company mining potassium sulphate in Colluli, South East Eritrea where there have been allegations that forced labor is being used to build a road to the mine. A British company, Andiamo Exploration, is involved in copper, zinc and gold exploration in Eritrea and another UK-based exploration and development company, Ortac Resources, is associated with it. Another Canada-based mining company, Sunridge Gold, which has been exploring for precious metal in Eritrea since 2003, is reported to have repeatedly refused to answer questions about its activities or its policy towards the use of forced labor.

Eritrean exiles, charities, NGOs and human rights organizations have frequently drawn attention to continued abuse of human rights in Eritrea over many years. One of these is the Stop Slavery Campaign, entitled "Time to Break the Chain of abuse". Eritrean activists from Sweden, Norway, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Germany, UK and Italy will, over the next six months, be calling on European governments and the UN to address the cycle of grave human rights violations being perpetrated against Eritrea's national service conscripts, forcing them to leave their country in thousands. More than 300,000 Eritreans have fled the country so far, according to the UNHCR. Many of these migrants embark on a dangerous journey through Sudan, Egypt and Libya, risking kidnapping and torture, before trying to cross the Mediterranean and settle in Europe.