

A Week in the Horn

17th April 2015

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News in Brief

Africa and the African Union

The Chairperson of the African Union, Dr Dlamini Zuma, and U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry, signed an agreement on Monday (April 13) to support an African Center for Disease Control and Prevention to be opened in Addis Ababa. The objective would be to strengthen Africa's capacity to combat disease, share information, and build collective capacities against Ebola, HIV, TB, malaria, and other diseases.

Ethiopia

President Dr Mulatu Teshome, visiting the Republic of Korea to attend the seventh World Water Forum, met with President Park Geun-hye on Tuesday (April 14). He expressed his hopes that Korea would continue to support rural development pilot projects. President Park hoped the Korea-Ethiopia "fiber-clothing technology park," currently under negotiation, would proceed successfully.

President Paul Kagame of Rwanda arrived in Addis Ababa on an official visit to Ethiopia on Thursday (April 16). He held talks with Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn and during his visit he will also be attending the Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa at the weekend. Ethiopia and Rwanda signed a Memorandum of Understanding covering development of urban and housing policies. (See article)

President Kagame and Prime Minister Hailemariam attended an Ethio-Rwanda Business Forum on Thursday (April 16) (See article)

Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn sent a message to Angolan Vice-President, Manuel Domingos Vicente last Friday (April 10) suggesting new areas for cooperation with reference to the future of Pan-Africanism.

The First Ethio-UAE Joint Ministerial Commission Meeting was held in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates, at the weekend (April 10-12). The Joint Ministerial Commission was co-chaired by Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, and Foreign Minister Dr Tedros. (See article)

Foreign Minister Dr Tedros Adhanom met with the US Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Ms Wendy

Sherman on Thursday (April 16) for talks on bilateral relations as well as on cooperation in the fight against terrorism and on the situation in the region including Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen. (See article)

Dr Tedros signed a book of condolence on Friday last week (April 10) at the Kenyan embassy in Addis Ababa. He expressed his deepest sympathy to the families of the victims at Garissa University and to the people and Government of Kenya.

The 4th **Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa** will take place in Bahir Dar, the capital of the Amhara Regional State, this weekend (April 18 -19), under the theme of "Secularism and Politicized faith".(See article)

Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, meeting a delegation of the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), headed by Hiroyuki Nemoto, Director-General for Overseas Planning Department of JETRO, on Tuesday (April 14), reiterated Ethiopia's firm commitment to building and promoting cooperation between Japan and Africa in industrialization.

On Tuesday (April 14), Ethiopia's Ambassador to South Africa, Ambassador Mulugeta Kelil, and embassy staff discussed protection for Ethiopian citizens with local authorities and South Africa's Minister of Home Affairs following the wave of violence against Africans in Natal townships.

A group of Ethiopian evacuees from Yemen have continued to arrive in Addis Ababa this week. They have included families of the diplomatic staff from the Embassy in Sana'a. The Government is continuing its efforts to provide speedy and safe evacuation for Ethiopian citizens.

Fitch Ratings has continued to give Ethiopia a credit rating of 'B'. It expects the Government to meet its fiscal deficit target of 2.9% of GDP this year. Expansion during the current fiscal year would probably be slightly down from the average of the past five years. Fitch believes the political outlook would remain stable.

The French BRL Group will be the main consultancy firm to carry out the technical studies agreed on for the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD,) and the Dutch Deltares company will also participate. The two firms will submit a joint action plan shortly, after which Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan are scheduled to sign contracts.

Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP) disclosed that the electric power generation projects under construction, which will increase electric generation from 2,268 mw to 10,000 mw, have created close to 50,000 permanent and temporary jobs. Over 16,000 jobs related to the GERD, Gilgel Gibe III and the Genale Dawa Dam, with another 22,000 in the rural electrification program.

Djibouti

Djibouti's Minister of Culture and Muslim Affairs, Aden Hassan Aden, laid the foundation stone for the construction of the **Center for Afar Language and Culture** in Samara, the capital of Ethiopia's Afar Regional State, at the weekend. He said the new Center will have a significant role to play in keeping, developing and maintaining Afar language and culture.

Eritrea

Eritrean refugee organizations say three boats containing a total of over a thousand refugees, mostly Eritreans, were heading to Italy on Wednesday (April 15), despite reports that up to 400 refugees, including many women and children, died on Monday (April 13) when their boat capsized. The UNHCR called for a more robust search-and-rescue mission to be set up.

Italy's Coast Guard and navy and other vessels rescued 8,480 refugees over the weekend (April 10-13), as warm weather and improving sea conditions encouraged an even higher number of boats of refugees than usual to set off from North Africa to Italy. The refugees crossing from Libya to Italy are from Africa, and a majority come from Eritrea.

Kenya

Kenyan Deputy President William Ruto demanded on Saturday [April 11] that the UNHCR should close the Dadaab refugee camps within the next three months. The UNHCR on Tuesday (April 14) urged Kenya to reconsider its demand. (See article)

Deputy President Ruto said on Sunday (April 12) that the Kenya Defense Forces will not withdraw from Somalia. He urged Kenyans to be united in the fight against global terrorism and said the Government was planning to recruit more police officers.

Interior Cabinet Secretary Joseph Nkaissery said on Tuesday (April 14) that the Government was offering a ten day amnesty to all individuals who went to Somalia for training and who now wished to disassociate themselves from Al-Shabaab. Those who failed to heed this call within the prescribed timeframe, he said, would face the full force of the law.

Kenya's Ambassador to Ethiopia says that Ethiopia and Kenya need to implement the economic integration agreements they have signed as soon as possible. Ambassador Catherine Mwangi said the two nations should realize the Special Status Agreement signed in 2012, as well as agreements signed on trade, investment, food security and infrastructure building as well as other areas.

Somalia

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud officially launched the state formation conference for a Central State in Adado town, in Galgadud region, central Somalia, on Thursday (April 16).

President Mohamed and members of the military forces commemorated the 55th anniversary of the founding of the Somali army on Sunday (April 12) in a ceremony at the Defense Ministry compound attended by the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, Ambassador Maman Sidikou, the head of AMISOM.

The Federal Government of Somalia placed a million US dollar bounty on the heads of top Al Shabaab officials last week. Among the 11 most wanted terrorists are the leader of Al-Shabaab, Ahmed Dirie "Abu Ubayda" (US\$250,000) and the deputy leader, Mahad Warsame Qalay "Mahad Karate" (US\$150,000).

Somalia Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke headed a Federal Government delegation for two days of discussions with Puntland President Dr Abdiweli Mohamed Ali last weekend [April 11 and 12]. Talks covered the constitutional review process, the boundaries of the Central Somali state, the establishment of an inclusive national army (to which Puntland agreed to contribute 3,000 troops) and resource sharing, as well as implementation of previous agreements.

At least 18 people were killed in an attack by Al-Shabaab fighters against the Ministry for Higher Education in Mogadishu on Tuesday (April 14). The death toll included seven Al-Shabaab terrorists as well as eight civilians. The attack was strongly condemned by the UN Security Council, by AMISOM and by IGAD as an "atrocious criminal act."

The President of Puntland, Dr Abdiweli Mohamed Ali, along with cabinet ministers and parliamentarians, met United Nations Development Program officials to review progress in capacity building, livelihoods and cross-cutting issues on Monday (April 13) at Garowe.

Puntland said on Wednesday (April 15) that over 720 refugees had arrived at Bosasso and other ports over the last few days following the latest flare up of conflict in Yemen. The UNHCR says it is coordinating preparations with Puntland and Somaliland to receive thousands fleeing from Yemen.

A 75-seat parliament was sworn in Kismayo for the Interim Jubaland Administration on Wednesday (April 15). Former Federal MP Sheikh Abdi Yusuf was elected as interim speaker.

South Sudan

A senior South Sudanese religious leader, the Assistant Archbishop of Juba, on Wednesday (April 15) called on the two rival leaders to take bold decisions to end the ongoing conflict and avert a looming economic collapse. Archbishop Santo Laku said it was time to act to avoid "this house collapsing on us".

In advance of the resumption of the IGAD-mediated peace talks in Addis Ababa later this month, President Salva Kiir convened a leadership meeting on Wednesday (April 15) of the SPLM political bureau to discuss strategies "aimed at ending the ongoing conflict." The SPLM-in-Opposition is also holding a consultation

conference to discuss its position before the talks resume.

A report issued by the Small Arms Survey's Human Security Baseline Assessment on Tuesday (April 14) says there are indications that the forces of both President Kiir and Riek Machar were preparing for intensified violence in the coming dry season months. The report says both sides want to maximize the territory under their control before the rains begin.

Sudan

Presidential elections took place this week along with elections for the national and state legislatures. Results are expected in late April but President Al-Bashir and the ruling National Congress Party are expected to win. (See article)

Ethiopia at the 7th World Water Forum in South Korea

The 7th World Water Forum, co-organized by the Government of the Republic of Korea and the World Water Council, was held from Sunday (April 13) to Friday (April 17) in Daegu and Gyeongbuk in South Korea, Daegu. The first Water Forum was held in Marrakech, Morocco in 1997 and has been held every three years since then. It is the world's largest podium for discussion of water and water-related issues with tens of thousands of people across the world participating. This year's theme for the Forum was "Water for Our Future" with the message and goal of securing "safe and abundant water for all." This year, the Forum included four elements; thematic, regional, political, and science and technology, with more than 400 sessions and 30,000 participants. It discussed a wide range of different water-related issues, challenges and solutions across the world, from local issues to regional and global and trans-boundary concerns.

The opening ceremony of the Forum was held at Daegu, the third largest city of South Korea, in the presence of Heads of State and Government, ministers, parliamentarians, water experts and other stakeholders. At the opening, President of South Korea, Park Geun-hye; FDRE President, Dr Mulatu Teshome; Turkmenistan President, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow; Tajikistan President, Emomali Rahmon; Hungarian President, Janos Ader, and Moroccan Prime Minister, Abdelliah Benkirane made statements.

President Mulatu told the Forum that, despite the fact that poverty was an existential challenge, Ethiopia "has taken serious steps, to solve the challenges of poverty and underdevelopment, which have borne results." Ethiopia, he said, "despite sitting atop of huge water resources and potential energy, nevertheless, is suffering from economic water scarcity." He noted that, "Ethiopia's economy is a hostage of rainfall" and this necessitated the utilization of any available water resource. Ethiopia, he said, "is determined to tap its water resources to mitigate climate risks, reduce dependency on rainfall and thus be able to provide water and food to its people." Underlining the multi-use and multi-dimensional benefits of hydropower dams, Dr Mulatu further noted that "Ethiopia's hydropower potential can provide sufficient generation to build a **regional power trade market**." President Mulatu concluded by stating his "sincere hope that the large water community that gathered in Daegu and Gyeongju for the 7th World Water Forum, will come out with recommendations that would facilitate the development of small to large-scale water infrastructure in developing countries - to make their populations and their economies resilient to water-related shocks." Ethiopia also took part in the Ministerial Conference held at Gyeongju on Monday (April 13), in which Ministers and Heads of Delegations from 100 countries participated.

Ethiopia's Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy, Alemayehu Tegenu, underlined the urgency and necessity of Ethiopia utilizing its water resources to feed millions of people. Minister Alemayehu also emphasized that Ethiopia knows "our responsibility to factor in the downstream concerns when we develop the resources on our portion of our transboundary rivers. Toward this end, Ethiopia is committed to serious consultations, information sharing and exchange with its riparian countries to confer win-win outcomes." Minister Alemayehu further noted the proactive and constructive role of Ethiopia in enhancing and strengthening cooperation regarding the utilization and management of transboundary watercourses. He highlighted Ethiopia's commitment to cooperation, as evidenced in its activities in the Nile Basin Initiative, and the first multilateral agreement signed in the Nile Basin - The Nile River Basin Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) - and its initiative for the establishment of the International Panel of Experts on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD).

The Ministerial Conference was applauded as a success for relating water agendas and suggested solutions and concluded with the United Nation`s sustainable development goals, and with the adoption and announcement of a Ministerial Declaration. The Declaration clearly underlined that "water is at the core of sustainable development" and it supported "the inclusion of one dedicated water goal and water-related targets in the Post-2015 Development Agenda." It also indicated that the Addis Ababa meeting in July 2015 on Financing Development should include water issues. The Declaration, while recognizing "the leading role that riparian countries have on advancing cooperation on transboundary waters", further underscore "the importance of international cooperation and partnership between developed and developing countries and other stakeholders in tackling water related challenges. The "Declaration" also states the importance of water in tackling climate change, the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, and supported the outcomes of the **7th World Water Forum.**"

The Ethiopian delegation, which was made up of experts from the Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ethiopian members of the Tripartite National Committee (TNC), was also actively engaged in the sessions of the Forum. In addition, they also shared Ethiopia`s experience in trans-boundary water cooperation and the significance of equitable and reasonable utilization of such watercourses for genuine and sustainable cooperation between riparian states. The 7th World Water Forum concluded on Friday (17 April). The next Forum will be held in Brasilia, the capital of Brazil, in 2018.

President Paul Kagame on an official visit to Ethiopia....

President Paul Kagame of Rwanda paid a two-day official visit to Ethiopia from April 16-17, 2015, following an invitation from Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn. The visit is intended to underline the importance of carrying forward the "exemplary relations" of the two countries and provide a new breakthrough in bilateral, regional and global issues of common interest. The visit will include assessment of the activities of the Joint Ministerial Commission meeting of the Declaration of Strategic Partnership Agreement and of other agreements on general cooperation, agriculture, trade, civil aviation, power purchase, and military cooperation and chart the course for a more vibrant Ethio-Rwanda partnership to bring greater prosperity to the two friendly peoples. The occasion of the visit also recognizes the importance of the Ethio-Rwanda partnership in expanding the cause of regional peace and security with a view to provide the opportunity for greater regional integration and regional development. Progress together, on matters of regional development, peace, stability and security, has been the harbinger of President Kagame`s official visit to Ethiopia.

The high-level delegations of Ethiopia and Rwanda, led by Prime Minister Hailemariam and President Kagame, held consultations at the National Palace. The Prime Minister expressed his gratitude to President Kagame and his delegation for accepting the invitation to visit Ethiopia to reactivate and re-orient the Joint Ministerial Commission, described as a practical and concrete mechanism to make full use of their respective economic, political, and diplomatic cooperation potential. The Prime Minister said Rwanda and Ethiopia shared numerous commonalities including a shared vision on the equitable utilization of the resources of the Nile River, a similar history of struggle for national renaissance and a similar story with the economic values and vision shared by their respective leaders and political parties, the Ethiopian People`s Revolutionary Democratic Front and the Rwandese National Patriotic Front, [which] contributed to the similarities in national development policies as well as their views of regional and continental development and security, said the Prime Minister. The overall policies, translated into practical implementation, brought the two countries to new frontiers of vibrant economic development, sustainable peace and maturing democracy.

The Prime Minister noted that President Kagame`s visit offered an opportunity to deepen all-round ties at all levels. He expressed his hope that the visit would give firm support to cement Ethio-Rwanda relations, noting that the high-level bilateral consultations could help the two countries develop key capacities necessary to deal with the scourge of terrorism in Africa, and work out proper and effective ways to resolve development and security challenges in the region, as well as chart a roadmap to transform their respective economies through regional hydropower interconnectivity. Prime Minister Hailemariam, stressing that priority should be given to regional power interconnectivity to enhance economic cooperation between the two countries, disclosed that the completion of Gilgel Gibe III and the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam projects would have significant benefits, not just for Ethiopia, but for the region at large. He said Ethiopia`s hydropower links could be extended to Rwanda to embrace industrialization.

The Prime Minister also noted that Ethiopia and Rwanda were emerging as leading elements in peace-making, in economic development and in sustainable peace in Africa. The Prime Minister stated that both countries

enjoyed excellent political and diplomatic relations, and said they were committed to ensuring regional peace and security. He also underlined their shared vision for the equitable utilization of the resources of the Nile, pointing out that both countries were playing a key role in the process of ratification of the Cooperative Framework Agreement for the benefit of all riparian countries.

President Paul Kagame said that his visit aimed to reaffirm and strengthen the excellent partnership existing between the two countries. He noted Rwanda had been inspired by Ethiopia's wide-ranging, sustainable and inclusive development achievements, and said it was highly appreciative of Ethiopia's exemplary role in regional peace and security. The President stressed the need to intensify academic exchanges and enhance ties between the business communities of the two countries. He extended an invitation to Prime Minister Hailemariam to visit Rwanda with a view to emphasizing the excellent relationship of the two countries. The President said "It is a true privilege to be among brothers in Ethiopia." He pointed out that both leaderships demonstrated a common determination to empower their two peoples as the central drivers of socio-economic development.

After their discussions, Prime Minister Hailemariam and President Kagame jointly witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding to deepen partnership in the development of an urban and housing policy as well as implementation of affordable housing.

..... and attends an Ethio-Rwanda Business Forum with Prime Minister Hailemariam

The Ethio-Rwanda Business Forum was held in Addis Ababa on Thursday (April 16) at the Sheraton Addis Hotel with the aim of further cementing the strategic cooperation of the two countries through trade and investment. Prime Minister Hailemariam and President Kagame attended, along with senior government officials, members of the business communities of both countries and of the public and private sectors, including potential investors.

In his opening remarks, Prime Minister Hailemariam reiterated the importance of the strategic partnership between the two countries and noted that it could rightly be considered as a model of cooperation, contributing significantly to the efforts to bring about sustainable development and a prosperous future in the region. The Prime Minister asserted that "Ethiopia and Rwanda had a lot in common and were joined together by their clear determination towards peace and prosperity". He noted that "both ranked in the league of fast-growing economies in the world." Concerning cooperation between the two countries, the Prime Minister said "I would like to speak emphatically about south-south cooperation in the context of Ethio-Rwandan relations." He said that "always close in a deeply convivial sense, we have traveled a long distance together, accomplishing more prosperity, more peace, more trust, in a fashion that can be seen as a model by many." Rwanda is Ethiopia's strategic partner in many areas, he said, and within the framework of strategic cooperation between the two countries, he said "we have signed various agreements on different issues like agriculture, health, civil aviation, air transport, defense, education, trade, culture, and the science and technology sectors."

Prime Minister Hailemariam also mentioned the efforts of Africa towards good governance and sustainable economic growth, and the commitment of Ethiopia and Rwanda to the African Renaissance. He said that "despite the challenges we are currently facing, Africa is moving forward by reducing the negative features and implementing good governance, and by scoring sustainable economic growth." Ethiopia and Rwanda, he said, were on "the right track of sustainable development, [and] should liaise more than ever with each other and other African countries to obliterate the negative images about Africa and provide the evidence of the renaissance of our continent."

The Prime Minister stressed that Ethiopia and Rwanda should extend its close, "heart-to-heart relations" into the dimension of investment and trade, as part of the basic concept of pan-African cooperation. He said "we can offer each other help to improve our capabilities to complement each other and enhance investment, trade and tourism gains." And the Prime Minister expressed his firm belief that now was the time for Ethiopia and Rwanda to further strengthen these relations.

President Kagame thanked Ethiopia for hosting the business forum and agreed on the commonalities between the two countries. He emphasized that the two countries should work to cooperate in the business sector "for the good of our region and our continent," adding that "there is no better way of doing that than through business, cooperation and investment". President Kagame said Rwanda and Ethiopia were the fastest growing economies in Africa and beyond. He noted Ethiopians were an industrious and entrepreneurial people. He said their investments were welcome in Rwanda. He praised Ethiopian leaders for investing in major landmark

projects that would have an impact far beyond Ethiopia in terms of their benefits. He also underlined that cooperation and partnership between the two countries should be further strengthened in a variety of different sectors.

At the conclusion of the Business Forum, a Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation was signed between the Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Association of Ethiopia and the Private Sector Federation of Rwanda.

Dr Tedros holds discussions with US Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs

Foreign Minister, Dr Tedros Adhanom, met with the US Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Ms Wendy Sherman on Thursday (April 16) for talks on bilateral relations and cooperation in the fight against terrorism and on the situation in the region including Somalia, South Sudan, Yemen and Eritrea.

Dr Tedros said he appreciated Ms Sherman coming to Ethiopia directly from the G77 meeting in Germany, and said it underlined her commitment to deepening the excellent relationships that already existed between the two countries. The Minister briefed Ms Sherman on the current situation in Somalia and on the progress being made politically and militarily. He noted that the al-Qaeda-linked Somali terrorist [group] Al-Shabaab had been weakened by the consecutive operations of AMISOM and the Somalia National Army (SNA) last year; [in] Operation Eagle and Operation Indian Ocean a significant number of towns in Bay, Bakool, Gedo, Shebelle, Hiran and Juba regions had been liberated, including the militant stronghold of Barawe port. He also emphasized the importance of the deaths of a number of Al-Shabaab leaders, including its former emir, Abdi Godane, by US drone strikes. Nevertheless, Al-Shabaab did still remain a threat, to Somalia, to the region and to the world. It might have been seriously weakened, but it still had the capacity to carry [out] bombings wherever it wanted, including the Somali Ministry of Higher Education this week as well as recent attacks on AMISOM camps and hotels in Mogadishu. In addition, Al-Shabaab fighters were active in neighboring countries and the recent attack on Garissa University in Kenya was Al-Shabaab's bloodiest ever massacre.

Dr Tedros emphasized that Al-Shabaab has been dislodged from most of its urban and port strongholds, but it still controlled large rural areas in south-central Somalia. He said it remained imperative that all Somalia's partners should continue to exert their concerted efforts to ensure peace in Somalia. The Minister thanked Ms Sherman for the role played by the United States of America, but he stressed that Somalia still needed more support from the international community, especially from donor countries, to help institute government and administrative institutions to ensure permanent victory over Al-Shabaab and provide continued backing for AMISOM. With regard to Vision 2016 and the elections due in September 2016, Dr Tedros said there had been some encouraging developments from the Federal Government in moving forward the process of establishing federal states, including the Interim Juba Administration and the South West Administration. He said Ethiopia was fully supportive of the Federal Government on all levels and believed the election could be held as scheduled in September next year.

Dr Tedros added that Ethiopia was committed to helping bring peace and stability to Somalia through national reconciliation processes and through military assistance. It would continue to assist in the training and development of the Somali National Armed Forces and in other ways, as required. He said Ethiopia remained determined to assist Somalia until the country can stand on its feet, in peace and stability. He commended the US efforts to co-ordinate the international community's support for peace and reconciliation in Somalia, and underlined the need for the international community to remain actively engaged. It should extend greater support to Somalia on the basis of the priorities defined by the Somali Government, namely: stability through the rule of law and good governance, economic recovery, social reconciliation, basic services, and national unity. Somalia and the international community, Dr Tedros emphasized, must continue to move fast to prevent any political and security vacuum, which would allow space for Al-Shabaab or other spoilers to retake liberated areas. Support for the establishment of effective security institutions was therefore of paramount importance. Somalia needed security institutions, he said, that were relevant, accountable and sustainable with the required command and control structure. These must also be consistent with the agreed powers of the central government and of the regions. The stress should be on the need for peace building as a complement to military efforts, but this also required the international community to be alert to the threat of Al-Shabaab and other spoilers trying to derail the peace process. Dr Tedros stressed that the Somalia Federal Government, in cooperation with its development partners, must also focus on providing social services and development activities in liberated areas. There was still a real need to establish local administrations in a broad-based and participatory manner that properly reflected local needs in the liberated areas.

Dr Tedros also briefed Ms Sherman on the situation in South Sudan and underlined the necessity of the

warring parties living up to their commitments and agreed principles. He said that the IGAD-mediation was expected to launch the IGAD-Plus process shortly. This would involve Nigeria, Algeria, South Africa, Chad and Rwanda as well other stakeholders. It would also be preceded by shuttle diplomacy. Ms Sherman welcomed Ethiopia's efforts to help the mediation and expressed her hopes for success.

Dr Tedros described the role of Eritrea in regional destabilization and in support of terrorist groups in the region. He said Eritrea had shown no indication of changing its policies in any meaningful way. Ethiopia, he said, had detailed evidence of **Eritrea's involvement in supporting anti-government and terrorist activities in Somalia where it continued to support Al-Shabaab, and in Yemen.**

The US Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs welcomed the enormous efforts that Ethiopia was putting into development internally as well as in its relations with neighboring countries. She appreciated the socio-economic progress achieved so far and said Ethiopia's democracy is moving forward. She expressed her hope that the forthcoming election would be a fair, transparent, inclusive and democratic. Ms Sherman underlined the importance of the longstanding relationship between Ethiopia and the United States and said she hoped it would deepen and widened in different areas. She welcomed the fact that Ethiopia's troops had formally joined AMISOM, taking responsibility for the security in AMISOM's sectors 3 and 4, the south-western regions of Gedo, Bay and Bakool, and liberating a number of towns from Al-Shabaab.

Ms Sherman underlined the importance of Ethiopia and the United States working closely together to fight terrorism. She said the US government was against all such groups that tried to assume political power through violence and terrorist activity. This included organizations and terrorist groups such as Al-Shabaab and also groups like Ginbot 7 identified by the House of Peoples representative of Ethiopia as terrorist organizations. She emphasized that in such situations it was necessary to fully understand the complexities of terrorist actors and networks and to respond to these activities [which] required internationalization of counterterrorist operations and increased provision of joint counter-intelligence action, strategy and operations that could effectively disrupt terrorist networks and activities. Ethiopia is a very strong and growing country, Ms Sherman said. "We want to make sure the stability, the peace, the security and the growing prosperity continue, and we look forward to a very strong partnership, building all the platforms that we need to meet these threats, meet these concerns with all seriousness, she added.

The discussion also covered the crisis in Yemen and its implications for the East African Region, and both sides expressed their concern over the linkages and networking between different terrorist and radical groups and organizations in different regions, which contributed to their capacity to create threats to international peace and security generally and to the East African region, due to its geographic proximity to Yemen. Dr Tedros and Ms Sherman agreed on the importance of the US and Ethiopia keeping in close touch over terrorist activity and in cooperating closely in the future to respond to the continuing threat posed by international terrorism.

First Ethio-UAE Joint Ministerial Commission Meeting held in Abu Dhabi

The First Ethio-UAE Joint Ministerial Commission Meeting was held in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates, last weekend, (April 10-12) and was co-chaired by His Highness Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates, and Dr Tedros Adhanom, Foreign Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

In his opening statement, Dr Tedros noted that the Joint Commission Meeting was the result of an agreement to establish a mechanism for expanding bilateral relations following Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan's visit to Ethiopia in 2013. Dr Tedros expressed his firm belief that the meeting would be able to identify areas of cooperation in trade, investment, tourism, labor exchange and education as well as cooperation in security and people-to-people relations. Referring to the expansion of bilateral trade, now reaching a level of US\$1 billion, and the encouraging trend of investment flows, he said Ethiopia expects the flow of investment from the UAE to increase as there was huge potential for expansion in a number of different fields. Dr Tedros noted that the Joint Commission was an important milestone in the growing bilateral relations between the two countries and said it was an opportunity to build a solid foundation for a future of strong cooperation, especially in the economic sector. He indicated that the bilateral agreements that would be signed would promote economic cooperation. He identified the tourism, investment, trade, labor and financing of major infrastructure projects as investments for possible cooperation. He also suggested encouraging the private sector to promote and expand two-way trade and investment.

In his remarks, Dr Tedros also indicated possible areas of cooperation in the fight against terrorism and in support of regional peace and stability. Noting that Ethiopia was playing a leading role in the efforts to stabilize

Somalia, both as a member of AMISOM and on its own, he said, "Our forces have paid and are paying for their lives in the fight against the Al-Shabaab terrorist group." He appreciated the UAE's decision to identify Al-Shabaab as a terrorist organization and pledged Ethiopia's cooperation and sharing of experience with the UAE in the fight against terrorist groups wherever they might be. Referring to Ethiopia's role in Sudan and South Sudan, the Minister noted that Ethiopia was the only country that provided the UN peace-keeping force for the Abyei region and it was also involved in the IGAD-mandated mediation role to resolve the conflict in South Sudan. He appreciated the support of the UAE.

Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, who welcomed the signing of the Declaration of Principles Agreement between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan, said it is important, not only for the countries concerned, but also for the whole of the Nile Basin and for its development. In his opening remarks, he noted that the UAE and Ethiopia had historic and important ties. Ethiopia, he said, was a major trading partner for the UAE. He referred to the statistical reports which ranked the UAE number eight in terms of foreign investment in Ethiopia and said he would look into further ways to increase this. He indicated that the UAE was keen to develop trade and investment relations and this would help to exploit the opportunities in industry, transport, infrastructure and other sectors. "No doubt, the growth of relations will require expansion in many fields, and the UAE can offer more in this respect through setting up partnerships between the private sectors of both countries," he said. Sheikh Abdullah said the "first meeting of the UAE-Ethiopian Joint Committee reflects our commitment to developing these relations in line with the aspirations of higher leadership in both countries, and in a way that serves the joint interests and objectives in all fields. We can also use this committee as a platform for developing cultural and technical cooperation, a move that can add a popular dimension to the partnership between us, and a strong support to the political administration of the leaders of the two countries."

Sheikh Abdullah reiterated that the joint committee meeting was a valuable opportunity to increase bilateral trade and explore more ways to do so. He also noted that mutual visits of senior officials strengthened direct communication and were an appropriate means to settle any dispute or meet any obstacles or challenges through direct talks. He noted that the opening of the representative office of the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Addis Ababa in May 2013 has already proved itself a successful model of trade cooperation. At the conclusion of the Joint Commission Meeting, the two sides signed a number of agreements covering relations in the fields of agriculture, education, customs, avoidance of double taxation and sport.

On the sidelines of the Joint Ministerial meeting, Dr Tedros Adhanom and Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan held bilateral discussions on the ways to strengthen relations and bonds of friendship between the two countries. They also exchanged views on regional and international issues of mutual interest as well as considered the latest developments in the region.

During his visit to the UAE, Dr Tedros also met Ethiopian community leaders and representatives of the Ethiopian Diaspora in the UAE and briefed them on the current political, economic and social developments in the country. In his briefing, the Minister noted that the implementation of the first Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP I) has been largely successful and most of the goals had been achieved. Based on the experience gained in the implementation of GTP I, he said, preparation of the second Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II) was now in its final phase, and would soon be made available for public consultations. The Minister noted that, in the labor agreements the Government was preparing to sign with different countries in the region, priority was being given to the safety and security of citizens. The Government was negotiating with countries in the region to sign agreements that ensured the safety of all Ethiopian citizens. The negotiations with the UAE were now in their final stage and he hoped an agreement would be signed in the coming few months. The Diaspora representatives commended the election debates taking place between the political parties, and broadcast by the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation. They said this provided a real opportunity for voters to make informed decisions.

Kenya wants all Somali refugees to return to Somalia within three months

Kenya's Deputy President William Ruto said on Saturday (April 11) that Kenya had given the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) three months to remove the more than half a million Somali refugees in the Dadaab camp complex and relocate them in Somalia. He said in a statement that "We have asked the UNHCR to relocate the refugees in three months", adding that, if it failed to do so then Kenya would relocate the refugees itself. The statement underlined Kenya's determination to take a tough response to the atrocious killing of 148 people by Al-Shabaab terrorists at Garissa University on April 2. In the past, Kenya has accused terrorists of hiding out in the Dadaab complex on several occasions and said that the camps have become a recruiting ground for Al-Shabaab. Dadaab was set up in 1991 following the collapse of the Somali

government and has steadily expanded over the years. According to the UNHCR the number of registered refugees in the settlements is around 335,000, but Deputy President Ruto suggested the number was considerably higher, at over 600,000. The Deputy President was echoing a call by Muslim leaders from the North Eastern province that it should be closed. They have claimed the camp has stopped being a place of refuge and become a recruiting and training ground for Al-Shabaab.

The UNHCR on Tuesday urged Kenya to rethink its instruction to close the world's largest refugee camp. It said it could not participate in forcing Somalis back to their homeland as that would breach international law. The UNHCR said the "abrupt" plan would have "extreme humanitarian and practical consequences" and it therefore wanted "the Kenyan authorities to give the matter further consideration." A UNHCR spokesperson said "the main issue is the voluntariness of returns. If these people were forced to return, it could be in breach of international law and UNHCR would not facilitate such a move." The 1951 U.N. Refugee Convention, to which Kenya is a party, prohibits forcing refugees back to areas where their life or freedom is threatened. UNHCR, in fact, considers that large-scale return of refugees is still not possible for many parts of Somalia, where local governance and public services, such as schools and healthcare, are lacking. Nor is security sufficiently well established in many areas. The UNHCR, however, said it was ready to work with Kenyan authorities to strengthen law enforcement at Dadaab to help protect refugees and Kenyans against possible intrusion by armed groups or "terrorist incursions" from across the border."

The UNHCR also said it was ready to work with Kenya and Somalia to step up the pilot program of voluntary repatriation that they signed last December to support those who wanted to return to three relatively safe areas in Somalia. A spokesperson for UNHCR in Kenya said the agreement between the Kenyan and Somali governments and the UNHCR was very clear. The refugees could only return back to their country "voluntarily." He said the UNHCR was "very aware that the government has a responsibility of protecting its citizens, but at the same time the refugees have rights too."

The decision has alarmed others beside the UNHCR. Kenyan MPs and the media have expressed concern at the plans, pointing out the difficulties of the proposed move, as well as Kenya's international obligations towards the refugees. A group of Kenyan parliamentarians on Wednesday pledged to have dialogue with the international community to facilitate voluntary repatriation of Somali refugees. Ekwe Ethuro, Speaker of the Kenyan Senate, said Kenya would abide by international protocols to ensure repatriation of Somali refugees does not compromise their safety. He said "The government has an obligation to respect international commitments as we embark on a process of repatriating Somalia refugees. We have commenced discussions with the UNHCR to explore the best modality of returning these refugees to their homeland." Kenyan parliamentarians are opposed to repatriation of Somali refugees until their security is guaranteed. The Senate Speaker said "The decision to repatriate Somalia refugees is based on the current national security threats we are facing. We need to protect our territory from infiltration by terrorists", but he added "the law must be followed."

The Somali government has made clear its unease over plans to relocate all Somali refugees to Somalia, saying it was not consulted on the matter. Somalia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Abdisalan Hadliye Omar, said firmly that Kenya "cannot forcefully relocate the refugees without them voluntarily leaving the camps." He said "we are in talks with the Kenyan government on the matter," but noted that Kenya had not involved Somalia in "their latest relocation plan." He said Somalia had a three-sided agreement reached by the Kenyan Government, the Federal Somali Government and the UNHCR and Kenya under which the refugees would voluntarily return to their homeland. Kenya, he said, was bound by the international treaty it signed regarding the refugees. He added that the Somali Government was now working on how to consolidate the treaty signed in 2013 whose provisions seem to have achieved little so far.

According to media reports the refugees in the Dadaab camps have also indicated their reluctance to return, pleading on Monday for Nairobi to reconsider its demand for relocation of the camps to Somalia. Camp residents made it clear that such a move would prove dangerous given the ongoing fighting in the country. They claimed returning to Somalia at this time was not an option, pointing out that even the leaders of the Somali government were not safe and needed to be escorted by AMISOM peacekeepers. The Kenyan human rights body, Kenyans for Peace, Truth and Justice, noted that the logistics of moving the entire population of Dadaab would be horrendous. It also said that it would play into Al-Shabaab's hand, offering it a ready-made army of perhaps 200,000 young men who would be angry, without work and desperate.

Sudan's Presidential and Parliamentary elections

The three days of voting for Sudan's Presidential, National and State legislature elections started on Monday (April 13). President Omar Al-Bashir is the front-runner in the presidential election. He was facing fifteen challengers. President Al-Bashir won a previous election in 2010. The presidential elections could go to a second round if no candidate wins a majority in the first round.

On Wednesday the National Elections Commission announced an extension of voting for one day in all areas. It said the sorting of votes would now begin on Friday throughout the country. The NEC said that in some areas, including Gezira, voting would also continue on Friday because of delays in the arrival of electoral materials. Counting there would, therefore, begin on Saturday.

President Omer Al-Bashir, the candidate of the ruling National Congress Party, accompanied by senior government officials, cast his vote in central Khartoum on Monday morning. People voted on seven electoral cards, one card for the president, three parliamentary cards for geographical constituencies, the proportional list and the woman's list and a further three cards for the legislative councils in Sudan's 18 states.

The voting has been monitored by a number of international organizations, including the Arab League, IGAD and the African Union. The Arab League's 33-strong monitoring team arrived in Khartoum a week before the vote. Salah Halima, Arab League envoy to Sudan, said the Arab League had long experience in monitoring elections and said the team had met with political parties participating in the elections as well as parties boycotting the elections, civil society organizations and the presidential candidates. The 30 members of the IGAD monitoring team also arrived a week before the vote and observed the elections at 8 polling centers including Khartoum, Omdurman, Khartoum North, Madani, Kosti, Shendi, Gedaref, El-Obeid and Dongola. The IGAD envoy to Khartoum, Mahmoud Abdallah, said IGAD's objectives included helping IGAD member states to hold fair and free elections besides offering the organization's expertise to assist in the processes.

The AU Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) decided to send an AU observation mission led by the former Nigerian president, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo. The mission deployed 20 short-term observers drawn from 14 African countries, representing institutions such as the Pan-African Parliament, Election Management Bodies, and Civil Society Organizations. The observers arrived on April 10, and teams of two covered 7 states. Chief Obasanjo held meetings with key stakeholders after his arrival, as well as subsequently observing the voting and counting process. On arrival, he stressed the importance of elections in the democratic process to the state media. He said monitoring the elections depended on institutions formed by the state to ensure the integrity, transparency and credibility of the polls. He said "We come as observers to check that all the participants and contestants have respected the regulations of those institutions that regulate the electoral process and that it reflects the wishes of the citizens." He said he hoped that Sudan's democratic experience would witness further improvement.

An AU statement said the mission's mandate was derived from the 2007 African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, the 2002 AU/OAU Declaration on Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa and the 2002 AU Guidelines for Elections Observation and Monitoring Missions. The statement said the assessment and observations of the Mission would be guided by the principles and guidelines laid down in these instruments and other relevant international instruments guiding international election observation and the legal framework for elections in Sudan. The Mission promised to release a final and comprehensive report within two months of the date of announcement of the final results. At a press conference after the end of voting, Chief Obasanjo said the turnout for the election had been low, with the percentage of eligible voters varying between 30 and 35. He attributed this to the boycott by opposition and civil society groups, but he added that the elections should not affect the national dialogue between the Sudanese political forces to end war and achieve democratic reforms. However, presidential assistant and NCP Vice President Ibrahim Ghandour said [on] his part [he] is satisfied with the election turnout. The National Election Commission announced that vote counting begins on Friday and the result will be officially announced on April 27. Chief Obasanjo noted that the vote faced difficulties in Blue Nile and South Kordofan states because of conflict, and he also mentioned the logistical problems that caused extension of voting in Gezira and some parts of Darfur region. The head of a Chinese delegation monitoring the election, Zhang Xun, said the electoral processes had been characterized by transparency, stability and safety, and were held in line with international electoral standards.

The ruling party earlier rejected calls by Sudanese opposition to postpone the general elections until after the national dialogue and formation of a transitional government and insisted the election was a constitutional

requirement that must be met. President Al-Bashir launched the national dialogue initiative more than a year ago, in which he urged opposition parties and rebels alike to join the dialogue table to discuss all pressing issues.

According to the NEC, more than 13 million people registered to vote at some 11,000 polling stations across the country. 1,072 candidates were competing for 425 parliamentary seats while 7,000 others are competing for 2,235 seats in the state legislative councils. According to the National Electoral Commission a total of forty-four parties are standing for the state and national parliaments. The results are expected on April 27.

Ethiopia, and Africa, need a long-term extension of AGOA

The African Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA) was signed into law by former US President Bill Clinton in the year 2000, in a bid to enhance economic cooperation and trade ties between the United States and African countries through the duty-free export of certain African products to US markets. AGOA came into effect in 2001 and it has had a considerable effect, with total African exports more than quadrupling since then. In 2012 alone the 39 eligible countries in Sub-Saharan Africa managed to export nearly US\$35 billion worth of production to the United States duty-free under the AGOA framework and the provisions of the related Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). With the aim of helping African countries become more competitive in the global marketplace, the AGOA framework also offers incentives to African countries to encourage improvements in infrastructure and harmonize trade standards, reduce corruption, and respect human and labor rights and the rule of law.

Ethiopia is one of the countries that have been taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the AGOA framework. Since AGOA went into effect in 2001, Ethiopia's exports to the US have expanded by 150%. Most of its exports offered through AGOA are in the apparel and textiles, leather products, and horticulture sectors.

The current AGOA framework is due to expire this year and this was a central topic at the AGOA 2013 Forum organized in Addis Ababa. The Forum looked at the progress achieved in terms of taking advantage of the opportunities provided by AGOA since the inception of the program. It also provided a consultative dialogue among the stakeholders on the future of United States-Sub-Saharan Africa trade and economic cooperation. The discussions produced a number of important insights on how the Obama Administration should move forward in working with Congress and other partners on extending AGOA beyond September 30, 2015. Recalling the significance and value of the AGOA framework, President Obama, in a live video address to the Forum, said that "AGOA increased economic cooperation and trade between the U.S. and Africa, encouraged vital government reforms so that more businesses succeed and made it easier for African goods to reach the U.S."

A year and a half have passed since the 2013 AGOA Forum. AGOA's expiry date is only a few months away and debates among various stakeholders on the possible extension of the program are becoming more urgent. Participants in the program have underlined the encouraging trends of development and structural adjustment that a number of the eligible Sub-Saharan African countries have made over the last few years in line with AGOA's demands. As a result, actors, partners and other stakeholders are now proposing a 15-year extension of the program.

It is at this critical juncture that Ethiopia has provided strong evidence showcasing the critical need for a long-term AGOA extension after 2015. A workshop, organized by the Ministry of Trade in Addis Ababa last month (March 24) concentrated on assessing performance, exploring challenges and priorities, and formulating workable mechanisms in the light of maximizing the potential of taking advantage of AGOA's market opportunities. Key presentation sessions at the workshop included: an analysis of major investment climate constraints behind the priority sectors selected by the AGOA response strategy; a review of the constraints with respect to access to inputs and industrial land; and a sketch of challenges with regard to access to finance. Earlier, following a review of major policy, regulatory and administrative cross-cutting issues, a strategic planning framework was adopted for more focused policy and program interventions to encourage exploitation of AGOA's market opportunities. Ethiopia, indeed, has made substantial progress, especially in transformation of the manufacturing industry. Currently, these changes have made it possible for a growing number of sectors, including small and medium-sized enterprises and entrepreneurs to become better positioned to take advantage of AGOA's market opportunities. Ethiopia believes it is imperative to emphasize that the ongoing AGOA-market-oriented transformation lends itself to a long-term extension of the program, rather than to any short-term extension.

Similarly, an Ethiopian case study conducted by The Brookings Institution in March this year also underlined the importance, indeed the necessity, for a long-term extension of the AGOA program. The study noted that "Ethiopia is now at the forefront of utilizing AGOA," and indicated that Ethiopia was now undertaking various actions and initiatives aimed at creating new opportunities to utilize the AGOA market. It noted that Ethiopia was among the first countries to develop an AGOA Strategy, pointing out that the Ministry of Trade had established an AGOA Center in the Ministry with a mandate to help Ethiopian companies take advantage of the legislation. This new National AGOA Center provides a one-stop-shop for companies looking to export to United States' markets. The Center also works cooperatively with public and private organizations to design effective programs, make policy recommendations, and facilitate direct interventions that can mitigate export constraints for priority sectors.

The Brookings report observed that the private sector, as a result of significant government incentives, was also engaged in creating an active enabling environment to make use of AGOA opportunities. One such element was the Ethiopian Institute of Textile and Fashion Technology at Bahir Dar University. This, the report noted, had the potential to become a center of excellence across the African continent for apparel design and become the backbone of a robust national apparel industry. In addition, with a view to getting access to the U.S. market under the AGOA framework, Ethiopian companies are just beginning to find American buyers interested in sourcing from the country. The Bahir Dar Tannery International Apparel Company is one such case. Equally, a number of international apparel companies are now looking to locate to Ethiopia. Phillips-Van Heusen (PVH) Corporation, which owns the Tommy Hilfiger and Calvin Klein labels, and Huajian shoes, which has already established a production facility, are among the foreign companies seeking a part in exporting apparel and leather products under AGOA.

These are areas which will get priority under the second Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II,) now being drawn up. The Plan will also lay particular emphasis on the development of the manufacturing sector. The Brookings study noted that the apparel industry can create a job market for over 2.5 million young and semi-skilled workers. And that, it underlined, was exactly "what AGOA was intended to achieve." The Brookings Institution report, in the context of progress and potential in the export sector, therefore said that a short-term renewal of AGOA would only intensify the complexities and uncertainties of accessing the U.S. market. It said a "short-term renewal would deny Ethiopia and the majority of African countries a vital policy instrument with which to transition to more inclusive and higher-value economic growth." The study, therefore, strongly underlined the need for a longer-term extension for AGOA if the program is to provide the full benefit, concluding firmly: "when Congress does vote to renew AGOA, it needs to ensure that the legislation will be in place for the next 15 years."

The 4th Tana High-Level Forum is being held this weekend in Bahir Dar

The 4th Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa will take place in Bahir Dar, the capital of the Amhara Regional State, this weekend (April 18 -19), under the theme of "**Secularism and Politicized faith**". Michelle Ndaya Ntab, head of the Tana Forum secretariat said that recent developments in the Sahel region, including security concerns posed by the activities of Boko Haram and the faith-based conflicts in the Central African Republic, would add relevance to this year's theme. It has attracted more than 200 stakeholders, including present and former Heads of State and Government, Ministers and senior government officials, ambassadors, policy makers, prominent scholars, representatives from civil society, faith-based organizations, and others.

In a press conference, the Chairperson of the Tana Forum board, former Nigerian President Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, said that Africa was a continent where faith holds a special place in people's lives. African states often used faith-based movements for political means or faced the problem of checking such movements by force. It was time to debate and seek holistic solutions to deal with the issue. "Tana" he said, "is an event like no other in Africa. It is a chance for Heads of State to hear from prominent African personalities, academics, religious leaders, and policy makers on issues that matter to the lives of ordinary Africans."

The opening session of the Forum will be the **Annual Meles Zenawi Lecture Series 2015**, on the subject of Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance: Reflections on the legacies of President Kwame Nkrumah. Former South African President Thabo Mbeki will give introductory remarks on the "Historical Perspectives of Pan-Africanism" before Ali Mufuruki, founder and Executive Chairman of InfoTech Investment Group Ltd and trustee of the Mandela Institute for Development Studies speaks on "Reflections on the Late President Kwame Nkrumah's Pan-Africanism Legacy".

The opening session of the Forum will be addressed by Prime Minister Hailemariam and by Thomas

Silberhorn, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany, who will speak on “Experience sharing on European Secularism” on behalf of the Tana Forum’s Partners. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, Chairperson of the Tana Forum, will speak on “The 2015 State of Peace and Security in Africa.”

Subsequent sessions will cover: “Secularism, Politicized Faith and Security”; “African Secularisms and Faith-branded Security Threats”; “Politicization of Faith, Fundamentalism and Human Security”; and “Secularism, Democracy and State Building in Africa: What Futures?” The main speakers, in the discussions and the panel discussions, include Charles Abugre, Ghanaian development economist; Professor Akindès Professor of Sociology, Alassane Ouattara University, Ivory Coast; Cheikh Rachid al-Ghannoushi, Muslim Scholar and co-founder of Nahdah party, Tunisia; Lakhdar Brahimi, Former United Nations Peace Envoy to Syria; Smail Chergui Commissioner for Peace and Security, African Union Commission; Dr Abdelwahab El-Affendi, Reader in Politics, Coordinator, Democracy and Islam Program, University of Westminster, UK; Prof Andreas Eshete, Advisor to the Prime Minister of Ethiopia with the rank of minister, and Amina Mama, Professor in Women and Gender Studies, University of California.

Apart from the discussion and debates, the program for this year’s Forum also includes a tree planting ceremony involving the Heads of State and Government attending the Forum for the inauguration of the Tana Forum Park on the outskirts of Bahir Dar.

The first Tana High-Level Forum on Security in Africa was held in April 2012 with the aim of promoting dialogue as a fundamental, peaceful and durable means for resolving conflict, and to demonstrate that diversity is strength, and not a source of conflict. It debated the two thematic issues of “Managing Diversity as a Basis for Guaranteeing Security” and the “Implications of State Fragility on Security in Africa”. The theme for the next Forum in 2013 was “Security and Organized Crime in Africa”, and the third Tana High Level Forum discussed “The Impact of Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) in and out of Africa on the Continent’s Security.”

The Tana High-Level Forum on African Security is an independent initiative of the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) of Addis Ababa University and eminent African personalities. Held annually in Bahir Dar, it provides a peace and security stakeholder group forum for open discussion of security issues and challenges in Africa, allowing an open and uninhibited space for interaction and consultation between African political decision makers and global actors and scholars, in an effort to provide contributions to security issues of key strategic importance to the continent.