

A Week in the Horn

19th June 2015

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News in brief

Africa and the African Union

The two-day 25th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Africa Union took place at the Sandton Convention Centre, Pavilion Foyer-plenary, in Johannesburg on Sunday and Monday (June 14 and 15), under the theme: "Year of Women's Empowerment and Development Towards Africa's Agenda 2063." (See article)

The AU Peace and Security Council held a meeting at the level of Heads of State and Government in South Africa at the weekend (June 15) on the situation in South Sudan. It strongly condemned all ceasefire violations and called for sanctions against those responsible. (See article)

The African Union has celebrated and honored the late Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Professor Wangari Maathai of Kenya by naming the gardens in front of its headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia after her. The proposal was made at the just concluded AU Summit. Professor Maathai introduced the idea of planting trees while serving in the National Council of Women in 1976, a concept she developed into the Green Belt Movement. She assisted women in planting more than 20 million trees on their farms and in school and church compounds.

Ethiopia

Prime Minister Hailemariam on Wednesday (June 17) met with a delegation of 22 journalists from the Sudanese media who paid a six-day visit to Ethiopia this week to share experiences, visit developments in various sectors and help create a stronger relationship between the two countries.

Dr Tedros Adhanom met with the UK Minister for Africa, James Duddridge, on Wednesday (June 10) for discussions on Ethiopia's recent elections, regional peace and security issues, economic development and human rights. Mr Duddridge welcomed Ethiopia's development efforts and said Ethiopia's pro-poor policies demonstrated the correlation between support provided and value for money. (See article)

Dr Tedros, during his visit to Johannesburg, met with several hundred members of the Ethiopian Diaspora community in South Africa. (See article)

Ethiopia and Zambia signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Friday (June 12) to establish a Joint Permanent Commission to enhance bilateral links and expand cultural, economic and social ties. The MoU was signed by Ethiopia's Foreign Minister, Dr Tedros Adhanom and Zambia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Harry Kalaba.

On the sidelines of the AU Summit in Johannesburg, Dr Tedros held a number of bilateral meetings with the Foreign Ministers of the Seychelles, Somalia, Serbia, Zambia and South Africa as well as other officials.

Foreign Minister Dr Tedros Adhanom on Wednesday (June 17) met with the 13 Ethiopians selected for the 2015 Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) Mandela Washington Fellows Program.

The State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos, paid a working visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Italy for bilateral and regional talks over the last week. He also met with investors in both Saudi Arabia and Turkey. (See article)

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dewano Kedir attended a Finland Ethiopia Business Cooperation Seminar in Helsinki, on Monday (June 15) together with Finland's Under-Secretary of State for External Economic Relations from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Mr Matti Anttonen. The State Minister also held talks with Ms Lenita Toivakka, Minister for Trade and Development in the Foreign Ministry.

Ethiopia has successfully interrupted the transmission of the Wild Polio Virus outbreak nearly two years after the outbreak was confirmed in the Horn of Africa. An international assessment team said last week that the last cases were reported from Kenya in July 2013, from Ethiopia in January 2014 and from Somalia in August 2014.

Eritrea

President Isaias returned to Asmara on Saturday (June 13) after a three-day working visit to Khartoum. He met President Omar Al-Bashir for talks on bilateral relations on Thursday (June 11) and also held discussions with the Chairman of the Sudanese National Assembly, Professor Ibrahim Ahmed Omar and First Vice President General Bekri Hassan Saleh.

Kenya

President Uhuru Kenyatta promised on Wednesday (June 17) that Kenya would keep its troops in Somalia to fight Al-Shabaab extremists. A statement from the Presidency said Kenya would "continue with the mission to support the stabilization of the Horn of Africa country." The statement said "We are a nation that appreciates and recognizes the rights of every individual and their freedom of worship. We will not allow any person to force on us a way of life that is not ours."

President Uhuru Kenyatta was elected the chairman of the African Peer Review Forum at the AU Assembly of Heads of States and Government in Johannesburg at the weekend. He takes over from President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia.

The Kenyan Defense Forces said on Monday (June 15) that they had driven off an Al-Shabaab attack on a military base in Lamu County the previous day and killed the Al-Shabaab commander, Luqman Osman Issa (Shirwa) responsible for two attacks in the area a year ago when at least 60 people were murdered.

Somalia

The conference to establish a central state in Somalia being held at Adaado has decided that the state should be called Galmudug (See article)

Somali and AMISOM soldiers guarding the Galmudug conference in Adaado prevented an attempted Al-Shabaab suicide car attack on Thursday (June 18). The driver and three Al-Shabaab gunmen were killed.

The United Nations, the European Union and other donors on Wednesday (June 17) signed six new joint programs set up through the Somalia Development and Reconstruction Facility under the framework of the Somali New Deal Compact. The programs will directly support peace-building and key deliverables of the Government's Vision 2016.

Puntland President Abdiweli Mohamed Ali sacked eight ministers on Tuesday (June 16) in his first major reshuffle since taking office in January last year. The changes affected key ministries, including Security, Planning and International Cooperation, and Education. All were dropped for failing to deliver. Last month, the President spoke of the need to overhaul the administration and fired a number of governors and mayors.

Jubaland leader, Ahmed Madobe, told a press conference on Friday (June 19) that he had agreed to mediation efforts by the UN Special Representative to Somalia, Nicholas Kay, following the Federal Parliament's no-confidence motion in the Jubaland Assembly two weeks ago. Jubaland will attend a consultative summit of the UN, the Federal Government and other regional administrations.

On Monday (June 15) some 7,000 Somali students sat for their final school examinations for the first time since 1990. They were sitting the first centralized examination for students who completed secondary school in Somalia since the fall of Siad Barre and the outbreak of civil war. Acting Prime Minister Abdullahi Ahmed Jama said the country was making steady progress in reforming its education system.

South Sudan

Ethiopia's Prime Minister Hailemariam, Chairperson of IGAD, launched the IGAD-Plus mediation on South Sudan on Sunday (June 14) at an IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government. The Prime Minister said this would enable IGAD to continue to provide leadership to the mediation process through the facilitation of the negotiations between the South Sudanese parties. Other members of IGAD-PLUS could provide unequivocal and solid support.

Jan Eliasson, UN Deputy Secretary-General told the AU Assembly on Sunday (June 14) that the United Nations would contribute actively to efforts aimed at finding a peaceful solution to the conflict in South Sudan. He said "This war, this nightmare, must come to an end." Mr Eliasson emphasized the need for peace and national reconciliation ahead of proposed power-sharing between Government and opposition forces.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the European Union organized a high-level conference in Geneva on Tuesday (June 16) to discuss the humanitarian situation in South Sudan. Pledges of another \$275 million in aid were given for what OCHA called the "relentlessly deteriorating" humanitarian crisis in South Sudan.

The UN Security Council met to discuss the problems of peacekeeping forces, their performance and the protection of civilians on Wednesday (June 17). The Council was addressed by the Under-Secretary-General for UN Peacekeeping Operations, Hervé Ladsous, and by UN operational commanders including Lieutenant-General Yohannes Gebremeskel Tesfamariam, commander of UNMISS.

Sudan

President Al-Bashir left South Africa after attending the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government on Sunday and Monday (June 14-15) despite calls by the ICC for his arrest. In October 2013, an extraordinary AU summit requested the ICC to suspend or terminate ICC proceedings until Africa's concerns on the Rome Statutes are considered. It also called for the ICC mandate not to cover sitting Heads of State and Government. The ICC has been widely criticized for appearing to prosecute African leaders exclusively.

An IMF Mission in Sudan to review recent economic performance, agreed on a new program to help achieve stability in line with the government's priorities. It met with Sudanese Finance Minister Badr al-Din Mahmoud on Wednesday (June 17).

The 25th Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union....

The 25th African Union Summit was held in Johannesburg, South Africa, between 7th and 15th of June, 2015, under the theme: “Year of Women Empowerment and Development towards Africa’s Agenda 2063.” To address the opportunities, strategies and prospects for women’s empowerment and development needed by both Africa’s Agenda 2063 and the Common African Position on Post-2015 Development Agenda, the current theme adopted at the 25th Assembly of the African Heads of State and Government was designed to implement the decision of the AU’s 23rd Ordinary Session in June 2014 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, when 2015 was declared the Year of Women Empowerment and Development.

Addressing the Opening Ceremony of the 25th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the AU on Sunday (June 14), President Mugabe of Zimbabwe, the Chairman of the African Union, said that “Whenever I think of the virtues and the indomitable spirit that epitomizes the African woman, I am reminded of the heroines across the African continent who stood up against the forces of colonialism and occupation.” In his address President Mugabe emphasized the significant role that women in Africa played across the years, citing Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia and Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, as instances of the trailblazers and proven examples of women’s leadership in Africa. In this context, President Mugabe noted that both had played a key role in the fight against Ebola, adding that today “Liberia is free of Ebola.” He stressed the need for further similar achievements under the AU theme, “Women’s empowerment and development towards Agenda 2063,” and noted there was still much to be done as many areas of action still remained demanding, particularly with respect to enhancing women’s economic empowerment and their decision-making capacities.

President Mugabe also underlined the prevailing political instability and insecurity in some parts of the continent which, he said, “clearly demonstrates the urgent need to fully operationalise the African Standby Force.” He said “we need to live up to our commitment to operationalise the African Standby Force by December 2015”, adding that this would be an important step towards the goal of silencing the guns by 2020. President Mugabe said peace and security were prerequisites for the achievement of the continental body’s developmental targets, including Agenda 2063. He said he was encouraged by the steady progress being made but “we have to redouble our efforts in dealing with the issue of the unnecessary loss of lives of our young people in the Mediterranean Sea in their desperate need to reach Europe and other places.” This, he said, was a matter requiring collective and urgent response. “Concrete steps have to be taken to deal with this unfolding tragedy, particularly in terms of addressing its root causes such as poverty, war and insecurity, lack of opportunities, perceptions of a good life abroad as well as stamping out human traffickers and smugglers.” He also said African countries must work together to eradicate xenophobic attacks similar to the spate of violence that had occurred in South Africa in recent months. He said that while this should be condemned “let us be cognizant of the fact that this is a problem that falls upon all of us and we should work together to find a solution. United we will not fail.”

Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, thanking the President, the Government and the people of South Africa for their hospitality, reminded her listeners that “in January this year, we were still in the throes of the Ebola epidemic, but, thanks to the resilience, and hard work of the peoples and Governments of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, to the young African men and women of ASEOWA, to Member states, the private sector, to the international community and to African citizens,” Liberia has now been declared Ebola free. She cautioned, however, that “we should not get complacent,” given that Sierra Leone and Guinea have still not been declared Ebola-free, despite significant reductions of the outbreak in those countries. Dr Dlamini-Zuma said the Ebola outbreak had exposed the weakness of the continent’s health systems and that “we must look at training more health workers and build our health systems and infrastructure”. Nevertheless, “the lessons from the Ebola virus disease are that with African solidarity and resolve, we can find solutions to our challenges.”

The Chairperson said the success gained in the fight against the Ebola outbreak underlined the key lesson that Africans can find their own solutions to their challenges. Mindful of the fact that Agenda 2063 serves as the continent’s beacon and roadmap, she therefore noted that the end result of the process would heavily depend upon the will and commitment of African leaders. Their courage in presenting a viable and comprehensive strategy would be crucial and would provide a key input in the process of building African capacity and skills for the implementation of Agenda 2063. In all this, the Chairperson also underlined, capacity and skills should be geared

“towards the empowerment of Africa’s young people, women and girls, creating an enabling environment for them to become the drivers of our transformation and development.”

Emphasizing the critical need to take women aboard in the course of development, the Chairperson underlined that any account of development efforts must address the needs and priorities of women and children who, she pointed out, together make up a majority of the African population. As women and children are also the main victims of conflicts, enduring untold miseries, hardships, sexual and other forms of violence, in wars and conflicts in which they played no part in starting, she further called on leaders to build tolerant, inclusive and democratic communities and societies. All this, she said, would be instrumental in the realization of the theme: “Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development towards Africa’s Agenda 2063.”

The Chairperson also addressed a number of other issues, including industrialization, the need to modernize agriculture, and ensure food security and job creation. She noted the challenges related to migration of youth, the need to fight xenophobia and above all to silence the guns in current areas of conflict. She said the tragedy of the deaths in the Mediterranean and incidents of xenophobia highlighted the fact that the people who leave their countries did so not out of choice but out of desperation, to try and make a living elsewhere.” Dr Dlamini-Zuma called on the political leadership, on governments, political parties, faith-based organizations and communities to remain focused on the continent’s transformation agenda, to ensure that the continent achieves its vision of “an integrated, prosperous, peaceful and people-centered Africa which is a dynamic force in the world.”

South African President Jacob Zuma, host of the Summit, in his opening remarks congratulated the African Union for the excellent work done in preparing Agenda 2063 and called for its realization. He said “the expectations from our people are high and we cannot fail in the implementation of Agenda 2063 to redefine, lead and fund our own development and the future.”

The earlier meetings during the week of the 30th Ordinary Session of the African Union’s Permanent Representatives Committee and the 27th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council both served as platforms for the discussion and adoption of the 10-year implementation plan of Agenda 2063 at the Assembly of Heads of State and Government on Sunday.

The Assembly took a number of important decisions including measures that should be taken to empower women, youth and children, the adoption of the ten-year plan and for peace and security. It also decided to take a step towards financial independence with an agreement to scale up financial contributions from member states, so that the AU can fund 100% of its operations, 75% of its programs and 25% of its peace and security activities. The aim is to make the AU more independent of foreign donors who still provide about 60% of the overall budget. To help them meet their greater obligations, the AU has proposed a basket of alternative sources of funding to its members, including levies and taxes on air fares, oil and other natural resources. But however they pay, states will have to be prepared to contribute more because of the added costs of initiatives like Agenda 2063. Contributions will be based roughly on the size of economies, but final details remain to be decided.

The Assembly discussed efforts to bring peace to various conflicts and combat the terrorist activities of Boko Haram in West Africa, Al Qaeda in the Sahel, the Islamic State in Libya and Al-Shabaab in Somalia. It also adopted the first ten-year plan to implement the Agenda 2063 initiative and launched negotiations for a Continental Free Trade Agreement aimed at liberating trade across all of Africa. Economic integration of the continent was a major theme of the discussions. Just before the summit, the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) was launched in Egypt, combining the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Community of Eastern and Southern African States (COMESA) and the East African Community (EAC) into a single market of 26 countries and over 600 million people with a GDP of about one trillion dollars. Ghana’s President John Mahama, current chair of ECOWAS, the Economic Community of West African States, said the creation of the TFTA had greatly accelerated the momentum towards the Continental Free Trade Area as ECOWAS would now be able to negotiate directly with the TFTA, and a union between ECOWAS and the TFTA would bring all but ten of the AU’s 54 member states into one market.

The 25th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union, in its final session, considered the reports and draft decisions of various sub-committees of the Assembly. Among these were the reports of Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf on the AU-High Level Committee on Post 2015 Development Agenda and the African Peer Review Mechanism; the report of Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn of Ethiopia

and Chairperson of AIDS Watch Africa (AWA) Heads of State and Government Action Committee; the report of President Macky Sall of Senegal and Chairperson of the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee (HSGOC); the report of President Ernest Bai Koroma of Sierra Leone and Chairperson of the Committee of Ten on UN Reforms; the report of President John Dramane Mahama of Ghana and Chairperson of the High-Level African Trade Committee (HATC); and the report of President Abdel Fattah El Sisi of Egypt and Coordinator of the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC).

African Union Chairperson, President Mugabe, in his concluding remarks at the closing session of the 25th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government on Monday (June 15), said the leaders had fruitful deliberations on the current theme: “Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development towards Africa’s Agenda 2063.” He welcomed the decision of the Heads of State and Government to “collectively adopt and fully endorse the first 10-year implementation plan of agenda 2063.” They had also, he underlined, committed themselves “to commence the implementation of flagship projects to spur economic growth and prosperity in Africa.”

...Dr Tedros’ bilateral meetings at the AU Summit...

On the sidelines of the 25th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union at the weekend, Foreign Minister Dr Tedros Adhanom held a series of discussions with Mr Joel Morgan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Transport of the Seychelles, and Mr Abdisalam Omer, Foreign Minister of Somalia, as well as with the Foreign Ministers of Serbia, Zambia and South Africa; the UK Minister for African Affairs, James Duddridge; the Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Mr Takashi Uto; and Mikhail Bogdanov, Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for the Middle East and Africa. The Minister also met with the UK’s Former Foreign Secretary, William Hague and Angelina Jolie, the Special Envoy for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Johannesburg.

The Minister’s discussions covered bilateral, regional, continental and global matters of common interest. Ethiopia and Zambia signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Friday (June 12) to establish a Joint Permanent Commission to enhance bilateral links and expand cultural, economic and social ties. The MoU was signed by Dr Tedros Adhanom and Zambia’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Harry Kalaba. Dr Tedros noted that historic ties between the two countries were exemplary but there was a need to expand and enhance bilateral relations and allow for the possibilities for the two countries to learn from each other and share best experiences. Mr Kalaba said the MoU demonstrated their joint commitment to forge deeper ties at political and trade levels. He said Ethiopia’s democratic system had created a platform for mass based economic development and Zambia “looked to Ethiopia as a champion of democracy and a country that has tried to bridge the gap between the poor and rich.” He said both countries were rich in natural resources and both, he said, would now endeavor to maximize the benefits of co-operation. Mr Kalaba said he looked forward to Ethiopia opening an embassy in Zambia; Zambia opened its embassy in Ethiopia immediately after independence in 1965. The Ethiopian embassy in Harare is currently accredited to Zambia; Dr Tedros said the Ethiopian Government was now working to open an embassy in Lusaka. The two countries have signed a number of agreements over the years: a bilateral Air Service Agreement (1998); News Exchange and Professional Cooperation Agreement (2009); Cooperative agreement between Addis Ababa University and Copper Belt University of Zambia (2011); an Agreement on Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation (2012) and a Cooperative agreement on Diplomatic Consultations. Ethiopia has invited President Lungu to attend the Summit on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa next month.

Dr Tedros Adhanom met the UK Minister for African Affairs, James Duddridge, on Wednesday (June 10). Their discussions covered Ethiopia’s recent elections, regional peace and security issues, economic development and human rights issues. Mr Duddridge congratulated Ethiopia on its peaceful and democratic election. Dr Tedros explained that Ethiopia’s adoption of a democratic federal system had brought about growing democratization and rapid economic growth. The country had made incremental democratic improvements year by year. Dr Tedros said that according to the results known so far the EPRDF had won about 442 seats out of the 547 in the National Parliament. The reasons for its success included Ethiopia’s first-past-the-post electoral system, which enabled the country to manage diversity. Regional parties which were associated with the EPRDF’s policies also won in their respective constituencies. Opposition parties, he said, were fragmented and fractured and had done little to try to win the hearts and minds of the majority of the electorate. Dr Tedros also briefed Mr Duddridge on the current situation in Somalia and the progress of integration of forces, stabilization and access to recovered areas. He noted the

state formation of the Interim Jubaland Administration and Interim South West Administration, and underlined the importance of establishing inclusive Interim Federal Regional Administrations and Assemblies. Dr Tedros emphasized the successes against Al-Shabaab and the urgent need for continuing humanitarian aid as well as the need for an increase in the level of support under the New Deal Compact from international partners with all financial assistance going through the Somali Development and Reconstruction Fund. Dr Tedros and Mr Duddridge agreed that a concerted effort should be exerted to maintain the momentum and support Somalia's state building and reconciliation process. Dr Tedros also briefed Mr Duddridge on South Sudan and IGAD's unprecedented efforts to resolve the conflict.

Dr Tedros noted that nearly 80% of the aid Ethiopia receives from the UK goes to the provision of social services such as education, health, in other words to financing implementation of pro-poor policies. He welcomed the UK as one of the most dependable partners in Ethiopia's fight against poverty. Mr Duddridge appreciated Ethiopia's development efforts and said the UK government had demonstrated its conviction that their development cooperation brought about clear transformation in the lives of Ethiopians. He said the UK Development Cooperation Ministry used a "Value for Money" standard to determine whether this was being achieved in the recipient country. Ethiopia's pro-poor policies over the years, he stressed, had clearly demonstrated the correlation between support provided and successful outcomes registered. Dr Tedros explained that the Government believed that the media played a major role in furthering a democratic culture and he pointed out that the Ethiopian Constitution provided for the rights to free speech and expression to be fully protected. Equally, he said, no media should preach instability and advocate terrorism. Ensuring national security and public safety was a central duty of a responsible Government and no journalists can be above the law. Dr Tedros said allegations that the anti-terrorism law had been used to suppress freedom of expression and obstruct the legal activities of opposition political parties were simply not true. He reaffirmed the Government's commitment to consolidate the democratization process and strengthen democratic institutions in Ethiopia.

Dr Tedros Adhanom's discussions with Mr Joel Morgan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Transport of the Seychelles, covered ways to promote bilateral relations between Ethiopia and the Seychelles. The two sides underlined the importance of exploring opportunities to deepen ties and work closely in all matters of mutual interest. Dr Tedros similarly discussed ways to boost the bilateral relations between Ethiopia and Japan when he met Mr Takashi Uto, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan. They also exchanged views on regional and global matters of common interest. In his talks with Mr Mikhail Bogdanov, Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for the Middle East and Africa. Dr Tedros noted the historic and long-standing bilateral relationship between Russia and Ethiopia and he underlined the need to further boost these links through increased trade and investment and technology transfer. Special Representative Bogdanov was accompanied by a business delegation whose members expressed a keen interest in investing in Ethiopia in various areas. Dr Tedros welcomed their interest and emphasized that the Government of Ethiopia would be ready to support their interest.

Dr Tedros also met with the former UK Foreign Secretary William Hague and Angelina Jolie, Special Envoy for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to discuss the UK initiative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict. Dr Tedros expressed his appreciation of the initiative and shared his thoughts on the best ways to tackle the problem of sexual violence in conflict. They also discussed the progress of the medical center that Angelina Jolie and her husband, Brad Pitt, are building in Addis Ababa in the name of their adopted Ethiopian child, Zahra. Dr Tedros assured her of full support from the Government of Ethiopia.

In his discussions with Ms M.E Nkoana Mashabane, Minister of International Relations and Cooperation of South Africa, Dr Tedros discussed the recent xenophobic attacks on foreigners living in South Africa. Ms Mashabane emphasized that the Government of South Africa was working to resolve the problem comprehensively and prevent any recurrence of the problem. She also stressed that the Government was promoting peaceful coexistence of the people of South Africa with foreign nationals and with all their African brothers and sisters. Both ministers agreed on the importance of addressing the root causes of the problem. Dr Tedros said that the Ethiopian Government trusted that the Government of South Africa would afford full protection to all Ethiopians living in South Africa and take appropriate measures to address the situation and bring offenders to justice. Dr Tedros and Minister Mashabane also discussed ways to strengthen cooperation between Ethiopia and South Africa through new agreements and through the full implementation of existing ones. They exchanged views on bilateral, regional

and sub-regional issues, with particular reference to ways to stabilize the region, particularly Somalia and South Sudan. They agreed to work closely in both bilateral and multilateral fora.

...and his meeting with members of the Ethiopian Diaspora in South Africa

Following his bilateral discussions with Ms Mashabane, Dr Tedros met with several hundred members of the Ethiopian Diaspora community in Johannesburg on Tuesday (June 16). He spoke about the violence that members of the community had suffered during the attacks against ‘foreign nationals’ in South Africa earlier in the year, describing these as “totally unacceptable”. He said the Government was working closely with the Government of South Africa to ensure there was proper protection for Ethiopians. He suggested the community should establish its own organization or association, an Ethiopian Renaissance Council perhaps, which would provide a strong and collective voice to protect people’s rights. A well organized and integrated approach, he said, would be the best means to ensure protection.

The Minister also briefed the community members on the performance of the Growth and Transformation Plan, and the country’s achievements in different areas including economic and democratic development. The Minister said that Ethiopia, with its well-crafted policies, stable macro-economy, enhanced peace and stability and double digit economic growth, had become one of the fastest [growing] economies in the world. This had made the country a preferred destination of investment. It wasn’t just the economy, Dr Tedros said. He pointed out the progress being made in social development activities and the impact of investment on the education and health sectors. There had been tremendous achievements from this sustained effort by the government and the people, he said, and this progress was now being recognized by international organizations like the World Bank and other organizations. *The Economist* and other institutions had recently said that Ethiopia’s two-decade surge in growth suggested a country known for famine and poverty, drought and civil war had started to come to grips with its challenges and has raised the prospect of “African lions” to parallel “Asian Tigers”.

Ethiopia's advantages, Dr Tedros said, included relevant policies and commitment, vast untapped resources, a youthful population and an expanding middle-class. He noted the process of democratization was continuing. Ethiopia, he said, was “making democracy”. The successes in institutional and infrastructure development, the foundation for Ethiopia’s economic take off, were also playing their role in regional economic integration. Ethiopia, indeed, was in the process of a new stage of energy development to encourage sustainable development throughout the region. He stressed the need to build on past achievements and sustain this momentum. Dr Tedros took the opportunity to thank the Ethiopian community in South Africa for their contribution to the achievements being made in Ethiopia, and then answered questions on various issues of concern raised by the community members.

The AU PSC Heads of State and Government meeting on South Sudan

The AU Peace and Security Council held a meeting at the level of Heads of State and Government over the weekend in South Africa, on the margins of the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government. The subject was the situation in South Sudan. The Council heard a report from the Chairperson of the Commission on the situation in South Sudan. It also heard an update from the Chair of IGAD, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn of Ethiopia, on the IGAD-led mediation efforts as well as statements from the Minister of Foreign Affairs of South Sudan and the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The Council decided it would hold a ministerial-level meeting by mid-July to consider the report of the AU Commission of Inquiry established to investigate human rights violations and other abuses in Sudan. This would also put forward recommendations on the way forward with special emphasis on the need to ensure accountability, reconciliation and healing among all South Sudanese stakeholders and communities.

In its communiqué the Peace and Security Council expressed its deep concern over the overall humanitarian, political and security situation in South Sudan. It strongly condemned all the ceasefire violations committed by the warring parties, and the attacks and other acts of violence and abuses of human rights against civilians during the armed conflict in Upper Nile and Unity States. The Council, expressing its appreciation for the humanitarian organizations for their continued support to the needy, condemned “in the strongest terms” the attacks and other

acts of violence aimed at humanitarian agencies and their personnel and assets. It appealed to all parties to work fully in concert with the humanitarian agencies.

The Council went on to strongly condemn any acts halting the implementation of the mandates of the MVM and the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). It pledged its full support to both the MVM and UNMISS. The Council also welcomed the efforts to reunite the SPLM and encouraged all parties to foster dialogue. At the same time it called for urgent steps to be taken by the UN Sanctions Committee to designate names and entities to be subject to the measures suggested under UN resolution 2206 (2015).

The Council commended the Chairperson of IGAD and the other leaders of the region as well as the IGAD Special Envoys for their sustained efforts. It noted with “disappointment the continued failure and unwillingness of the leaders of the warring parties to make compromises and reach an agreement to end the conflict,” and also voiced its disappointment over the “continued failure and unwillingness of the leaders of the warring parties to make a compromise and reach an agreement to end the conflict in their country and the untold suffering inflicted on their own people.” The Council stressed that the continuation of the armed conflict, while paying little attention to the suffering of the people, was equivalent to the abdication by the South Sudanese leaders of their most fundamental responsibility to their own people.

The Council noted the fact that the AU High-level Ad-hoc Committee of Heads of State and Government, of Algeria, Chad, Nigeria, Rwanda and South Africa, had agreed on the key elements of its work program. It welcomed the appointment of Alpha Oumar Konare, former president of Mali, as AU Special Representative for South Sudan and assured him of the Council’s full support in coordination with the Ad Hoc committee.

Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, Chairperson of IGAD, told the Council that the paucity of trust between the parties to the conflict remained a major block to the IGAD-led peace process and the efforts to end the war. He said the warring parties had failed to meet numerous deadlines, and he said it was difficult to believe that the parties would meet the 9 July deadline for the establishment of a Transitional Government of National Unity. However, he said, the AU Assembly would strongly request all South Sudanese stakeholders to cooperate with the IGAD mediation process and conclude negotiations on the remaining issues and fully operationalize the agreed principles on the transitional arrangements towards resolution of the crisis. Prime Minister Hailemariam thanked Commissioner Chergui for his report on the situation in South Sudan and welcomed the appointment of Professor Alpha Oumar Konare as Special Representative of the AU Commission. He noted the Council had endorsed the composition of the AU High-level Ad-hoc Committee of Heads of State and Government on South Sudan in March.

The Prime Minister said the parties had continued their conflict, further destroying “the social fabric of this young nation”. He said this and the consequent grave humanitarian crisis was a tragedy not only for the Republic of South Sudan but for all in the region. He added that, at the end of the day, whatever the region or the international community might do it was “the people and the leaders of South Sudan who matter the most for achieving lasting peace and reconciliation in their country.” He urged the leadership of the two parties to heed the calls of their people, the region, Africa and the international community. He also stressed the need for the Peace and Security Council, the AU Commission and other partners to continue to support the IGAD process. It was, he said, imperative for everyone to speak with one voice and avoid dilution from duplication of efforts. He emphasized the importance of sending consistent and coherent messages, both in words and actions, to the South Sudanese parties.

On Sunday (June 14), Prime Minister Hailemariam, Chairperson of the IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government, launched the IGAD-plus mediation on South Sudan. He said that IGAD was of the view that IGAD-plus would enable IGAD to continue to provide the necessary leadership to the mediation process through the facilitation of negotiations between the South Sudanese parties, while other members of IGAD-plus could provide unequivocal and solid support. He said IGAD had been quick to take the initiative to engage the parties to try to stop the conflict at the outset and begin negotiations to resolve the dispute. IGAD, he said, had the full and consistent support of the African Union and the international community. The Prime Minister said that although the war was continuing, the IGAD Mediation had achieved substantive progress in addressing some of the critical issues in the peace process. The major problems that still remained included the structure of the executive and power sharing arrangements among the top leadership, but there were also a few other issues to be resolved before the parties could sign a comprehensive agreement to bring sustainable peace and stability to South Sudan.

Prime Minister Hailemariam, noting the Peace and Security Council had established the AU High-Level Ad-hoc Committee of Heads of State and Government to strengthen Africa's support to IGAD and assist South Sudanese Parties and stakeholders to achieve durable peace, said it was within this context that the IGAD-plus framework had been developed. The core concept had now been developed and amended by the IGAD Council of Ministers and was now ready for distribution and implementation. The joint efforts of IGAD and partners allowed for enriched political, diplomatic and financial support and enhanced ownership of the final agreements by the parties involved and for their successful implementation. He said the Comprehensive Peace Agreement for Sudan and the conclusion of the protracted peace process in Somalia were concrete examples of the success of such partnerships for peace.

The Chief Mediator, Ambassador Seyoum Mesfin, also briefed the meeting on what IGAD-plus meant. He stressed the process remained an IGAD-led peace process, providing an African solution to the crisis, but now with partners playing an added role to support the peace process. The IGAD meeting agreed that it was important to approach the issue internationally and use every effort to achieve a breakthrough.

Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos visits Saudi Arabia and Italy

The State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos paid a working visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Italy for bilateral and regional talks. He also met with investors in both Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

In Saudi Arabia, the State Minister met with the Saudi Arabian State Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Nizar Bin Oumed Medeni and discussed bilateral and regional issues. Ambassador Berhane noted that the interests of both countries were convergent, and whatever the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia did for its own good had a positive impact on Ethiopia as well. Whether it concerned issues of security, stability or economic development, their interests interacted positively. Similarly, said Ambassador Berhane, whatever Ethiopia has achieved in the last 24 years and had been satisfactory for Ethiopia, will have a positive impact on the region in general and on Saudi Arabia in particular. He noted that Ethiopia, after dealing with many problems, had reached a point where it was a factor for stability in the region and was seen as one of the fastest growing economies in the world. He welcomed the contribution of the Kingdom in investing in different sectors of the economy. He also appealed for it to contribute further, noting that there was a great deal of untapped [potential] in Ethiopia's natural resources and power generation. These would be attractive for Saudi investors. In this context, he called on the assistance of the Kingdom in accessing finance for hydroelectric projects.

Ambassador Berhane also briefed Dr Nizar Bin Medeni on developments in Somalia, Sudan and Eritrea. He strongly emphasized that peace and stability in the region were in the interests of Ethiopia and said it was therefore doing all it could to assist countries in the region in their efforts to achieve peace, stability and economic development. He noted that the situation in Somalia was improving day by day and Somalia expected to hold general elections in 2016. He said Ethiopia encouraged Somalis to settle their differences amicably and for this purpose Ethiopia, along with other countries, was assisting Somalia to achieve the desired goal. Ethiopia was therefore part of AMISOM, joining at the request of the Somalis themselves, the AU and the UN. As a result, Al-Shabaab had been seriously weakened paving the way for peace and stability in Somalia. The State Minister called on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to assist in these efforts as it had done in the past.

On Sudan, State Minister Berhane said Ethiopia enjoyed absolute cooperation between the two governments and peoples. He said that both Sudan and South Sudan had full confidence in Ethiopia, and the fact that both countries had agreed that the "Blue Helmet" UN peacekeepers in the Abiye region must be Ethiopians, and only Ethiopians, was a demonstration of this.

On the other hand, the State Minister said, the situation in Eritrea remained a nightmare. The Eritrean Government continued to work day and night to destabilize the region and for this purpose it was working hand in glove with Al-Shabaab. The Eritreans had fought long and hard for freedom and democracy, he said, but they had ended up with a government that was not only deeply hostile to the region as a whole, but was also harming its own people. He said that it was because of this reality that the AU supported the sanctions regime adopted by the UN Security Council. He pointed out this was only the second time in the AU's history that it had supported sanctions in Africa.

The other occasion was over the former apartheid regime in South Africa. Ambassador Berhane underlined the absolute necessity of keeping the targeted sanctions on Eritrea in place until it changed its behavior. Failure to do so could only worsen the situation in the region.

Dr Nizar Bin Oumed Medeni noted that relations between Ethiopia and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were historical and deeply rooted and he agreed their interests were convergent. He underlined the necessity of activating the Joint Commission and said Saudi Arabia was ready to hold the next meeting in December. With reference to Saudi investments in Ethiopia, he suggested that the corresponding Permanent Representatives should work out modalities for exchanges of business delegations, tourism teams and members of the media. He agreed that the potential for economic relations was largely untapped and that it was important to create awareness of the possibilities.

Dr Medeni explained his country's position on regional issues. He said Saudi Arabia attached great importance to stability in Yemen and in Syria and to good neighborliness with Iran. He emphasized that security and stability in the region is not only necessary for the stability of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, but also for the GCC as a whole. In Africa, said Dr Medeni, the Saudi Arabian Government was ready to work together with those playing a key role in bringing peace and stability in the region, such as Ethiopia. The discussions, which were cordial and friendly, ended with promises to continue to work together.

During his stay in Jeddah, State Minister Berhane also held discussions with Ethiopian community leaders. He briefed them on developments in Ethiopia relevant to peace and the economy. The community leaders raised concerns regarding the speed and quality of services to members of the Diaspora. They emphasized their readiness to support the country as they have done in the past. Ambassador Berhane shared their concerns and said he would investigate the problems and work to resolve them.

Ambassador Berhane also met with investors who expressed interest in potential possibilities for investment in the hotel, agriculture, medicine and IT sectors. He briefed them on the untapped potential and the incentives provided by the government. He underlined that Ethiopia's legal protection for investors, its close bilateral cooperation with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the fact that it was a member of MIGA, combined to give investors guaranteed security. They were welcome to come to Ethiopia to see the situation for themselves.

Prior to his visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, State Minister Berhane visited Italy where he held talks with State Minister Pasteli, Italy's State Minister for Foreign Affairs. The two ministers exchanged views on bilateral and regional issues, particularly on the ever increasing flow of refugees that affected both countries. Mr Pasteli said that it was embarrassing for the EU to talk so much about refugees to Ethiopia, which was itself hosting such large number of refugees from Somalia, the Sudan and Eritrea. Ambassador Berhane, who noted the current figure was over 700,000, including some 200,000 Eritreans, said Ethiopia appreciated Italy, for taking the highest number of refugees in the EU. Ambassador Berhane briefed Mr Pasteli on the situation in Ethiopia and on the Government's efforts to create a favorable atmosphere for the economy to move ahead and contribute to stability in the region. In this context, he explained the destabilizing role played by Eritrea which, he pointed out, is engaged in training and hosting terrorists with the aim of destabilizing the region. Al-Shabaab elements, for example, were permanently residing in Eritrea. At the same time as it was involved in such activities, the Government in Asmara was also asking for sanctions to be lifted. Ambassador Berhane said President Isaias should not be rewarded for his continuing evil behavior. He stressed that Ethiopia wanted Eritrea to be 'managed' and the only management tools available were sanctions. Lifting them would, in these circumstances, be tantamount to giving Eritrea a green light to go to war. State Minister Pasteli said on his part, that the EU shared this view of Eritrea, but there was a difference of approach. The EU was trying to follow a carrot and stick approach in order to encourage behavioral changes on the part of Eritrea. It was not in any sense intending to reward Eritrea for its destabilizing role in the region. After a cordial meeting, the two State Ministers agreed to continue to exchange views in all areas.

Ethiopia's House of People's Representatives discusses the record pro-poor budget

The House of People's Representatives has been discussing the draft budget for the next Ethiopian fiscal year presented by the Minister of Finance and Economy, Sufian Ahmed. The draft budget of 223.4 billion birr was approved by the Council of Ministers the previous week.

Of the overall figure, 22.6% is for recurrent expenditure, 37.4% for capital expenditure, 34.7% for regional states and 5.4% is assigned for implementation of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Minister, presenting the draft, gave details of the performance of the current fiscal year which ends next month. The forecast shows 11.4% growth for the year, marking the achievement of major development targets set by the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP). Minister Sufian said this success would open a new era of growth in the years to come. He noted that according to 2014 data, the economy had grown 10.1% on average for three successive years, 2011/2, 2012/3 and 2013/14. During this period agriculture grew by 6.6%, industry by 20% and the service sector by 10.7%. The country had fallen short of meeting its targets in bringing about a structural transformation to industry but the growth of the industrial sector, from 10.3% in 2011 to 14.3% in 2014, could still be seen as a promising achievement. By every measure Ethiopia was on the right track to achieve almost all the Millennium Development Goals. The Minister added that the fast, sustainable, broad based and equitable nature of Ethiopia's growth made it outstanding among African countries. He also noted that this broad based and equitable growth contributed to a significant decrease of poverty and an increase in peoples' income level. Poverty levels had been lowered from 38.7% in 2005 to 29.6% in 2011 and by the end of the current fiscal year, he said, it would reach 22.2 %, as targeted in the GTP. The per capita income had increased from US\$396 in 2004 to US\$632 in 2014. All this, Minister Sufian said, was creating an enabling situation for Ethiopia's efforts to become a middle income country.

During the period 2011-2014, the largest portion of the budget was allotted to infrastructure - for road and rail expansion, energy, information technology and water. Most of these projects will be completed at the end of the current fiscal year. The completion of road sector projects has increased road coverage for free movement of people and goods. Federal and regional road coverage expanded to 60,466 km in 2014 from 48,800 km in 2010. Basic health service coverage had reached 100% in 2014 and the country had achieved the MDG target of decreasing child mortality by two thirds, two years ahead of the time-frame. First cycle (grades 1-8) education coverage reached 92% in 2014. The Minister noted that environmental protection and agricultural extension works had been expanded in the last year, and the country had managed to keep inflation rates in single figures. Efforts to encourage investors to become involved in financial institutions were bearing fruit and this had encouraged the public to save more. Increases in infrastructure, social service delivery, support to the private sector and strengthening of internal resource mobilization and financial sector development underlined the forecast for double digit growth of 11.4% this year, Minister Sufian told the House of People's Representatives.

The Minister also emphasized that the country's efforts to reduce poverty levels and become a middle income country were registering positive results. At the same time, he also stressed that more needed to be done to improve the country's performance in the export trade sector. The draft budget bill takes a number of factors into consideration in aiming for robust, rapid, equitable and sustainable development in Ethiopia. It aims to enhance structural transformation of the country's economic and social growth.

The Minister also laid out the sources for the budget. He said out of the total budget some 157 billion birr, 80.2%, is expected to come from domestic sources of finance, taxation and non-tax incomes. The country expects to increase its tax collecting capacity by 20% next year. Out of total budget around 16% is expected to come from donors and external loans, including 24.6 billion birr from loans and the remaining 14.1 billion birr from foreign aid.

According to the World Bank, Ethiopia's economy has experienced strong and broad based growth over the past decade, averaging 10.8% per year from 2003/04 to 2012/13. This compared to a regional average of 5.3%. Expansion of the service and agricultural sectors accounted for most of this growth, while the manufacturing sector performance was relatively modest. Private consumption and public investment explain demand-side growth, with the latter assuming an increasingly important role in recent years. Economic growth has brought with it positive trends in reducing poverty, in both urban and rural areas. As Minister Sufian told the House, while 38.7% of Ethiopians lived in extreme poverty in 2004-2005, five years later this had fallen to 29.6%, a decrease of 9.1 percentage points as measured by the national poverty line of less than \$0.6 per day. He also underlined the Government anticipated this would fall to 22.2% this last fiscal year.

Over the past two decades, there has been significant progress in key human development indicators: primary school enrollments have quadrupled, child mortality has been cut in half, and the number of people with access to clean water has more than doubled. These gains, together with more recent moves to strengthen the fight against malaria and HIV/AIDS, underline the progress in critical aspects of human development. Nevertheless, there is still much to be done. The Growth and Transformation Plan I [GTP I] was geared towards fostering broad-based development in a sustainable manner to achieve the MDGs. With the emphasis on pro-poor policies, it envisioned a major leap, in terms not only of economic structure and income levels, but also in improved social indicators. Ethiopia has achieved the MDGs for child mortality and water and there has been encouraging progress in gender parity in primary education, in HIV/AIDS, and malaria prevention. Positive results have also been achieved in universal primary education, although the MDG target [of 100%] may not be met this year.

Ethiopia is also witnessing encouraging improvements in terms of environmental development, provision of water, increase in forest coverage, response to climate change, and biodiversity management. The new GTP II explicitly states that “building a ‘Green Economy’ and ongoing implementation of environmental laws are among the key strategic directions to be pursued during the plan period”. The economic strategy is now focusing on four initiatives for fast-track implementation. These are: Exploitation of Ethiopia’s vast hydro-power potential; Large-scale promotion of advanced rural cooking technologies; Efficiency improvements to the livestock value chain; and Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD). Ethiopia, in fact, is undertaking a series of very substantial renewable energy projects that are in harmony with the UN Secretary General’s global initiative of “sustainable energy for all”. The Government believes that sustained political will, leadership and commitment by all stakeholders, are required to realize the 5-year GTP. It recognizes that sustainable development in Ethiopia can only be achieved if development is pursued in all social, economic and environmental sectors in a balanced manner, and if the benefits are equitably shared among all citizens.

The draft budget underlines the Government’s determination to continue spending money on its pro-poor policies, on social sectors which will fundamentally change the livelihood of the people. These include education, health, water, road and rural electrification development programs. Minister Sufian said that “from the total capital budget, 66.6% will go to infrastructure development that needs the government’s immediate attention”. The budget also assigns large sections of the budget to manufacturing, export and urban development, with the specific intention of transforming the economy in a sustainable manner.