

A Week in the Horn

24th February 2017

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News in Brief

Africa and the African Union

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned this week that the world was in the grip of an astonishing and acute crisis with more than 20 million people in South Sudan, Somalia, northern Nigeria and Yemen facing starvation over the next six months and with nearly 1.4 million children at imminent risk of death. The Secretary-General warned that "The situation is dire." He said: "We need \$4.4 billion by the end of March to avert a catastrophe," and, so far, the UN agencies have raised only \$90 million."

The 'Mogadishu Declaration' by the Presidents of Djibouti, Kenya, and Somalia and the Prime Minister of Ethiopia issued on Wednesday (February 22) commits the four countries to regional cooperation to "ensure an effective response to the drought and to enable further progress in peace building and state building in Somalia." (See article)

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) put out a report - "Horn of Africa: A Call for Action" - on Friday (February 17), detailing the current humanitarian needs for Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia. (See article)

Representatives of the 10 member states of the Nile Basin Initiative met in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania on Wednesday (February 21) to mark **Nile Day**, the 18th anniversary of the establishment of the Nile Basin Initiative. This year's theme is '**Our Shared Nile - Source of Energy, Food and Water for All**'. The member states of the NBI are Burundi, DR Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. NBI states are involved in more than 35 investment projects contributing to food, water and energy security in the region.

Ethiopia

President Salva Kiir arrived in Addis Ababa on Thursday (February 23) for a three-day official visit. The visit will enhance bilateral relations and cooperation. The two sides signed a number of cooperation agreements covering various areas including security. (See article)

Prime Minister Hailemariam, at the inauguration of President Mohamed Abdullahi of Somalia on Wednesday (February 22) said the people of Somalia had set a great example to other countries in conflict by holding the successful election of parliament and president. He said: "Ethiopia's government and its people will stand on your side. It's our wish to see a stable Somalia that contributes to regional stability and prosperity."

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn officially launched the Humera integrated agro-industrial park, the second of its kind in the country, on Tuesday (February 21). When fully operational, Humera is expected to produce 700,000 tons of processed products, from livestock, fruits, vegetables, cereal and oilseeds, earning 18 billion Birr in annual revenue.

Foreign Minister Dr Workneh Gebeyehu attended the 53rd Munich Security Conference in Germany at the weekend. He held talks with High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Ms Federica Mogherini on Saturday (February 18) on the margins of the Conference, and also met with the UK's Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Boris Johnson for talks. (See article)

At Munich, Foreign Minister, Dr Workneh, also participated in the High-Level dialogue on **"Migration and Security: Challenges in Africa and Beyond"** as well as in the meeting on Somalia: **"Building Security in a post-conflict country: Beyond Guns and Guns in Somalia"**. (See articles)

Foreign Minister, Dr Workneh visited Brussels this week and met with a number of EU officials. He also held talks with the Ethiopian Ambassadors accredited to European states. (See article)

In a meeting with Foreign Minister Dr Workneh Gebeyehu, Mr Issad Rebrab the founder and manager of Cevital, the largest private conglomerate in Algeria, with interests in the agri-food sector, retail, industry and services, disclosed the company's decision to set up huge investment projects in Ethiopia on Friday (February 24). Cevital has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Public Enterprises.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs Hirut Zemen, met with Deputy Foreign Minister of the Hellenic Republic (Greece) on Friday (February 24). The two sides have agreed to further strengthen the bilateral relations in the areas of trade, tourism, culture, agriculture and sport.

Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos, Special Advisor to Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn, on a visit the UAE this week, met with UAE's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed on Monday (February 20) in Abu Dhabi. They discussed ways of enhancing Ethiopia-UAE bilateral ties, and increasing economic and investment activities. The UAE is Ethiopia's second largest economic partner next to Saudi Arabia among the Gulf countries.

The two-day meeting of the Ethiopia-Sudanese Border Development Commission held in Mekelle, in Tigray Regional State this week, called for stronger partnership in areas of major concern and for faster implementation of agreements to step up cooperation on border security, control of arms smuggling, human trafficking, illegal border trade and criminal activities along the shared border. They also agreed to work together on health, tourism, and transport infrastructure and to reach understanding to resolve customs related problems over the export of Ethiopian products to Sudan. (See article)

The Strategic Emergency Food Reserve Agency has announced that it is distributing **141,000 metric tonnes of food and non-food assistances to drought-hit areas** from its seven warehouses at Adama, Shashemene, Wolita Sodo, Shinle, Kombolcha, Woreta and Mekelle, as part of its rapid response to the urgent need of pastoralists. Misrak Mamo, Director-General of the Agency said the Federal and regional governments were jointly providing assistance for the people in need.

This week, preparations to celebrate the 6th anniversary of the commencement of the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) are in full swing with various programs and festivals announced by the Office of the National Council for the Coordination of the Public Participation on the Construction of the Dam. (See article)

Ethiopia commemorated the 80th anniversary of Martyr's Day on Monday (February 20), remembering the 30,000 civilians of Addis Ababa massacred by the Italian troops following the attempted assassination of

Marshal Rodolfo Graziani in 1937. Former patriot fighters and thousands of people saw wreaths laid at the Martyrs' Monument.

Professor Richard Pankhurst, doyen of Ethiopian historians and scholars, and renowned Friend of Ethiopia, was buried at Addis Ababa's Trinity Cathedral on Tuesday (February 21). Ethiopia's President Dr Mulatu Teshome and other senior government officials, academics and scholars attended the impressive funeral, as well as family members and relatives and thousands of friends and mourners.

Djibouti

President Ismail Omar Guelleh, who attended the inauguration of President Mohamed Abdullahi in Mogadishu on Wednesday (February 22), also laid the foundation stone for a new Djibouti embassy in Mogadishu, together with President Mohamed Abdullahi.

Eritrea

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres announced the establishment of an internal review team to take forward the reforms to the UN Secretariat peace and security strategy, functioning and architecture on Friday (February 17). The team, led by Tamrat Samuel, an Eritrean national, will be expected to submit recommendations to Mr Guterres by June.

François Crépeau, the UN's Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants, has criticized the recent decision of Switzerland to tighten its asylum policy towards Eritreans. He said there was no evidence that someone returning to Eritrea would not face punishment and called on Switzerland to be "certain, in every single case, that return for an individual will not be problematic." Some 5,000 Eritreans apply for asylum annually in Switzerland.

Kenya

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi met with President Uhuru Kenyatta during a one-day visit to Nairobi on Saturday (February 18). President el-Sisi said his visit aimed to reach out to Kenya for a better deal over the use of the Nile in exchange for improved trade between the two countries. At a joint press conference, he said: "Egypt and Kenya are bound together by the common artery of the River Nile and a long history of productive cooperation," adding, "We will support development in the Nile Basin countries to optimise the use of this large Nile for the good of the Nile basin countries in general."

President Kenyatta, attending the inauguration of President Mohamed Abdullahi in Mogadishu, congratulated Somalia on the conclusion of a peaceful election and reaffirmed Kenya's commitment to Somalia. He said: "we are collaborating to restore regional stability as we face transnational and cross-border crimes"; he said he was confident that "God will grant you wisdom to deal with such challenges".

Somalia

President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed was formally inaugurated as Somalia's 9th President on Wednesday (February 22), in the presence of the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, the Chair of IGAD, the Presidents of Djibouti and Kenya, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, the AU Special Representative and head of AMISOM, and representatives from other partners and international organizations. **(See article)**

Somalia's President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed has appointed Hassan Ali Khayre as his Prime Minister. Hassan Ali Khayre pledged to form a government that was inclusive and responsive and met the expectations of Somalis. **(See article)**

President Mohamed Abdullahi left for a visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on Thursday (February 22) at the invitation of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. The drought is expected to be a major item of discussion during his visit.

Meeting with AMISOM commanders and ambassadors of Troop Contributing Countries on Saturday (February 18) President Mohamed Abdullahi said he envisioned defeating al-Shabaab in the next two years. Promising to be a true partner in combating terrorism, he called on AMISOM and the Somali National Army to redouble their efforts.

President Mohamed Abdullahi visited the hospital to see dozens of victims wounded in the car bomb explosion on Sunday (February 19) in the Kawa-Godey market. 39 people died in the explosion and many of the injured suffered extensive third degree burns. The President offered a US\$100,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of those who planned the blast; he pledged to pay for medical treatment for the injured and to support the families of those who died in al-Shabaab bombings. 900 civilians died in al-Shabaab attacks last year.

This week, the UK announced an aid package of £100 million to Somalia to help [with] food, safe drinking water and emergency healthcare in regions threatened by famine. International Development Secretary Ms Patel said in a statement that the "world faces a series of unprecedented humanitarian crises", including South Sudan and Somalia.

AMISOM opened a three-day training session to bring soldiers into line with UN laws on human rights and gender equality on Tuesday (February 21). This is part of capacity building for AMISOM officers and for the Somali National Army. Newly deployed officers in the five sectors will be trained on mainstreaming gender issues. The officers will act as the link between AMISOM headquarters and the sectors.

Kismayo, the capital of Jubaland state, held a two-day **International Book Fair** this week (February 21-22). The event featured 400 titles as well as artifacts and traditional works of art. Author and organizer Mohamud Dirie said it aimed to inspire book writing, reading and interest in Somali culture especially among young people.

South Sudan

President Salva Kiir made a three-day official visit to Ethiopia this week (February 23-25). **(See article)**

President Salva Kiir told MPs on Tuesday (February 21) that the national dialogue he declared last year was not "a trick, a delaying tactic or a calculated strategy to consolidate its grip on power". He called on members of the opposition and partners to the 2015 peace deal to put aside doubts and join him and members of his administration in the restoration of peace. He said the dialogue would encompass all the country's rival political parties and the process would be led by a number of eminent statesmen, who are "trusted", genuine and credible.

President Salva Kiir issued a decree on Monday (February 20) replacing Machar Achiek Aderwith James Mathiang Rok as head of the state-owned oil company, Nilepet. No reason was given for the change. South Sudan relies largely on oil for its revenue, but the sector has been the target of accusations of mismanagement and of the proceeds from crude oil sales failing to reach the Ministry of Finance.

The UK's Department for International Development (DfID) said on Tuesday that it was making £100m available to South Sudan this year, in addition to a similar amount pledged last year, as part of a package aimed at preventing migration from east Africa. The EU also announced an emergency package of 82 million Euros to what the UN described as a "man-made" famine.

Famine has been declared in parts of Unity State in the northern-central part of South Sudan. UN agencies warned on Monday (February 20) that war and a collapsing economy have left 100,000 people facing starvation. A further 1 million people were classified as being on the brink of famine, according to the World Food Program and other UN bodies. They said humanitarian access was urgently needed to reverse "an escalating catastrophe." 4.9 million people, more than 40% of South Sudan's population, are in need of urgent food, agriculture and nutrition assistance.

Sudan

President Omar Al Bashir attended the opening ceremony of the International Defense Exhibition and Conference, (IDEX) being held this week (February 19-23) in Abu Dhabi. Sudan's state-owned defense company, the Military Industry Corporation, offered a range of products at IDEX, including rocket launchers, armored vehicles, self-propelled artillery systems, explosives, guided bombs and even ships. MIC said all had been tested and used in the Sudanese armed forces.

Another Darfur rebel group, the Sudan Liberation Movement for Peace and Development (SLM-PD), a splinter faction of the SLM-AW led by Abdel-Wahid al-Nur, on Tuesday (February 21) has signed the National Dialogue Document. The General Secretary of the National Dialogue, Hashim Ali Salim, welcomed the decision and called on the SLM-PD to make efforts to convince the remaining armed movements to join the peace process.

President Salva Kiir of South Sudan on a state visit to Ethiopia

President Salva Kiir Mayardit of the Republic of South Sudan arrived in Addis Ababa on Thursday for a three-day state visit to Ethiopia (February 23-25). Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn and Foreign Minister Dr Workneh Gebeyehu welcomed the President and his accompanying high-ranking delegation at Bole International Airport. During his visit, President Kiir and his delegation will be holding talks with President Dr Mulatu Teshome, Prime Minister Hailemariam and other officials.

The Prime Minister and President Kiir held a bilateral meeting on Friday (February 24) with discussions covering Ethio-South Sudan relations in general, as well as the humanitarian situation and the drought in the region and South Sudan's peace process. In welcoming President Salva Kiir to Ethiopia, the Prime Minister underlined the longstanding and historic links between the two countries and peoples and stressed that Ethiopia's policy towards South Sudan was premised on the principle of good neighborliness, based on mutual trust and confidence. He said he wanted to see bilateral relations expanded further and infrastructural links extended with the Joint Ministerial and Joint Border Commissions consolidated.

Prime Minister Hailemariam said Ethiopia would continue to offer its strong support and cooperation for peace and stability in South Sudan. He noted that IGAD, the AU and the UN all agreed on the importance of implementing the **Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan**, which he described as the only viable option for a lasting solution to the political problems of the country. This was something, he said, that promoted inclusivity and provided the necessary platform to bring an end to the ongoing political conflicts through national reconciliation, healing and accountability. He also emphasized that Ethiopia fully supported South Sudan's National Dialogue which, together with the Peace Agreement, would provide an inclusive political settlement to ensure peaceful, free and fair elections in 2018.

Prime Minister Hailemariam visited South Sudan last October and during that visit the two countries signed a number of agreements including one on the Promotion and Protection of Investment and Memoranda of Understanding on Bilateral Consultations and on Roads and Bridges. One of the issues in the discussions this week has been to encourage implementation of those earlier agreements.

Their talks today [24th Feb] covered implementation of the border control and security cooperation deal signed in October last year, and the two sides also agreed to stop hosting armed opposition groups in their respective countries. The two leaders agreed on the importance of strengthening cross-border trade and agreed to name the road connecting Gambella with South Sudan, the Ethio-South Sudan Friendship Road. They discussed the humanitarian situation in South Sudan and both parties emphasized the drought in the Horn of Africa, describing it as a common concern. They called on the international community and donors to assist urgently. The two sides also agreed to work together in international affairs and signed a number of agreements on various issues.

Ethiopia and South Sudan enjoy strong cooperation in different areas including capacity building and infrastructure development as well as the historic and cultural bonds between their two peoples. President Kiir's visit will only strengthen the relationship.

Foreign Minister Dr Workneh Gebeyehu attends the Munich Security Conference...

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Dr Workneh Gebeyehu, arrived in Munich, Germany to attend the 53rd Munich Security Conference (MSC), at the end of last week. Among the key topics of this year's MSC 2017 are **Cyber, Health, Energy and Climate Security issues, Terrorism and Extremism, the war in Syria and the future of the European Security Order**. European and Global Cooperation as well as Global Order are also among issues on the agenda. The MSC is an independent forum dedicated to promoting peaceful conflict resolution and international cooperation and dialogue in dealing with today's and future security challenges. Over the past five decades, the Munich Security Conference has become the major global forum for the discussion of security policy. Each February, it brings together more than 450 senior decision-makers from

around the world, including heads-of-state, ministers, leading personalities of international and non-governmental organizations, as well as high ranking representatives of industry, media, academia and civil society, to engage in an intensive debate on current and future security challenges. In addition to its annual flagship conference, the MSC regularly convenes high-profile events on particular topics and regions and publishes the [Munich Security Report](#).

Numerous official partner events took place on the sidelines of the Conference covering such issues as **fighting the root causes of Migration** and Economic Cooperation as part of a **new Deal for Africa**. These included a key side-event on 'Building Security in Post-Conflict Country: Beyond 'Guys and Guns' in Somalia hosted by the United Nations. The Conference also offered the opportunity for a number of bilateral meetings, and Dr Workneh held meetings with the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Ms Federica Mogherini and the UK's Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Mr Boris Johnson, among others.

In the meeting with EU High Representative Ms Federica Mogherini, the two sides discussed issues of regional peace and security, migration, and the positive steps taken by the government of Ethiopia in solving internal problems. Ms Mogherini congratulated Dr Workneh Gebeyehu for taking office as Foreign Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and expressed willingness to continue the existing strong relations between the EU and Ethiopia. Dr Workneh thanked the High Representative for her good wishes and briefed her on the situation in Ethiopia and the region. On Somalia, the Minister emphasized the positive and encouraging trend of state building in Somalia as demonstrated by the election of President Mohamed Abdullahi. He stressed that Ethiopia and the IGAD countries viewed this development as a chance to further engage with Somalia in its efforts to build peace and security and assist in national institution building. Ethiopia is confident of the EU's support and called upon it to contribute to strengthen these initiatives in the Horn. Both sides agreed to continue their dialogue during the High Representative's **planned visit to Ethiopia in March**.

Dr Workneh also briefed Mr Boris Johnson on the current situation of Ethiopia and the region. They discussed Ethiopia's new role as a non-permanent member of UNSC and emphasized the need to consolidate their collaboration at the level of the representatives in New York to work together on regional peace and security matters including both Somalia and South Sudan. Dr Workneh requested that the UK Secretary of State reverse the current trend of issuing visas from the High Commission in Pretoria, South Africa and consider the issuance from the High Commission in Addis Ababa as it is the seat of African Union and various regional offices for Africa. Mr Boris Johnson thanked Dr Workneh for the meeting and promised to continue the existing good relations between the two countries. He requested that Ethiopia's participation at the **Conference on Somalia** in London in May, 2017 should be at the highest level with Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn attending. Both sides concluded their meeting by agreeing to further deepen and expand their strategic partnership in various new sectors and to also exchange visits at the highest level in the years to come.

Dr Workneh also discussed investment opportunities in Ethiopia with major German companies at the Bavarian Ministry of Trade in Munich on Friday (February 17). Some 10 representatives of leading international German energy, auto, environmental and agro- processing companies have expressed their interest in doing business in Ethiopia. Speaking on behalf of the **German-Africa Business Association**, its chairman, Dr Stefan Liebing, said there was a growing interest among German companies to invest in one of the most important and fast-growing economies in sub-Saharan Africa. He added that the meeting will help representatives of the companies to better understand the investment climate in Ethiopia and the current demand for technology as well as requirements for training.

Dr Workneh briefed them on the current situation in Ethiopia and the region as well as the pre-eminent opportunities existing in the country as reflected in the second Growth and Transformation Plan, especially in the manufacturing, agro-processing, energy and construction sectors. He said, "I would like to assure you that you have chosen the right partner in development, as the government of Ethiopia is ready to provide you with all necessary support to facilitate your investment in Ethiopia and work closely with the Federal Republic of Germany to guarantee the success of your economic ventures." He added: "the manufacturing and agro-processing parks under construction in different parts of the country would soon be operational to enhance investments from major global companies." The meeting concluded in reaching an agreement to map out the interest of these companies and closely engage the Ethiopian Embassy in Berlin to facilitate their entry into the Ethiopian market.

... a 'decision-makers' Forum on 'Migration and Security' ...

A high-level dialogue on "Migration and Security: Challenges in Africa and Beyond" was one of the side events at Munich on Saturday (February 18). It focused on the challenges related to migration and security issues in Africa and facing Europe and the options for international cooperation. This dialogue, held for the fourth time at the Munich Security Conference, included Ethiopia's Foreign Minister, Dr Workneh Gebeyehu, Rwanda's Foreign Minister, Louise Mushikiwabo, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, and the Director General of the International Organization for Migration, William Swing, covered the interaction and overarching issues and the major aspects concerning the way forward. The occasion was organized and moderated by GTZ.

In his intervention, Foreign Minister Dr Workneh noted the concern over the political and security effects on destination countries, but stressed that migrants and refugees were the most vulnerable ones needing protection, both along the transit routes and in destination countries. He underlined the risks faced by young Africans on their dangerous journeys, exposed to terrorists and the network of human traffickers and smugglers across borders and the dangers of the Mediterranean. There were, of course, both pull and push factors involved: "the majority of the refugees and migrants are pushed out from their home for different reasons including violent conflict and the search of better opportunities", or even a repressive government. The other main reasons for displacement include climate change and the depletion of resources in some countries. Sharing insights about the difficulty in dealing with the challenge in the region, Foreign Minister Dr Workneh, said "weak border management coupled with poor physical infrastructure and difficult geography has made it difficult to control migration."

Ethiopia, he noted, was making every effort to address **the root causes of displacement and irregular migration through poverty reduction and job creation**. It was currently host to more than 800,000 refugees. It has now developed a new policy to allow refugees to work in the country's developing industrial parks. These parks are intended to create more than 100,000 jobs, and 30% of these will be dedicated to refugees. This, Dr Workneh said, would certainly create a more secure environment and mitigate options for secondary migration. He called for more robust participation of European member states in the development of industrial and agro-industrial parks. Ethiopia also looked forward to the operationalization of the **European External Investment Fund**, he said, as this would be instrumental in the creation of jobs in African countries. Dr Workneh referred to the need to combat human traffickers and smugglers. East Africa, he said, faced highly organized and sophisticated criminal networks using modern communication tools and operating in all countries, both source and destination countries. It needed urgent cooperation between home, route and host countries to address the challenges.

Dr Workneh also spoke of development, the other dimension of migration. Referring to the concept of migration for development in the Sustainable Development Goals, he said migration could also offer immense benefits and was an important driver of growth and development in both countries of origin and destination. He stressed: "if properly managed, migration can be a positive force in the reduction of poverty and improvement of livelihoods." He noted legal channels for safe, orderly and regular migration improved human security and mitigated irregular migration, but this demanded strong communication and commitment by origin and destination countries as well as international stakeholders. Strategic investment schemes like jobs compacts would also improve living conditions through sustainable development in countries of origin.

He called for enhanced cooperation and dialogue through regional and inter-regional schemes among other mechanisms. Overall, Dr Workneh emphasized that the issue must be looked at in a holistic and integrated manner. The result would be reduced pressures and improved security for destination countries.

...and on Somalia, Dr Workneh underlines the need for continued international support

One of the key side events at the Munich Conference was a meeting to discuss Somalia, under the title: "Building Security in a post-conflict country: Beyond Guns and Guys in Somalia". It was attended by officers of the US Africa Command, as well as representatives of the EU Naval Force Contributing Countries and members of International Organizations. Speakers included the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), Michael Keating, and Ethiopian Foreign Minister, Dr Workneh Gebeyehu.

Mr Keating noted that Somalia has come a long way from the political, economic and social chaos it suffered for so long to conduct a successful election and a peaceful transition of power. He emphasized that now was the time for the government of Somalia to take ownership of building its national institutions and its security apparatus. This was necessary in order to build up the confidence of its people, and restore the trust of its neighbours and the international community who have stood by it for the last two decades and half.

Dr Workneh identified security in the context of Somalia as a phenomenon of post-conflict transition and a foundation on which enduring peace and long-term, sustainable development could be built. He noted this raised questions as to what constituted progress in conflict-affected countries and countries coming out of conflict. He underlined the Horn of Africa region in general, and Somalia in particular, is usually defined as a complex political and security environment. For most observers, he said, the Horn of Africa region is besieged by poverty and underdevelopment, recurring drought and famine and war and violent armed conflict, a region marred by protracted political strife, regional interstate rivalries and a place for global strategic power struggles.

Somalia, he pointed out, was no exception to this. He referred to its state of armed conflict without a functional central government since 1991, caused by the desire of warlords, clan leaders, political brokers or extremists to control central power. More than two dozen peace initiatives had been launched but traditional and religious forms of governance and political alignments, coupled with clan fighting, had frustrated all initiatives for peace and reconciliation in Somalia. Peace processes were further undermined by the proliferation of initiatives and involvements of external powers, either trying to exploit the situation to promote their own self-interest or were competing for dominance.

In fact, despite the difficulties and challenges, efforts to bring about peace and to establish a functional government were not totally in vain. As a result of perseverance, political will and constant engagement by Somalis, the regional countries and IGAD, as well as the international community, Somalia, after decades of clan feuds, armed conflicts and violent extremism, has made significant progress in bringing stability, re-establishing state structures and in restoring institutions. It is now moving forward. It is beginning to institutionalize peaceful politics. Institutions are being put in place. The State formation process is being completed. National elections have been successfully carried out. A President has been elected. With the aid of the international community, the battle against piracy has been won. The terrorist group al-Shabaab is in retreat. The economy is beginning to show some signs of recovery. Somalia has indeed rejoined the international community, strengthening its diplomatic relations with neighboring countries and more widely. Last year, it hosted the 28th Extraordinary Summit of the IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Mogadishu.

This is all very commendable, but although Somalia is politically in far better shape than a few years back, the political transition is far from complete. A number of major issues have yet to be finalized. These include the establishment of a functional democracy, the adoption of a constitution, the Security and Justice Sector Reform and integration of the Somali Security Forces and Somali National Army. Somalia still has to transform itself from a war-torn state to a functioning state, able to deliver security and stability and service delivery, to end political infighting and create the conditions necessary for genuine grass-root reconciliation and an inclusive national dialogue.

Equally, the overall security situation remains grave. Successful offensives by the Somali National Army and AMISOM have driven al-Shabaab out of many towns and villages. Al-Shabaab's popular support is waning. Its income levels have been significantly reduced and its control of its forces is not as effective as it was. It is in fact in retreat but it remains dangerous with the capacity to launch terrorist attacks both in Somalia and outside. It still controls large areas of southwest Somalia. We must, in fact, remain involved, and work to strengthen AMISOM and provide it with additional resources. We must consolidate control over liberated areas and encourage cooperation between the Somali National Army and AMISOM forces. The importance of co-ordination and determination among all stakeholders to defeat of al-Shabaab and all forms of terrorism and extremism in Somalia and elsewhere cannot be overestimated.

Of course, Dr Workneh stressed, the problems of Somalia cannot be solved only through military operations. This is why the revival of Somalia has to focus, *inter alia*, on the inclusivity of all peaceful parties in the political process, as well as on Security and Justice Sector Reform, economic transformation and post-conflict reconstruction and development, transparency and accountability as well as empowerment of women, local ownership and community engagement. These elements are critical to consolidate peace and stability and to address weak institutional structures and to strengthen democratic governance in Somalia. In other words,

the quest for peace in Somalia requires a comprehensive, concerted and determined approach, encompassing not only political inclusivity but also conflict prevention, management and resolution, the eradication of poverty, the promotion of democracy and the rule of law, institutions building, post-conflict reconstruction and sustainable development as well as humanitarian assistance. This in turn requires sustained political will and the need for close cooperation and dialogue among various stakeholders. Somalis have displayed their determination to move towards a democratic system by holding these peaceful Parliamentary and Presidential elections. This is an impressive success in a country and a region so often referred to as troubled and conflict prone. It is a process that will continue.

Winning the fight against al-Shabaab and terrorism, bringing enduring peace and building a strong economy in Somalia will only be possible through deliberate regional and international collaborative efforts. It was against this backdrop that the IGAD Regional Security Cooperation Framework was agreed by Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Uganda to address regional security issues and assist Somalia. The Framework focuses on regular consultations and dialogue on common regional security issues. It provides for cooperation and coordination on shared security priorities, to reduce common security threats including terrorism and violent extremism; it promotes confidence and security-building measures. Overall, it reaffirms the strong solidarity and commitment of IGAD member states to continue supporting the stability of Somalia. In addition, IGAD member states also acknowledged the unfolding humanitarian crisis in the region and in Somalia in particular when they agreed to establish an IGAD-based multi-donor trust fund to support the humanitarian and refugee needs and over-all development in Somalia.

Dr Workneh concluded by repeating and underlining that this effort of nation, institution and peace-building in Somalia continued to require collaborative efforts between Somalis, IGAD and the regional countries as well as the international community. It was necessary for all to remain vigilant and involved in order to bring lasting peace and stability and economic transformation and prosperity to the people of Somalia.

...before traveling on to meet EU officials in Brussels

After the Munich Conference, Foreign Minister Dr Workneh visited Brussels and held meetings on Monday this week (February 20) with the Belgian Foreign Minister, Didier Reynders, and various EU officials. The Minister met with Mr Reynders on Tuesday and discussed bilateral relations. They agreed on the need to further strengthen cooperation as their capitals were seats of their respective regional organizations, the African Union and the European Union. The relations between the EU and Ethiopia are founded on the Cotonou Agreement and have 40 years of constructive bilateral relations in areas as diverse as development cooperation, trade and economic development, consolidation of democratic institutions, regional peace and security and migration.

Ethiopia is one of the EU's most important partners on the African continent, active in regional peace and security as well as in thematic international debates such as climate change. Against this background, Dr Workneh Gebeyehu held talks with Mr Stefano Manservigi, Director-General DEVCO, on further supporting the efforts of Ethiopia to eradicate poverty, and foster inclusive and sustainable economic, social and environmental development through programmable development aid from the European Development Fund, as well as non-programmable development aid, projects funded by the EU Trust Fund, humanitarian assistance and concessional loans from the European Investment Bank. EU support to Ethiopia for the period 2015-2020 will exceed €2 billion and rests on these five pillars. The two sides also looked at ways of maximizing the social and economic impact of development cooperation while ensuring sustainability, including improved alignment of EU donors with the Growth and Transformation Plan II and Ethiopia's Climate-Resilient Green Economy Strategy.

Ethiopia, one of the countries most affected by the El Niño phenomenon, is experiencing its worst drought in 50 years following three failed rainy seasons. More than 5 million people are in need of emergency assistance and millions more across the continent are affected by the extreme weather conditions. Dr Workneh thanked the EU Director General for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Ms Monique Pariat, for earmarking 27.5 million Euros for emergency assistance in 2017. He called on the agency to support the region as the drought is intensifying.

Dr Workneh met with Mr Jean-Christoph Belliard, Political Affairs Director at EEAS and Ambassadors of the 28 EU member states. He briefed them on the current political situation and reform measures taken by the government to enhance its peace, development and democratization agenda. Ethiopia and the EU, he noted, share a vision for a peaceful, safe and stable Horn of Africa, a precondition for the political, economic and social

development of the region as a whole. Given Ethiopia's crucial stabilizing role in the Horn of Africa, the EU and Ethiopia share information, perspectives and lessons learned, and consult each other on issues of common interest. These include conflict prevention and resolution in the Horn of Africa and the broader region, the role of IGAD, the African Peace and Security Architecture and the African Peace Facility. They intend to enhance their cooperation to maintain the dynamic economic growth and ambition of Ethiopia to join middle income countries on the basis of its green and inclusive economic growth.

Foreign Minister Dr Workneh Gebeyehu met with Dr Patrick I. Gomes, Secretary-General of the ACP during his stay in Brussels and discussed the evolving role of the secretariat in regard to its relationship with the EU and also the global dynamic situation. The Minister assured the Secretary-General of Ethiopia's readiness to assist the continued efforts of the secretariat to sustain the development of member states from Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific regions.

Dr Workneh also met with the Ethiopian Ambassadors accredited to European states and discussed current issues in Ethiopia and the region. He briefed the Ambassadors on the reforms being undertaken in the country to strengthen good governance and institutional capacity issues and measures taken to enhance the business and investment climate. The discussion also focused on ways to transform the Foreign Ministry to effectively address the regional and global challenges that it faces and to meet the strategic goals put forward to achieve a middle-income economy by the end of the next decade. The meeting agreed on the need to actively use all instruments of diplomacy and reform to help meet the expectations of the government and people of Ethiopia.

President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed of Somalia's inauguration....

President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed was formally inaugurated as Somalia's 9th President on Wednesday (February 22), in the presence Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn of Ethiopia and Chair of IGAD, President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti, President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia, Michael Keating, the AU Special Representative and head of AMISOM, Ambassador Francisco Madeira, and representatives from the Arab League, Sudan, Turkey and other partners and international organizations, who offered their congratulations and good wishes. Also present were two former Presidents, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, both of whom promised to assist the new government in any capacity that they could.

Speaking at his inauguration ceremony, President Mohamed Abdullahi said Somalia's youth unemployment rate was about 80%, forcing many young people to pursue dangerous journeys to Europe and the US. "I'm a parent, I feel for the parents who lost their children in the seas or those who have their loved ones in prisons. We will try to create jobs for the youth," the new President pledged. In a strong indication of his government's will to deal with violent extremism, President Mohamed Abdullahi expressed his determination to deter more youths from being recruited into militant groups and warned those who are involved in al-Shabaab activities to defect and join in the nation building process. He also pledged to return dignity back to Somalia. He acknowledged that he was just at the beginning of a long journey as his government aims to tackle the looming famine, the security situation, and national reconciliation. But, he warned: "Because of the limited resources we have, our achievements will be limited; for the past 26 years, there have conflicts and droughts, so it will take other 20 years to fix this country."

The new President said Somalia's main obstacles were insecurity and the humanitarian crisis, which affects millions of people. The new President also said his government would focus on "reconciliation, justice and law and the restoration of the confidence of people in the government." The importance of security was underlined by the latest terrorist attack in Mogadishu, aimed at innocent civilians in a market, killing at least 39 people and injuring dozens more on Sunday (February 19). At the time the UN Security Council reiterated that its determination to support peace, security and development in the long-troubled country would not be swayed by this, or any other such attack.

President Farmajo, in his speech, thanked his predecessors for conceding power peacefully, noting that every Somali President who lost a contested election had listened to the will of the people and welcomed their successor. This, he said, was a sign of democracy that Somalis should take pride in. The President promised payments, equipment and training for the military, which over the next few years will take on more of the responsibility of countering al-Shabaab, and said his government would welcome people who choose to leave al-Shabaab, adding that "you few thousands cannot stand in the way of 12 million people."

On the occasion, Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn stressed that Somalia is on the right track towards ensuring stability after a long period of unease. Congratulating the new President, Hailemariam affirmed his government's commitment to continue to closely work with the new government. He said, "Ethiopia's government and its people will stand on your side. It's our wish to see a stable Somalia that contributes to regional stability and prosperity." President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, congratulating the people of Somalia for their peaceful election, noted: "The Somali people have spoken and they have great expectations of the new government in rebuilding and developing the nation." President Kenyatta said: "You, Mr President assume office as we face an enormous challenge and we are collaborating to restore regional stability as we face transnational and cross-border crimes and I am confident that God will grant you wisdom to deal with such challenges."

UN Secretary-General António Guterres' message, delivered by Michael Keating, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, praised AMISOM and Somali forces for providing a secure environment throughout the electoral process. The message read, "On behalf of the UN, I express my deep appreciation to the international partners, including the African Union, European Union, IGAD, the League of Arab States and donor countries for their support to the electoral process and the wider recovery efforts in Somalia...Their combined support illustrates the international community's hope to see the people and Government of Somalia united in building their country."

The African Union Commission's Special Envoy and head of AMISOM, Ambassador Francisco Madeira, said the AU would continue its efforts in pacifying the country alongside Somali security forces. He praised the forces for their work in safeguarding the electoral process which went on peacefully without any major incidents. Ambassador Madeira added, "The African Union is with you, Mr President and will remain by your side as you confront the challenges afflicting your people."

...and the Mogadishu Declaration on Regional Cooperation on the Drought

Following the inauguration of the new Somali President, a joint Declaration was issued in Mogadishu on Wednesday (February 22) by President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh of Djibouti, Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn of Ethiopia, President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, and President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed of Somalia.

It acknowledged the "significant stress as a result of the current drought" and the effect of multiple seasons of failed rains and global weather patterns; and the immediate humanitarian crisis facing the region today. It noted this might result in a renewed famine over the coming months and could also have security and political implications as people move borders in the hope of increasing their chances of survival. This is taking a particularly heavy toll on children and women, making people vulnerable to exploitation, human rights abuses and to criminal and terrorist networks. Drought-related disease outbreaks and inter-communal conflict are already on the rise.

The Declaration noted that each government was mobilizing to respond but the "dire situation calls for international collaboration and regional partnership between governments, civil society, aid organizations, business and international donors." The four leaders declared "We commit ourselves to regional cooperation to facilitate a more comprehensive response and strong partnership." It committed them to strengthening cross-border collaboration and to efforts to establish security and stability in Somalia "to ensure an effective response to the drought and to enable further progress in peace building and state building in Somalia." It further added a commitment to protection and assistance to those compelled to leave their areas of origin. It said they would be consulting on a regular basis to review progress and agree on any necessary collective action. Their foreign ministers and drought response teams have been instructed to work together. In the longer term, the Declaration commits the four countries to work together bilaterally and through existing regional bodies such as IGAD, the African Union and the United Nations to address the underlying structural issues that affect their economies, environments and communities, including cross-border rangeland and water resource management.

This said, they had come together as heads of government of four countries in a region facing significant stress as a result of the current drought. It noted that multiple seasons of failed rains and global weather patterns had, yet again, negatively affected the resilience mechanisms of millions of the people of the region. This was evident in the immediate humanitarian crisis facing the region today and would also show up in longer term socio-economic vulnerability in communities that were today selling all their assets and uprooting their families for survival.

They noted the situation, which might worsen in Somalia and result in a renewed famine, could also have security and political implications in the region and beyond, as coping mechanisms were eroded and tensions over dwindling resources risked sparking conflict. Scores of people were moving both within countries and across borders in the hope of increasing their chances of survival. This upheaval was taking a particularly heavy toll on children and women, and made people vulnerable to exploitation, human rights abuses and to criminal and terrorist networks. Drought-related disease outbreaks and inter-communal conflict were already on the rise.

The Declaration said each of the four governments were mobilizing to respond, but "the dire situation" called for international collaboration and regional partnership between governments, civil society, aid organizations, business and international donors.

The Declaration added that the four countries would be consulting on a regular basis to review progress on these issues, and to agree upon any necessary collective action that will help their countries and region respond. They had also instructed their respective foreign ministers and drought response teams to work together and keep us briefed. The Declaration concluded by adding that "in the longer term, we commit to working together bilaterally and through existing regional bodies such as IGAD, the African Union as well as the United Nations to address the underlying structural issues that commonly affect our economies, environments and communities, including cross-border rangeland and water resource management."

UNOCHA issues "A Call for Action" for the Horn of Africa

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) put out a report - "Horn of Africa: A Call for Action" - on Friday (February 17), detailing the current humanitarian needs for Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia. It notes that there are 12.8 million severely food insecure people in the region, 2.3 million refugees, 2.1 million internally displaced people, and the requirements for humanitarian assistance total \$1.9 billion.

In a situation overview, OCHA points out the 2016 *Deyr* or short rains season (October to December) brought severely low levels of rainfall to the region. This was particularly acute across Somalia, southern and south-eastern Ethiopia, northern and coastal Kenya and, to a lesser extent, south-western Ethiopia and central and south-western Uganda and south-eastern South Sudan. It says analysis of the cumulative regional rainfall from August to December shows severe deficits. Areas such as central and southern Somalia have registered only a third of their usual seasonal levels. This is the third consecutive year of drought in the region and multiple years of diminished food production has exhausted people's capacity to cope with another shock and there is a low rainfall forecast for March to May, the main rainy season for pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities in the current drought belt. This makes the situation worse than in 2010-11. The drought has had a major impact on water resources, including river flow levels and the availability of water for human and livestock consumption. In Somalia, the southern part of the Shabelle River has run dry, the Dawa River is drying faster than normal and the Juba River has reached very low levels.

There have been widespread crop failures affecting farming and agro-pastoral communities in most of Somalia, south-western Ethiopia and north-eastern Kenya. Areas dependent on the *Deyr* (*Hagaya*) short rains are facing significant food shortages and are likely to remain dependent on markets until the next harvest in February 2018. Although global wheat and maize prices continued to fall during the last quarter of 2016, the FAO food price index for East Africa more than doubled in 2016. This trend has accelerated into 2017, with increases of 30 to 40% for maize and sorghum in some areas of Somalia and a 75% rise in the price of maize in Uganda. Livestock are becoming increasingly weak and dying at alarming rates, with catastrophic consequences for pastoral communities. Livestock losses have a serious impact on livelihoods; and even if half of a herd survives, it takes a minimum of two to four years for pastoralist and agro-pastoralist households to recover. Terms of trade are declining sharply for pastoralists, as livestock prices are collapsing contributing to rising food insecurity and malnutrition. Household production of milk and meat is low and the price of milk and other dairy products has rocketed.

As a result, 12.8 million people in Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya and Somalia are severely food insecure and are in need of humanitarian assistance. Following the short-rain assessment in January, the number of food insecure people in Kenya has doubled to 2.7 million, from 1.3 million in August 2016. Some 5.6 million people in Ethiopia require food assistance this year. Nearly 3 million Somalis are expected to face Crisis and Emergency levels by June, more than double the previous six months. Severe drought, rising prices, continued insecurity, humanitarian access limitations, and depressed rain forecasts suggest famine is possible in Somalia in 2017.

Approximately 600,000 children under 5 in Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia will be in need of treatment for severe acute malnutrition in 2017 and this number is expected to rise rapidly. The drought and the associated reduced access to water and sanitation has the potential to further exacerbate ongoing disease outbreaks and create new ones. About 15 million people will not have access to safe drinking water in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia in 2017. Drought, economic shocks and conflict in the region have disrupted the education of approximately 6 million children in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. In Somalia, more than 110,000 school-aged children enrolled in schools in drought-affected areas are at risk of being forced out of education. In Ethiopia, the report says, 578 schools have temporarily closed due to the effects of the drought, affecting nearly 228,000 students. In Kenya, 175,000 pre-primary and primary school children in ten counties are out of school due to drought. The drought has also triggered movements of families in search of grazing land, water and work. In the first three weeks of 2017 alone, more than 33,000 people were displaced due to drought in southern and central Somalia alone, including 3,000 who crossed the border into Ethiopia. In Borama, Somaliland, approximately 40,000 individuals were newly displaced in January. In sum, the repeated climatic shock cycles, coupled with insufficient recovery periods, have limited household and community coping mechanisms.

OCHA says the regional implications of the drought include possible increases in cross-border movement of drought-affected people along with the possibility of inter-communal conflict due to dwindling resources. It notes that conflict in the region continues to displace vulnerable people, many of whom are driven to seek seeking refuge in drought-affected countries, including Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda. Most of the refugees end up in the most marginalized and drought-affected areas of the region, causing increasing pressure on limited resources. Equally, those affected by drought and their livestock are vulnerable to disease outbreaks that can cross borders. The drought is happening against a backdrop of multiple crises in the region, putting pressure on the humanitarian community's ability to respond, and food insecurity more widely across eastern and southern Africa region may lead to a reduction of available regional food stocks to respond to the drought.

OCHA's report notes that although climatically the current drought's impact is more intense and widespread than in 2010-2011, there are significant differences, including good practices and opportunities that have evolved since then. Governments are better prepared and there has been better analysis and early warning, so early action. International and Local NGOs reacted to early warnings, adapting their long-term resilience programming as well as mobilizing additional resources to respond to the initial impact of the drought. For example, UNICEF, WFP and FAO developed a **Joint Resilience Strategy** for Somalia to help vulnerable communities better withstand shocks; and FAO has developed a **Predictive Livestock Early Warning System** for Kenya to estimate and depict current pasture availability, predicting edible vegetation cover up to six months into the future. The Government of Kenya declared a national drought emergency for the current drought and has committed US\$99 million for the current drought response. In March 2016, it launched the Kenya National Agricultural Insurance Program with the assistance of the World Bank; pay-outs to farmers totaling up to \$2 million are expected in the next weeks.

OCHA's summary of the current situation in Ethiopia is: 5.6 million people in Ethiopia require emergency food assistance in 2017; 2.7 million children and pregnant and lactating mothers require supplementary feeding; in all, 9.2 million people need support to access safe drinking water, 1.9 million households need livestock support, and 300,000 children up to 5 years old will be targeted for the treatment for severe acute malnutrition in 2017.

The report looks at the responses in Ethiopia, pointing out that the bulk of humanitarian delivery is done with and through Government service providers, supported by international humanitarian actors where needed. **The Government was, it says, by far the largest humanitarian contributor, providing US\$735 million to the El Niño response in 2015 - 2016**, and allocating over US\$ 47 million as a first installment to the 2017 Humanitarian Requirements Document. The Productive Safety Net Program in Ethiopia reduced the number of people needing humanitarian assistance by 8 million by providing cash or food transfers. The World Bank provided US\$100 million as additional financing for the Productive Safety Net 4 Project for extended safety-net support to drought-affected households. The R4 Rural Resilience Initiative program is giving risk management support, including weather-indexed insurance, to small-scale and subsistence farmers; some farmers in Tigray Regional State have already received a drought related pay-out.

It emphasizes that for the first half of 2017, the Government and humanitarian partners are prioritizing areas affected by the new drought in southern and southeastern Ethiopia. Food, nutrition, water, sanitation, livestock de-stocking/feeding, health, child protection and education are amongst the most urgent needs. Humanitarian partners are addressing mobile pastoralist communities and providing complete nutritional care and health services, including reproductive health; a flexible mobile service is being used to enable those

displaced by drought to access services. Support is also being provided so children can continue education. Government and partners are ensuring access to safe drinking water alongside activities to reduce the spread of disease. The Government, with support of development partners, will continue providing cash and in-kind transfers to 7.9 million beneficiaries of the Productive Safety Net Program, including approximately 2.2 million in Somali and Afar regions. This explicitly targets poor and food-insecure households. To support pastoralists minimize livestock losses, the response includes the full range of livestock relief interventions outlined in the Ministry of Agriculture's **National Guidelines for Livestock Relief Interventions in Pastoralist Areas of Ethiopia**. Drought conditions are expected to peak during the dry December to March *jilaal* season and affect milk production and nutrition status. The response then will be complemented by supplementary food based on regular screening to help the most vulnerable. The Government and partners will prepare for a scaled-up response should the 2017 spring *belg* rains be delayed and erratic, as the National Meteorological Agency recently forecast.

The urgency has been underlined this week by the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien's warning that "Time lost means lives lost". Mr O'Brien released \$18.5 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund to enable critical aid for more than 785,000 people in Ethiopia's Somali region on Tuesday (February 21). He said this would help provide access to water and health, nutritional and agricultural services as well as assist pastoral communities, thousands of whom have been forced to move in search of water and pasture. Mr O'Brien stressed this needed to be "matched and surpassed urgently. Millions of people's lives, livelihoods and wellbeing depend on continued donor support."

Ethiopia-Sudan Border Development Commission meeting in Mekelle

The 18th session of the Commission on Development of the Joint Ethiopia-Sudan Border was held last week (February 16-17), in Mekelle, capital of Ethiopia's Tigray Regional State. The Ethiopian delegation was led by Ato Abay Woldu, President of the Tigray Regional State; the Sudanese delegation by Mr Mirghan Salih Seed Ahmed, Governor of Sudan's Gedarif State. The meeting also brought together a range of stakeholders from the governments of Ethiopia and Sudan to discuss a range of issues pertaining to farming in the border areas and trade exchanges as well as smuggling and other illegal activities.

In a keynote address, the head of the Ethiopian delegation, Abay Woldu, noted that the meeting was unique for two reasons. In the first place, the meeting was being held while Ethiopia was undertaking process of "deep reform" at both federal and regional levels to formulate a response to popular and ongoing criticisms of governance. Secondly, the meeting was taking place on the eve of celebrating the **42nd anniversary** of the setting up of the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front. Ato Abay commended the people of the Sudan for their support during the TPLF's struggle and underlined that the two countries had always maintained strong cooperation in different areas on the basis of mutual trust and respect. He welcomed the agreements that had been made at previous meetings of the Commission and the pace of implementation in areas related to the efforts to prevent activities of anti-peace elements and to developing social services provision, especially in the health sector.

Nevertheless, he said, much remains to be done in other sectors of cooperation, and this "requires our concerted efforts in areas such as human trafficking, illegal trade, and proliferation of small arms and responsible utilization and protection of natural resources". Ato Abay underlined that the 18th session of the Joint Ethio-Sudan Border Commission should critically examine some of the issues that had delayed implementation of agreements that were in the pipeline. He encouraged participants to look for joint solutions to all problems of mutual concern in an amicable and brotherly manner. He stressed that it was up to the delegates to respond to any questions over the status quo in implementation of the agreed minutes of the discussions.

The Sudanese delegation, led by Mr Mirghan Salih Seed Ahmed, Governor of Gedarif State, expressed its gratitude to the organizers for the warm welcome. Mr Mirghan Salih Seed Ahmed said that both the Sudanese and Ethiopian people have lived together and collaborated in various states of affairs. He gave due regards to the efforts of the current governments of both countries. The Governor underscored the significant need for both countries to effectively utilize their resources and to do that, he underlined, needed peace and security. So, he urged, it was necessary for the defense and police forces of both countries to work together. Mr Mirghan called on the meeting to be successful and productive.

Following the opening sessions, the meeting established three committees to deal with political and security issues, with economic, trade, customs and related issues, and for social, cultural, tourism, sport and youth

health and agriculture issues. On political and security issues, delegates from both sides presented reports regarding the implementation of the mutual understanding agreed at the 16th Joint Border Development Commission meeting in Assosa, in December 2014. Both made it clear they appreciated the excellent spirit of cooperation and the high level of understanding visible in both Federal and State/Regional governments in working to resolve any issues of common concerns. In a similar vein, both sides reported successive joint consultations at each administrative level. These had resolved various important issues by mutual understanding. The meeting appreciated the strong cooperation between various local government administrative units on both sides and welcomed their growing relationship. The two sides also expressed their commitment to implement already signed agreed minutes at different State and Zonal levels. On economic, trade and customs issues, the two sides reported on their respective efforts to deal with illegal trade. They agreed to strengthen their efforts to share information on this. On social, cultural, tourism, sport and youth health and agriculture issues they identified common areas for collaboration.

Overall, the Commission meeting allowed both sides to deliberate on various areas of mutual concern, paving the way for continued and mutually beneficial cooperation. Ethiopia and Sudan have been engaged in strengthening their diplomatic and people-to-people relations and their collaboration on issues of mutual interest. One example of this is, of course, their cooperation in the utilization of the Nile River. **Ethiopia and Sudan believe that Nile is a source for cooperation and mutual benefits among neighboring countries.** Both sides are committed to enhancing the relationship between peoples residing in the border areas, working to integrate them with infrastructural facilities, including road and hydropower links. Nobody doubts it is in the best interests of the two countries to work towards the effective implementation of the bilateral cooperation agreements for joint border development.

Strengthening their bilateral cooperation will help realize economic integration and peaceful coexistence in the region. Ethiopia is an anchor of peace and stability in the Horn of Africa and, in addition to involvement in regional peace and stability, it has been working hard to encourage regional economic integration. The relationship with Sudan is based on mutual trust and a win-win approach; their economic and political relations can, indeed, serve as a model for other countries in the region.

Preparations start for GERD's sixth anniversary

Three weeks ago, Prime Minister Hailemariam and President el-Sisi of Egypt met on the margins of the 28th AU Summit to discuss bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual concern. They stressed the importance of widening and deepening the scope of cooperation in various areas including political, security and economic fields. In a joint statement issued after their meeting, they announced that they were closely following the tripartite technical talks on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), and they reaffirmed their commitment to the prevailing cooperative spirit. They also underlined the importance of encouraging closer communication and continuous consultation at the leadership and various institutional levels on all aspects of mutual concern. They highlighted the need to boost people-to-people relations in order to enhance mutual public confidence and emphasized the important role to be played by the media in this. Prime Minister Hailemariam and President el-Sisi recognized the paramount importance of enhancing bilateral relations to capitalize on the achievements accomplished so far at leadership and institutional levels and to enhance mutual confidence.

This week, preparations to celebrate the 6th anniversary of the commencement of the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) began [with] announcements of various programs and festivals by the Office of the National Council for the Coordination of the Public Participation on the Construction of the Dam. These will include concerts, sport competitions, and fund-raising and bond sale events. They underline the public's support for the construction of the dam, through labor, knowledge, and professional and financial support. Currently, financial contributions from the public have raised over nine billion birr, with 1.8 billion birr coming from various sources this budget year, according to the National Council.

The construction of the GERD is on schedule and it continues to be constructed with care, accountability and transparency in all aspects, not least the provision of all relevant and timely information to stakeholders and neighboring countries. The Dam is the result of enhanced regional cooperation. From the outset it was made clear that in addition to embodying the two cardinal principles of international water law, the principles of **reasonable and equitable utilization and of no significant harm**, the Cooperative Framework Agreement provided for an alternative to the former unfair colonial treaties and agreements concerning the Nile River. The Nile Basin Initiative and the Cooperative Framework Agreement between them have encouraged the spirit of cooperation among the Nile Basin states, granting each and every country the right to fair shares of the water.

The construction of the GERD is not luxury but a necessity for Ethiopia. The country is in dire need of power to cope with the expanding energy demands of development and to sustain its fast-growing economy. Rapid urbanization, a large and growing population and expanding industrialization, underline the need for energy development for the development of the second phase of the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II) 2015/6-2019/20. Like the first GTP, this aims to continue improvements in physical infrastructure through public investment projects and to transform the country into a manufacturing hub. Fully aware that conventional industrial development would, among other adverse effects, result in a sharp increase in GHG emission and unsustainable use of natural resources, Ethiopia aims to become a middle-income status by 2025 with a climate-resilient green economic strategy. Hydropower is one central aspect of such a strategy though Ethiopia is also paying significant attention to other sustainable power resources, including geothermal, solar and wind power. To support economic development at the annual growth rate of more than 10% to which the government aspires, the power supplies need to increase by more than 14% per year. Ethiopia is one of the countries that managed to achieve most of the Millennium Development Goals, including halving the number of people below the poverty, reducing hunger and undernourishment and greatly expanding access to education and health. The attainment of the Millennium Development Goals was closely linked to access to energy; and there is no doubt that the Sustainable Development Goals will only be achievable if there is sufficient access to energy. The construction of GERD is an essential and necessary element in this. Indeed, it has become a very real and prominent symbol of national pride, a flagship project for the effort to alleviate poverty and lead to the renaissance of the country.

Ethiopia has taken the first steps for the implementation of the United Nation's Convention Framework on Climate Change accord, the Paris Agreement, with the House of People's Representatives voted unanimously for ratification of the draft bill. The construction of GERD falls fully into Ethiopia's green-economic development policy. **Its intended 6000MW output will actually replace more than 10,000 tonnes of greenhouse from gas or coal power plants.** Equally, the Government, underlining its commitment to environmental protection and conservation activities, has mobilized people at the local level to get involved in environmental conservation activities at a cost of 42 billion birr. On the wider level, GERD would also be beneficial to the regional and riparian countries. It will encourage the 2063 African Union agenda of "Regional Integration" as Ethiopia shares its energy outputs with other Nile Basin countries. It is already providing the first power to Kenya, Sudan and Djibouti and building [more] transmission lines; this in turn is encouraging people-to-people relations as well as expanding trade. This provision of power will expand significantly once GERD starts delivering its output.

Indeed, from the outset, Ethiopia demonstrated the benefits of GERD would accrue to downstream countries and the Northeastern African region as well as to its own citizens. The construction of GERD is fully based on international standards and extensive environmental impact assessments, as well as the principles of equitable and reasonable use and of no significant harm. Among its efforts to demonstrate this, Ethiopia proposed the setting up of the International Panel of Experts to review the project and help resolve the concerns of Sudan and Egypt as well as ensure transparency. The Panel concluded GERD was being constructed to international standards and would benefit for all three countries. Equally, Ethiopia made it quite clear from the very beginning it would accept all the Panel's recommendations and it has already implemented those applicable to it.