

A Week in the Horn

24th June 2016

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News in Brief

Africa and the African Union

A two-day conference themed: **Global Education for Peace in Africa** celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Africa Regional Conference and the Golden Jubilee of the establishment of the world-renowned University of Bradford, United Kingdom, opened on Friday (June 24).

Opening the conference, Deputy Premier Demeke Mekonnen said that the issue of peace and education are pressing issues for the overall development of Africa and Ethiopia is working towards peace building at regional and international levels beyond the national priorities and endeavors in the area.

Erastus Mwencha, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), led an AU delegation to attend the Third Forum on China-Africa Media Cooperation on 21 - 22 June 2016, in Beijing, People's Republic of China.

An AUC delegation led by the Deputy Chairperson Erastus Mwencha met with Huawei's Senior Vice-President Dr Gong Yuanxing in Beijing on (June 22) to exchange views on methodologies that would further strengthen Africa's ICT development and industrialization strategy whilst concretizing Huawei's investment within the Continent.

The Presiding Officer of the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) of the African Union (AU), Dr Joseph Chilengi, on June 24 held a series of consultations with the Mandela-Washington fellows as part of the Africa Regional Conference of the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), which were held in West, South and East Africa.

Ethiopia

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn has been on a three-day visit to the Republic of Kenya this week (June 22-24) where he met Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta and discussed ways of deepening the bilateral ties and expanding the level of cooperation between the two countries. (See article)

Ethiopia and Kenya signed an agreement to start the construction of the Ethio-Kenya oil pipeline on Thursday (June 23). The signing of the agreements was witnessed by Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn and President Uhuru Kenyatta, wherein both leaders reiterated the importance of implementing the signed agreements.

The **Ethio-Kenya Business Forum** opened in Nairobi this week (June 23). Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn and Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta called on business community of both countries to take advantage of a Special Status Agreement (SSA) to help increase bilateral trade.

Prime Minister Hailemariam, on June 22, met with a delegation from Chinese textile and light manufacturing associations. The Premier briefed the delegation on investment opportunities available in Ethiopia. He said his country is keen to do all it can to expand the bilateral investment ties. Head of the delegation, Ms Helen Hai, noted that Ethiopia's fast economic growth and government's commitment has already begun to encourage investors.

The 2016 United Nations Security Council election will be held on Tuesday next week (June 28), at United Nations Headquarters in New York City. Ethiopia, as a member of the Africa Group, is currently the African candidate for a Non-Permanent membership seat of the Security Council for 2017–18.

The 35th Ethio-Kenya Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) Meeting was held at Radisson Blue Hotel in Nairobi, Kenya this week (June 21). The JMC meeting was organized with the fundamental aspiration of reviewing progress on ongoing LAPSSET projects and other energy related projects and agreements, which seeks stronger cooperation on a range of matters, including border management and reducing human trafficking. (See article)

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Tedros Adhanom, met with South Sudan's Vice President, Mr James Wani Igga on Monday (June 20). Mr Wani briefed Dr Tedros on South Sudan's current peace implementation process and its progress. Dr Tedros welcomed the positive progress in the country, and noted the importance of revitalizing South Sudan's economy. The Minister also reaffirmed the continued engagement of the Government of Ethiopia and IGAD in realizing the full operationalization and implementation of South Sudan's peace deal.

Foreign Minister Dr Tedros received Managing Director of Tuia International Consulting, Mr Timothy Gibson on Tuesday (June 21). Mr Gibson mentioned how the opening of Ethiopia's economy for potential investors had encouraged the company to pick the country as a prospective field of investment, particularly in dairy industries. The Foreign Minister gave his assurance that the government would provide its support to potential investors who would invest their financial and technological assets, not only in the livestock sector, but also in other areas.

Ethiopia and the African Road Maintenance Fund Association (ARMFA) have signed (June 22) an agreement on the establishment of ARMFA's regional office in Addis Ababa. The agreement was signed by Ambassador Taye Atske-Selassie, State Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia and Rashid Mohammed, Representative of the African Road Maintenance Fund Association.

Ethiopian Ambassador to Sudan, Abadi Zemo, and Foreign Minister of Sudan, Prof Ibrahim Ghandour, on June 22, discussed the progress of relations between the two countries and means of consolidating them further, particularly in the economic and trade fields.

Unilever, the London based company and the world's second-biggest consumer-products maker, opened its first factory in Ethiopia on Thursday June 23. The factory was built in Dukem town, near the capital Addis Ababa. Unilever is one of the world's leading manufacturers of many consumer products including; foodstuffs, personal care and home products.

The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy of South Korea announced that a team of personnel from the ministry, the Korea Electric Power Corporation, the Korea Electric Power Research Institute, the Korea Energy Management Corporation and the Korea New Renewable Energy Center, is scheduled to be in Ethiopia from (June 19 to 25) as part of Korea's plan to build an energy-independent village in Ethiopia.

World Refugee Day this year was celebrated in Ethiopia at the National Cultural Center in Addis Ababa on June 17 and, on June 20, at the Tsore Refugee Camp in Benishangul Gumuz Regional State as well. (See article)

Eritrea

Thousands of Eritrean refugees staged a demonstration in Addis Ababa this week (June 23) in support of the recent report of the UN Commission of Inquiry, which states unequivocally that crimes against humanity have been committed in Eritrea over the past 25 years. "The findings of the commission have established what we, the victims, had already known and felt for years," said Tewodros Aregay, vice president of Eritrean Refugees in Ethiopia. Demonstrators have urged the African Union to take action in light of the report of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea.

Mr Smith, Chairman of the Commission of Inquiry into human rights in Eritrea, formally presented the second report of the Commission on Tuesday this week (June 21) to the UN Human Rights Council. The Council held its interactive dialogue on Eritrea that afternoon.

The Eritrean Government organized an anti-Commission demonstration on Tuesday (June 21); Eritrean supporters of the Commission and critics of the Government held their demonstration on Thursday (June 23).

Kenya

U.S. President Barack Obama spoke by telephone on Thursday (June 23) with Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta on the need for strong international support for refugees living in Kenya, the White House said. The statement added that Obama and Kenyatta "agreed that the United States and Kenya would work closely together on this issue, to better ensure that the needs of refugees and host communities are met."

Kenya will begin closing the Dadaab refugee camp on July 1, an Interior Ministry official said on Thursday (June 23). Amos Gathecha, the ministry's security and operations secretary at a meeting of stakeholders in Kenya's tourism industry said, "We are aware of the international outcry regarding the closure; we are not going back on closing Daadab."

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World Refugee Day was also celebrated in Kenya on Monday (June 20) as it has been every year since 2000. (See article)

Somalia

In a report for World Refugee Day on Monday (June 20), the United Nations High Commission for refugees (UNHCR) said conflict in countries like South Sudan and Somalia had raised the total number of refugees and internally displaced persons in sub-Saharan Africa to 18.4 million in 2015. (See article)

Federal government and regional leaders arrived in Baidoa on Wednesday (June 22) to continue National Leaders' Forum talks on the format of the elections. The meeting is expected to finalize the modalities for the August election for members of parliament but other issues on the agenda include national security, the status of the capital and cooperation between regional state leaders.

A delegation led by IGAD's envoy to Somalia, Ambassador Mohamed Abdi Affey, arrived in Beled Weyne this week to facilitate the inter-state formation of Hiiraan and Middle Shabelle. The delegation, which included senior officials from the Ethiopian foreign ministry, met with Ugas Hassan and clan elders to discuss state formation.

The IGAD Political Affairs Program, in collaboration with IGAD's Somalia Facilitation Office, has organized the visit of 16 Somali officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Puntland, Jubaland, South West and Galmudug regions to Ethiopia this week to look at Federalism. The group is visiting the Ministry of Federal

and Pastoralist Affairs, the House of Federation, the House of People's Representatives, Oromia Regional State, the Forum of Federations Office and Ethiopia's Somali Regional State.

South Sudan

The United Nations on Wednesday (June 22) said that it would send peacekeepers home over a "lack of responsiveness" during a bloody attack on a UN-run camp in South Sudan in February.

In a report for World Refugee Day on Monday (June 20), the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) said conflict in countries like South Sudan and Somalia had raised the total number of refugees and internally displaced persons in sub-Saharan Africa to 18.4 million in 2015. (See article)

South Sudan's deputy Central Bank governor, John Dor Majok, on Thursday (June 23) said the country's foreign currency reserve is likely to last for only a month. He reportedly said, "The reserves we have may cover only imports of only five weeks." [sic]

Sudan

The National Dialogue Coordination Committee (7+7) on Thursday (June 23) welcomed the ongoing regional and international efforts to persuade opposition forces and armed movements to sign an African Union brokered roadmap for peace in Sudan.

The Ministry of Guidance and Endowments on Monday (June 20) said it had signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to coordinate efforts to fight against extremism and terrorism.

Prime Minister Hailemariam makes a three-day visit to Kenya

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn has been on a three-day visit to the Republic of Kenya this week (June 22-24) where he met Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta and discussed ways of deepening the bilateral ties and expanding the level of cooperation between the two countries. An Ethio-Kenya Business Forum was also held in Nairobi (June 23). Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn and Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta called on the business communities of both countries to take advantage of a Special Status Agreement (SSA) to help increase bilateral trade. Both leaders noted the trade volume between the two countries was still low and that various initiatives undertaken by the governments should be a catalyst to facilitate trade. Speaking at the forum, Prime Minister Hailemariam said the two countries were seeking to accelerate the implementation of the SSA, which aims to enhance trade and investment between the two countries. "We do admit the actioning of the Special Status Agreement has been slow, but we are ready to remedy this to ease the cost of doing business," he said.

Once the SSA is fully implemented, with the elimination of both tariffs and non-tariff barriers, market access between the two countries will be improved, which will therefore benefit the flow of goods and services. He also said the trade between the two countries will be boosted by the completion of the Lamu Port-Southern Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor project, which runs through the two countries and aims to transform infrastructure across its path. The prime Minister called on the businessmen of the two countries to take advantage of the new policies being implemented by the two governments to build strong business ties.

President Uhuru Kenyatta on his part said, "We will actively engage with you (the business community) because the private sector drives the economy of any nation." He said trade between Kenya and Ethiopia grew from 46 million U.S. dollars in 2008 to 77 million dollars in 2015. "Our mutual efforts to facilitate trade and improve the ease of doing business in our respective countries will see these numbers keep rising over the long-term," he added.

Kenya and Ethiopia are among Africa's leading countries in terms of economic growth rates. While Kenya's economy is currently growing at about 5.6 percent, Ethiopia's economy grew by 11 percent in 2015. Kenya exports to Ethiopia, in part, insecticides, fungicides, textile materials, aluminium, medicines and household equipment made of base metals, among other manufactured products. Ethiopia exports to Kenya, in part,

vegetables, spices, oil seeds, lime, cement and fabricated construction materials, cereals and crude [raw?] vegetable oils.

Over the week, Ethiopia and Kenya signed an agreement to start the construction of the Ethio-Kenya oil pipeline. The agreement was signed by Mr Tolossa Shagi, the Ethiopian Minister of Mines, Petroleum and Natural Gas and his Kenyan counterpart on Thursday (June 23). The two sides also signed agreements on various areas of cooperation. And the signing of the agreements was witnessed by Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn and President Uhuru Kenyatta. Both leaders reiterated the importance of implementing the signed agreements.

...and the 35th Ethio-Kenya Joint Ministerial Commission meeting

The 35th Ethio-Kenya Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) meeting opened on Monday (June 20) at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Nairobi, Kenya. The meeting was co-chaired by Dr Tedros Adhanom, Foreign Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Dr Amina Mohammed, Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kenya.

In his opening statement, Dr Tedros Adhanom noted that Ethiopia and Kenya had enjoyed long-lasting, excellent and harmonious relations for centuries, despite the turbulence of the region. Equally, the peoples of Ethiopia and Kenya had long-standing cultural, social and people-to-people relations that demonstrated their cordial relationship and underlined their cordial state-to-state relations. Indeed, he said, the joint efforts of the two countries in developing infrastructure connections not only proved their common desire to lay the foundation for regional economic integration; it also indicated their common vision to strengthen relations at both bilateral and multilateral levels. Dr Tedros noted the agreements made over the Standard Gauge Railway and the multi-purpose LAPSSET project, coupled with the construction of trans-boundary highways, power transmission lines and the One Stop Border post at Moyale. All these were clear examples of the encouraging gains being made in the push for economic integration.

Dr Tedros also emphasized that bilateral relations were moving steadily forward. He stressed that this could be seen in President Uhuru Kenyatta's recent official visit to Ethiopia, accompanied by members of the Kenyan business community, and the exchange of business delegations to each other's capitals. In addition, there had been the December 2015 initiative by President Kenyatta and Prime Minister Hailemariam for joint border development in the adjacent areas of Kenya's Marsabit County and the Borena and Dawa Zones of Ethiopia.

Turning to matters of peace and security, Foreign Minister Tedros stressed that the threat from terrorism, particularly from al-Shabaab, remained a serious challenge to the region at large and particularly to the reconstruction and nation building of Somalia. He underlined the importance of the combined efforts of Kenya and Ethiopia to combat terrorism and prevent radicalization of youth. He called on both countries to redouble their efforts to strengthen their already existing close military and security cooperation and to intensify economic cooperation at all levels.

Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Amina Mohammed underlined that Ethiopia and Kenya's friendly ties dated back to the early days of independence. She said the numerous Memoranda of Understanding and the various Agreements that had been signed between the two countries over the years exemplified these ties. At the same time, however, the Cabinet Secretary underlined the limitation in implementation of these MoUs and agreements including the Special Status Agreement signed between the two countries.

The Special Status Agreement was signed in 2012 with the aim of offering a framework for engagement with bilateral investors to develop mutually strategic areas as well as enhance economic and commercial relations. The two leaders agreed that trade should particularly focus on textiles, food complexes, agriculture, raw materials and value addition. They also agreed that external investment would require infrastructural development and appropriate incentive packages for investors with particular emphasis on the hospitality sector to enhance tourism.

Two years later, Prime Minister Hailemariam and President Kenyatta called for the enforcement of the Special Status Agreement. President Kenyatta, on a visit to Ethiopia, noted that the agreement provided a framework for co-operation between the two nations "in key sectors of the economy – in trade, in

investment, in infrastructure and in food security," to improve the living standards of their citizens. He said he had directed his Cabinet Secretaries to nominate experts to oversee the implementation of the agreement. Prime Minister Hailemariam underlined Ethiopia's willingness to enforce the agreement.

Speaking on political issues, foreign affairs and the security cluster, Ambassador Mohammed praised the excellent relations of the two countries in defense, foreign affairs and security working through established mechanisms such as the Defense Pact and the Joint Border and Administrators' Committees.

In the previous few days, senior officials of both countries exhaustively discussed all aspects of the relationship and they identified areas for further cooperation. The two ministers congratulated their senior officials on the extensive, detailed and vibrant discussions both at the Joint Technical Committee level for the Special Status Agreement and at the Technical Committee level for the Joint Ministerial Commission. The discussion at the Technical Committee level for the Ministerial Commission was conducted in a cordial and brotherly spirit with the committee coming to mutually satisfactory outcomes. Indeed, the discussions made clear the similarity of the positions of both countries on most major regional and international matters as well as the convergence of their vision in terms of their bilateral relations. Dr Tedros and Ambassador Mohammed took the opportunity to reiterate the importance of implementing the signed agreements.

The meeting provided an example of Kenya and Ethiopia's complete readiness and open determination to further strengthen their already existing close relationship. This is certainly a real indication of the unique and special nature of their relationship, a relationship underlined yet again by the signing of four agreements. The 35th Joint Ministerial Commission meeting is the last meeting as the Joint Ministerial Commission has now been elevated to the bi-national High-level Commission which will be held every two years and coincide with an exchange of state visits.

Election of Non-Permanent Members of the UN Security Council

The 2016 United Nations Security Council election will be held on Tuesday next week (June 28), at [United Nations Headquarters](#) in [New York City](#), during the [70th session](#) of the [United Nations General Assembly](#). The election is for five non-permanent seats on the [UN Security Council](#) for a two-year mandate commencing on 1 January 2017. In accordance with the Security Council's rules of rotation, the ten non-permanent Security Council seats rotate among the [regional blocs](#) into which UN member states traditionally divide themselves for voting and representational purposes. The five available seats therefore include one for [Africa](#), one for the [Asia-Pacific Group](#), one for [Latin America](#) and the [Caribbean](#) and two for the [Western European and Others Group](#). The elected members will serve on the Security Council for 2017–18. What makes this year's election different is that the General Assembly in September 2014 adopted Resolution 68/307 to push the elections back to six months prior to the beginning of the newly elected Council members' terms. This election is the first time that the Security Council election will have been held in June.

Ethiopia, as member of the Africa Group, is currently the African candidate for a Non-Permanent membership seat of the Security Council for 2017–18. Ethiopia started its campaign after being given the unanimous endorsement of the African Heads of State and Government to be a representative for Africa at the last AU Summit. Following the African endorsement, on February 29, Ethiopia's Foreign Affairs Minister, Dr Tedros Adhanom, together with Mr Erastus Mwencha, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Ambassador Smail Chergui, AU Commissioner for Peace and Security, Haile Menkorios, UN Under-Secretary-General, and Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union, officially launched Ethiopia's campaign for a seat as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. Since then, Ethiopia has been engaged in making every effort to ensure its election as a member of the Security Council.

Ethiopia, of course, has always been a strong advocate of the values of collective security and multilateralism, and its firm commitment and significant contributions to the United Nations and its principal organ, the Security Council, is something that should be taken into consideration in this context. Ethiopia was one of the 51 pioneer countries that founded the United Nations in 1945. Indeed, it was not only a pioneer member, it was also an active participant and a major contributor to the drafting and subsequent adoption at the San Francisco Conference of the organization's Charter, a Charter anchored in the creation of a global collective security system. In fact, Ethiopia's deep-seated conviction of the importance of collective security goes back much further. Ethiopia was one of the only two African countries to have been a member of the League of Nations. Despite the fact that Ethiopia was unable to count on League support during its hour of need in the

1930s, the country has always retained the same firm convictions and solid commitment to multilateralism that it had then. These have never diminished.

Indeed, this commitment and the country's active participation in the United Nations has been consistent across successive Ethiopian governments, irrespective of contrasting ideologies and political structures during those seventy years. Although a founding member of the United Nations, Ethiopia has only twice served on the Security Council, in 1967–1968 and 1989–1990. At a time when Ethiopia's African brothers were emerging from the manacles of colonialism, Ethiopia was able to seize the opportunity of its membership of both the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity to promote the causes of the continent. During its Security Council membership in 1967-68, Ethiopia was at the forefront of the decolonization struggle, strongly advocating the self-determination and political autonomy, among others, of the peoples of Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa. Driven by its belief and commitment to the principles of collective security, Ethiopia also consistently voiced firm opposition against the many examples of ruthless aggression in Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere. Moreover the country has always played an active and critical role in representing Africa in different multilateral fora and promoting the continent's interests notably over climate change in recent years.

Ethiopia is also proud of the fact that it has always responded to UN calls for collective action to safeguard international peace and security. Since the inception of the United Nations, Ethiopia has deployed over 80,000 military and police personnel in more than ten peacekeeping missions worldwide. In the early 1950s and the 1960s, it was one of the first countries to contribute to the United Nations peacekeeping operations in Korea and in Congo. It saw those operations as successful testing grounds proving the continued relevance of the principle of collective security. More recently, throughout the 1990s and subsequently in the new millennium, Ethiopia has also provided forces for UN operations in Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Abyei, Darfur, and South Sudan. Currently, it is also deploying a substantial number of troops in the AU Mission in Somalia, AMISOM.

In recent years, threats to world peace and security have evolved in an unprecedented manner in the face of a larger number of simultaneous and complex security and humanitarian challenges. The spread of internal conflict and bloody civil wars in a number of countries have meant the number of refugees and internally displaced persons have risen to unforeseen levels, as the UNHCR underlined this week, on World Refugee Day. Then there are the growing threats posed by terrorism, which have threatened to undermine the maintenance of international peace and security as never before. Ethiopia strongly believes these global challenges to peace and security necessitate a new level of collective action and enhanced international cooperation. Ethiopia's role in the maintenance of peace and security is also the driving force for its peacekeeping and peacemaking efforts in the sub-region and, indeed, in Africa at large. Within the framework of IGAD and the AU, Ethiopia is playing a leading mediation role to resolve the problems of South Sudan and has been at the forefront of fighting against terrorism in Somalia and supporting Somalia's state-building process, as well as taking an active part in the creation of the East African Standby Force. It is also shouldering its regional responsibilities in hosting over 700,000 refugees from neighboring countries, the largest number in Africa.

Ethiopia's desire to be a member of the Security Council comes from its very strong and very real belief that its solid record of continued contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security puts the country in a well-placed position to shoulder the necessary responsibilities. Ethiopia has always responded to UN calls for collective action on international peace and security. It will continue to do so. It will also continue to offer the necessary commitment, strength and ability to provide real and valuable support to multilateralism and to Pan-Africanism. Given the opportunity to serve on the Security Council, it will contribute largely and effectively to the operations of the United Nations, and will continue to make meaningful contributions to the maintenance of international peace and security in line with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

UN Human Rights Council's interactive dialogue on Eritrea

It has been an active time for Eritrea and Eritreans in Geneva this week. Mr Smith, Chairman of the Commission of Inquiry into human rights in Eritrea, formally presented the second report of the Commission on Tuesday this week (June 21) to the UN Human Rights Council. The Council held its interactive dialogue on Eritrea that afternoon. The Eritrean Government organized an anti-Commission demonstration on the Tuesday; Eritrean supporters of the Commission and critics of the Government held their demonstration on Thursday.

Mr Smith told the Council that the Commission had concluded that Eritrean officials had committed "crimes against humanity, including widespread and systematic enslavement, imprisonment, enforced disappearance, torture, rape, murder and other inhumane acts with the aim of maintaining control over the population and perpetuating the leadership's rule." The Commission found that military and national service programs were "arbitrary and of indefinite duration, the use of arbitrary detention remained routine across the country, and former detainees described widespread torture." No steps had been taken to address any of the problems, which led the Commission to conclude that officials had committed the crime of enslavement. The Commission also found the use of arbitrary detention remained routine across Eritrea. The Government very rarely informed family members or judicial authorities about these detentions, and former detainees described widespread torture. Those acts were ongoing and constituted crimes against humanity. It also found the documented crimes were committed primarily, directly or indirectly, by State and ruling party officials, military commanders, and members of the national security office. The Commission identified alleged perpetrators and had compiled files on those individuals to assist future accountability mechanisms, though they remained classified for the moment. The Commission recommended that the Security Council refer the situation in Eritrea to the International Criminal Court.

Mr Smith recommended that the Security Council refer the situation in Eritrea to the International Criminal Court and impose travel bans and freeze the assets of individuals suspected of crimes against humanity. He called on the Human Rights Council to renew the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Eritrea, to keep the situation in Eritrea on its agenda, to invite the High Commissioner for Human Rights to report periodically on the situation there, and to support the establishment of a structure by the Office of the High Commissioner with a protection and promotion mandate, in particular to ensure accountability for crimes against humanity. He concluded: "So long as there is no constitution, so long as there is no parliament where you can debate national questions, so long as there is an abusive national service which is unending, so long as there is no free press, so long as there are no civil society organizations apart from government-appointed ones, so long as people are living in fear and are controlled by the State, there will be no full enjoyment of all human rights and no real progress for the Eritrean people."

Eritrea, as the concerned country, issued a blanket denial to all the allegations in the Commission's report. It said the Commission of Inquiry denied reality and unfairly accused Eritrea of "enslavement, torture, persecution, rape, murder, and other inhuman acts". The Commission's methodology, it said, was flawed and its findings compromised. It claimed Eritrea was actively working to implement the 92 recommendations it had received through the Universal Periodic Review process, and that it was actively participating in regional and international arrangements to comprehensively address irregular migration. It claimed the course of action advocated by the Commission could only lead to "an unmitigated disaster".

Among those taking part in the interactive dialogue were the European Union, Switzerland, Cuba, the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, Norway, China, France, Djibouti, the United States, Spain, Ghana, Botswana, Somalia, Kenya, Belgium, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Ireland. NGOs participating included Human Rights Watch, CIVICUS – World Alliance for Citizens' Participation, United Nations Watch, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Speakers expressed their deep concerns about the findings of "persistent, systematic and widespread gross violations of human rights, including enslavement, rape, murder and torture, which amounted to crimes against humanity." They were concerned by the lack of change in the national service policy or improvements in the patterns of repression overall. They called upon the Government to respect the human rights of its people, and to cooperate fully with the Human Rights Council mechanisms, and so prove that it had nothing to hide. Delegations stressed the need for accountability and justice for the victims of violations and said that, in the complete absence of a national mechanism to address the Commission's findings, it was crucial for the international community to ensure justice for victims of human rights violations and abuses.

The European Union regretted that Eritrea had not granted access to the Commission and took note of the finding that there were reasonable grounds that crimes against humanity had been committed in Eritrea since 1991. However, it claimed a "conditional policy of engagement" with Eritrea could contribute to the improvement of the human rights situation and called upon the African Union to get involved. The United Kingdom said Eritrea's cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and with the international community on human rights reforms should be intensified. The mechanism of the Special Rapporteur was an important tool for the international community. The United States said the thousands of citizens that were fleeing the country every day were evidence of the dire human rights situation; Eritrea

should honor its own Constitution, limit the duration of national service, reform the judiciary and protect human rights defenders.

Germany expressed disappointment that the Government of Eritrea had not cooperated with the Commission, which had shown reasonable grounds to believe human rights violations had been committed. Norway said that as a longstanding friend of Eritrea, it was concerned about the lack of accountability and said implementation of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review and other human rights mechanisms should continue. China also said the international community should provide Eritrea with assistance for technical capacity building, and all relevant human rights mechanisms were called on to engage with Eritrea with objectivity and neutrality. France said the Commission had confirmed that certain human rights violations, including enslavement, rape, murder and torture, amounted to crimes against humanity. It was deeply concerned about the conclusions of the report and fully supported the renewal of the mandate.

Djibouti called upon the authorities to return all prisoners, including those who were taken prisoner in 2008. Ghana called upon Eritrea to duly address the recommendations made by the Commission. Botswana said Eritrea should be assisted in complying with its obligations relating to human rights. Somalia expressed deep concern that Eritreans were subject to indefinite national service, arbitrary detention, and other crimes, leaving them no alternative but to flee their country. Kenya urged the Human Rights Council to support a process that engaged the Government of Eritrea. Ethiopia said that in light of the overwhelming evidence provided by the Commission, the Council would be failing the victims if the perpetrators were allowed to go unpunished.

In the concluding remarks, Eritrea claimed the Commission of Inquiry had provided no evidence or grounds for action. It admitted that Eritrea faced human rights' challenges but insisted there were no systematic and gross widespread violations of human rights in Eritrea. Mr Smith said the essential recommendation made in the report was that the Eritrean Government should take steps to address the extremely serious human rights situation in the country. This needed political will and concrete steps by the Government, specifically "introduction of the rule of law, with the adoption of a new Constitution and institutions that were able to hold government institutions and individuals to account."

The day before the interactive dialogue, Radio France International interviewed Eritrea's Foreign Minister, Osman Saleh. The Minister denied that Eritrea supported any armed Ethiopian opposition group, despite the repeated television appearances by leading members of such groups acknowledging such support. He claimed young Eritreans were leaving the country to look for work because of the embargo on arms, which, he said, amounted to indirect economic sanctions on Eritrea. He denied there were any detention centers in the country. Even more implausibly, he claimed prisoners, including the high-ranking government officials and veterans of Eritrea's liberation struggle (the G15) arrested on September 18 and the private press journalists detained a week later, were "all alive" and "in good hands".

Two members of the G15, who had been outside the country and so avoided arrest, Mesfin Hagos, formerly Chief of Staff and Defense Minister, and Adhanom Ghebremariam, former Attorney General and Ambassador to Sweden and Nigeria, immediately issued a statement welcoming this news but expressing their skepticism. They pointed out that political prisoners in Eritrea are held incommunicado, and family members have no right of visitation. It was impossible to confirm the well-being of prisoners or where they were held. They were, therefore, concerned this announcement might give false hope to family members, who have already heard from various sources that many of these prisoners had died. They called on the Government to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit the prisoners and confirm their state of health. None of these prisoners, of course, have ever been tried or convicted in any court and there have been a number of plausible reports that they have suffered from serious mistreatment and persistent solitary confinement, treatment which has led to a number of them dying. Another of those that Mr Saleh said was still alive was the Swedish journalist, Dawit Issak, jailed without trial in 2001 for what was claimed to be crimes against national security. Mr Saleh claimed that Dawit Issak would eventually be sentenced when the country's government "sees fit."

The day before the interactive dialogue, twenty international and Eritrean human rights organizations also wrote an open letter to the Permanent Representatives of Members and Observer States of the UN Human Rights Council. This expressed their "grave concern about the Eritrean Government's continued and egregious violations of human rights", and requested that delegations co-sponsor a resolution that renewed the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea for one year; supported

the establishment of a structure by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights with a protection and promotion mandate, to assist in ensuring accountability for human rights violations in Eritrea; requested that the High Commissioner for Human Rights report regularly on the human rights situation in Eritrea; and transmitted the report of the Commission of Inquiry to the UN General Assembly, the UN Security Council, and the UN Secretary-General. Among the signatories were Amnesty International, Article 19, Christian Solidarity, CIVICUS, World Organization Against Torture; and over a dozen Eritrean Human Rights' organizations.

One of these, Human Rights Concern-Eritrea, issued a report on June 16 that gave details of continued forced labor by Eritrean conscripts under the compulsory National Service program. The report said recent interviews with over 50 conscripts who managed to escape had revealed that, as recently as January 2016, Eritrean conscripts were subjected to forced labor at the Bisha Mine, owned jointly by the Canadian company Nevsun and the Eritrean state; at the mines owned by the Government and Zara Mining Share Company; and by the Colluli Mining Share Company and the Government. Conscripts were obliged to work six and a half days a week, up to 12 hours a day. Their net pay, after deduction for food, was 450 Nakfa a month (between \$10- \$40 dollar according to the exchange rate.) Housing conditions were poor and medical support minimal. Conscripts are not allowed to leave and any attempt to escape was severely punished with various forms of torture or beatings. Agents of National Security, Hagerawi Dehnet, who are present at all mining sites, closely supervise the entire forced labor operation. All the people interviewed by Human Rights Concern-Eritrea were personally warned by the authorities and the sub-contractor, Segen, a military construction company, not to reveal that they were employed at the mine as conscripts and against their will.

United Nations High Commission for Refugees celebrates World Refugee Day...

In a report for World Refugee Day on Monday (June 20), the United Nations High Commission for refugees (UNHCR) said conflict in countries like South Sudan and Somalia had raised the total number of refugees and internally displaced persons in sub-Saharan Africa to 18.4 million in 2015. Indeed, sub-Saharan Africa recorded the largest displacement totals in 2015 after the Middle East and North Africa. The report said: "Continuing bitter conflict in South Sudan in 2015, as well as in Central African Republic and Somalia, plus new or continuing mass displacement in or from countries including Nigeria, Burundi, Sudan, DR Congo, Mozambique and elsewhere, together produced 18.4 million refugees and IDPs as of year's end." Five of the world's top-10 refugee hosting nations were African countries, led by Ethiopia, followed by Kenya, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Chad, the UNHCR said.

Across the globe, the report says 65.3 million people were displaced as of the end of 2015, compared to 59.5 million just 12 months earlier. These included 21.3 million refugees and 40.8 million IDPs. The UNHCR said more people were being displaced by war and persecution and that was worrying in itself, but the factors were that endangered refugees were multiplying too. The report says children constituted 51% per cent of the world's refugees in 2015, and worryingly, as in the case of Eritrea, many were separated from their parents or travelling alone. Three countries, Syria, Afghanistan and Somalia, produce half of the world's 21 million refugees.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees and countless civic groups around the world hosted World Refugee Day on Monday (June 20) in order to draw attention to the millions of refugees and internally displaced persons worldwide who have been forced to flee their homes due to war, conflict and persecution. In a world where violence forces hundreds/thousands of people to flee their countries each day, this special occasion commemorates the strength, bravery and resilience of millions of refugees, forced migrants and internally displaced people who live in poverty under the threat of violence without basic human rights such as freedom of movement and opportunities for education and employment. The occasion honors the courage, strength and determination of women, men and children who are forced to flee their homeland under threat of persecution, conflict and violence. On this day people honor the spirit and courage of millions of refugees worldwide. It is also a day to recognize the contributions of refugees in their communities, and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, said UNHCR marks World Refugee Day each year on June 20 to shine a light on the courage and resilience of families forced to flee war or persecution.

In Ethiopia, World Refugee Day this year was celebrated at the National Cultural Center in Addis Ababa on June 17 and, on June 20, at the Tsore Refugee Camp in Benishangul Gumuz Regional State as well. Dr Aisha Abdullahi, Commissioner for Political Affairs of the African Union Commission delivered a speech at the event

representing the AUC Chairperson, and praised Ethiopia's sound handling of refugees despite the critical challenges it faced due to the impact of the El-Nino drought. Dr Abdullahi said the humanitarian support Ethiopia provided to refugees from different African countries was commendable. The UNHCR Representative in Ethiopia, Clementine Nkweta Salami, also commended Ethiopia's open door policy for refugees. Other speakers included Zeinu Jemal, the Deputy Director of Ethiopia's Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs of the National Intelligence and Security Service, who emphasized that the country was working to improve the livelihoods of refugees in Ethiopia; and the Speaker of the Benishangul-Gumuz State Council, Fekadu Tadesse, who assured those present that refugees sheltered in the camp would continue to enjoy close follow-up and government support.

As one of the most stable countries in East Africa and the Horn of Africa, Ethiopia plays an important leadership role in the region and throughout the continent. With the presence of the African Union, the UN Economic Commission for Africa and many other international organizations in Addis Ababa, it is also an important diplomatic and political hub. Its location, however, means Ethiopia cannot escape the effects of an unstable and volatile region prone to conflict. For more than a generation, the Government and people of Ethiopia have been providing asylum for hundreds of thousands of refugees from across the region. Its open-door policy has made it easy for asylum seekers to access the country and enjoy full rights of asylum. The protection of refugees is implemented in accordance with the provisions laid down in the refugee proclamation, and with respect to the policies of the government aimed at strengthening people-to-people relations as defined in the foreign policy and security strategy. The government has reaffirmed its commitment to continuing to provide the necessary protection to refugees and has dedicated itself to implementation of the internationally-set principles for refugee protection and assistance and other provisions. Ethiopia, of course, is signatory to the 1951 UN refugee convention and its 1967 protocol, as well as to the Refugee Convention endorsed in 1969 by the then OAU.

The result has been that the influx of refugees has already surpassed the most substantial projection of numbers. Ethiopia is currently ranked as the leading host country for refugees in Africa and the 10th in the world. It hosts over 735,000 refugees in a total of 24 refugee camps. Amongst these, South Sudanese have figured prominently, followed by Somalis and Eritreans as well as refugees from Sudan and several other countries. As in many countries around the world, children make up the bulk of the refugees in Ethiopia. The UNHCR has lauded the government and people of Ethiopia for their long-time cooperation and the hospitality they have continued to provide for refugees. The refugees are able to enjoy greater living space, privacy and dignity in Ethiopia. In many cases, they are able to choose their own housing and find or create jobs to provide a means of livelihood. This helps to minimize the strain on local resources. A considerable number have been able to take up scholarships to continue their education in higher learning institutions, at government owned universities. The refugees are also able to attend certified vocational skills training institutions to help them gain marketable and productive skills that will allow them to make a living while in the country or upon their return home. The dedication and commitment to assisting refugees, demonstrated by the government and the people, has contributed greatly to the development of mutual trust between refugees and the host communities. It also helps to provide a conducive environment to promote a strong relationship among the countries of the region.

...while Kenya underlines its determination to close the Dadaab camp complex

World Refugee Day was also celebrated in Kenya on Monday (June 20) as it has been every year since 2000. The theme for this year's event was "Get to know refugees - their role in the country." The celebrations included football matches, music, dance, poetry readings, theatre dramas, puppet shows and performances by refugee groups in Kenya. The event, held in collaboration with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Kenya Red Cross, drew participants from across the country and refugees living in Kenya.

Kenya's main refugee concern currently is, of course, the projected closure of the Dadaab refugee camp complex, which it has made clear it intends to close. It has announced that it will be closed by the end of the year, though the Somali Government and others have indicated they would like to see a longer time frame.

Somali Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke told the *Washington Post* last week that closing the Dadaab refugee complex this year "would be very tough." He suggested it would be more realistic to set a 2019 deadline for emptying the camps. The Prime Minister insisted: "We want our refugees back. Definitely, but you have to calibrate the way they are coming back. You can't just throw them back with nothing." He said the Somali government was still trying to persuade the Kenyan government to extend the life of the

camps. He said: "We don't want Kenya to push out refugees at this stage in time, because it can create much more insecurity if these refugees are just kind of thrown out, with nothing at the civil society end." The Prime Minister pointed out that many of those in the camps were youngsters and they might be tempted to join radical groups and create more instability for both countries.

Writing in Kenya's *Daily Nation* last Saturday (June 18), Dr Abdisalam Hadliye Omar, Somalia's Foreign Minister, said it was clear that "there was a determination to, yes, return Somali refugees in Dadaab home, but to do so in a way that is dignified, orderly, and in line with all international laws and existing agreements." Dr Omar had accompanied President Mohamud on his visit to Dadaab a week earlier when the Somali delegation had been accompanied by Mr Joseph Nkaissery, the Kenyan Interior Cabinet secretary, and senior officials from the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Dr Omar said: "the section of Dadaab that we visited was well maintained and the Kenyan Government and the partners on the ground such as UNHCR and Islamic Relief are implementing life-changing education and health projects in the camp."

He noted that Somalia, Kenya, and the UNHCR had a historic opportunity to work through and within the principles and guidelines of the Tripartite Agreement to create a blueprint for successful refugee resettlement policies that can be transferred across borders. It would not be easy but "we have the conditions for success." He said the refugees wanted to return home and the government wanted them home. However, he stressed, "their return must be dignified, orderly, and carried out in a manner that allows them to have meaningful lives upon arrival."

The Foreign Minister emphasized that Somalia was turning the corner to stability and progress: "A strengthened Somali Government and institutions are working with partners, including the Kenyan Government, to prepare the ground for the return of our citizens by defeating the last pockets of terrorism and creating opportunities at home." This would allow the resettlement of "this most vulnerable group in a dignified, timely, and well planned manner".

Equally, the logistics of the process remains formidable as a Kenyan government statement acknowledged when it said the "decision will have adverse effects on the lives of refugees and therefore the international community must collectively take responsibility on humanitarian needs that will arise out of this action."

Religious leaders and humanitarian activists have also been calling on the government to treat the inhabitants of the Dadaab refugee camp "with dignity" and urging it to delay the closure of the camp. Clergy, in particular, have warned of a potential humanitarian crisis in the Eastern Africa region if the camp is closed. The Roman Catholic Bishop, Joseph Alessandro, of the Garissa Diocese, where the camp is situated said: "Since they have decided to go ahead with it, we are now trying to see that the exercise is carried out with dignity and in a humane manner,"

In fact, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, told a press conference in Nairobi on Monday (June 20) that Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta had asked him: "give me a plan, and we'll discuss it". He said the plan was still being worked on "with our partners" and would be presented to the foreign ministers of Kenya and Somalia at a meeting in Nairobi at the end of this week. He said "We'll talk about these plans and a possible extension, taking it step by step." While the exact timing may be a matter for debate, Kenya has repeatedly said its decision in May to close Dadaab, which it regards as a "security threat", is irreversible.

The UN High Commissioner, who met President Kenyatta over the weekend, said he was "happy to hear the president said emphatically that any solution, and repatriation is obviously the best solution, has to be conducted in a manner that is humane, dignified, safe and respects international law and principles". Kenya signed up to the voluntary repatriation agreement with Somalia and UNHCR in 2014, but it has not been the hoped for success. Since the program began, in December 2014, only 14,000 refugees have returned, half of these in the first four months of this year. According to the High Commissioner, tens of thousands more have relocated under their own steam. The agreement set a target of returning 50,000 people by the end of the year.

The High Commissioner also told the press conference that said he believed a more generous reintegration package was needed to tide returnees over for between six months and a year, not for just three months. He also called for much greater investment by the international community in Somalia, to create real opportunities and development strategies. "Otherwise", he warned, "we can plan whatever we want, and the people will flow back [to Kenya] or flow elsewhere, and continue to be a factor of instability in this region."