

A Week in the Horn

27th February 2015

News in brief:

- **Ethiopia**
- **Djibouti**
- **Eritrea**
- **Kenya**
- **Somalia**
- **South Sudan**
- **Sudan**

Articles from page 4:

- **South Sudan peace talks in Addis Ababa continue....**
- **...while the UN Security Council is briefed on the situation in South Sudan**
- **UN Security Council debate on International Peace and Security**
- **Ethio-Canada Business Forum reinforcing 50 years of diplomatic friendship**
- **President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti visits Somalia....**
- **...following a suicide attack at Mogadishu's Central Hotel**
- **The 9th Nile Day celebration in Khartoum**
- **The National Electoral Board preparations continue**

News in brief

Ethiopia

Prime Minister Hailemariam laid the cornerstone for the opening of construction of the 375 kilometer Awash-Kombolcha-Woldia-Hara Gebeya Railway Project on Wednesday (February 25) in Kombolcha. This will be built by the Turkish company, Yapi Merkezi, in the next three and half years at a cost of US\$1.7 billion.

Dr Tedros Adhanom met with members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense of the Norwegian Parliament on Thursday (February 26). He told the delegation, headed by the Chairwoman of the Labor Party, Anniken Huitfeldt, that the Government of Ethiopia cherished the bonds of development partnership with Norway for building a Climate Resilient Green Economy by 2020.

State Minister Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos held discussions with Mr Petr Drulak, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic on Wednesday (February 25), reviewing development cooperation, bilateral relations and further areas for future partnership.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dewano Kedir, on Tuesday (February 24) met with the Canadian Trade Mission led by Senator Meredith.

UN Under-Secretary-General and Associate Administrator of UNDP, Ms Gina Casar, was visiting Ethiopia this week (February 21- 26), meeting senior government officials and inaugurating the Innovative Investment Facility to support small and medium enterprises access credit and other financial services.

Linda Thomas Greenfield, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, said on Thursday (February 26) that the U.S. was committed to continuing to support Ethiopia's role in stabilizing South Sudan. She also noted the support the U.S. Government was extending to AMISOM.

A two-day Ethio-Canada Business Forum was held this week (February 23-24) in Addis Ababa attended by a Canadian Trade Mission led by Senator Don Meredith. It was part of the events marking the 50th Anniversary of Ethio-Canada Friendship. (See article)

The UK's Department for International Development (DfID) said on Thursday (February 26) the UK was prepared to support "economic development to help generate jobs, income and growth that will enable self-

sufficiency and ultimately end poverty.” The transition in approach would not affect aid in 2015/16.

The Joint Council of Political Parties has selected nine subjects as the agendas for televised debates between political parties. The subjects cover: the Multi-Party System and Building Democracy; Federalism; Agricultural and Rural Policy; Urban Development and Industrial Policy; Good Governance and the Rule of Law; National Security; Foreign Policy; Infrastructure; Education and Health. (See article)

The Ethiopian Leather Industries Association (ELIA) launched its three day All-African Leather Fair last weekend at the Millennium Hall in Addis Ababa. Nearly 200 exhibitors, 49 from overseas, participated. The leather industry has expanded by 14% a year over the past 5 years.

Djibouti

President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti started a two day official visit to Somalia on Saturday (February 21). He and President Mohamud laid the foundation of the East African Somali-speaking Regional Academy. President Guelleh visited Djibouti troops in Belet Weyne. (See article)

Turkey, which is donating six fully equipped ambulances to Djibouti, according to an agreement signed by both countries in Ankara on Tuesday (February 24), is also taking steps to establish a 50-bed children's hospital in Djibouti.

Eritrea

Canada's Sunridge Gold Corp has announced that it expects its Asmara Project (60% owned by Sunridge and 40% by Eritrean National Mining Corporation) to commence mining operations in the fourth quarter of 2015. Sunridge says it will produce an average annual production of 65 million pounds of copper, 184 million pounds of zinc, 42,000 ounces of gold, and 1 million ounces of silver over the first 8 years, with a mine life of 17 years.

Eritrea attended the first-ever summit for the Red Sea oil and gas sector on Monday and Tuesday this week (February 23-24) in Dubai. Other countries present were Egypt, Sudan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Jordan, and the meeting focused on investment, exploration and energy production opportunities on both sides of the Red Sea.

An Organization of African Trade Union Unity (OATUU) symposium was held in Asmara at the beginning of the week under the theme of "Trade Union Reforms in Africa". According to OATUU it was attended by around 48 heads of African Trade Unions as well as representatives from China, Italy and Turkish Workers Federations.

Kenya

Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta arrived in Algiers on Tuesday (February 24) for a three day state visit to Algeria at the invitation of Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika. Foreign Affairs and International Trade Cabinet Secretary Amina Mohamed and Algiers' Foreign Minister, Ramtane Lamamra signed a Memorandum of Understanding to promote bilateral cooperation in the fields of oil, gas and power.

The President's Office in Kenya announced on Monday (February 23) that construction work would start next month on the new port to be built near Lamu. This is part of the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) corridor project. In 2013, Kenya announced that a consortium led by China Communications Construction Co Ltd had won a US\$449 million contract to build the first three berths of the port.

The Heads of State Summit of the East African Community of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania in Nairobi on Friday (February 20), agreed to rapidly push forward the planned creation of a Monetary Union to boost trade and that a Monetary Union would be the last step towards the formation of a political federation. They agreed a 2018 deadline for launching a single East African currency

Kenyan Deputy President William Ruto said on Friday last week (February 20) that Kenya would open an embassy in Mogadishu this year to help deepen bilateral relations between the two countries. He said he would also be visiting Somalia later in the year.

Kenyan police authorities said on Wednesday (February 25) that Islamic extremist activity had been responsible for the deaths of 173 people in Kenya during 2014. This was the highest figure for the three years during which Kenya has been the target of violence from Somalia's al-Shabaab terrorists. The Kenyan police, identifying extremist attacks for the first time in their annual crime report, said 312 people had been killed in attacks since 2012 and 779 people wounded during 2012-2014.

Somalia

A suicide bomb attack by Al-Shabaab at the Central Hotel in Mogadishu on Friday (February 20) killed 28 people and left dozens injured. Ethiopia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly condemned the attack as did the UN and AU representatives to Somalia. (See article)

The next round of the Turkish-sponsored talks between Somalia and Somaliland were postponed a few hours before they were due to start in Istanbul on Thursday (February 26). Somaliland says the talks will start on March 1.

President Barack Obama has nominated a career diplomat, Katherine Simonds Dhanani, to be the first U.S. Ambassador to Somalia in nearly 25 years. Ambassador Dhanani will be based in neighboring Kenya until security conditions permit the US embassy in Mogadishu to reopen.

South Sudan

Ambassador Seyoum Mesfin, Chief Mediator at South Sudan's IGAD-mediated peace talks on Monday (February 23), warned that this is "the final opportunity to make progress and usher in a new era of peace in South Sudan, we must not fail." He demanded that President Salva Kiir and rebel leader Riek Machar meet "without further delay", March 5 as the deadline for Kiir and Machar to conclude the details of a final peace accord and transitional government. (See article)

President Salva Kiir, the chairman of the ruling SPLM, issued an executive order cancelling the dismissal of senior party members, and extending them an amnesty. The order also outlines security arrangements for three representatives from each of the three factions of the SPLM, of the opposition, the government and of former political detainees to meet in Juba in 45 days' time to discuss the reformation of the SPLM as agreed earlier at Arusha. (See article)

Mr Hervé Ladsous, UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, said in a briefing to the UN Security Council on South Sudan Tuesday (February 24) that there was now an urgent need to reinforce mediation efforts, as well as to impose consequences on the parties if they fail to show willingness to compromise. (See article)

Sudan

President Omer Hassan al-Bashir started a four day visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Saturday (February 21), heading a delegation including the Ministers of Defense, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Investment, Electricity, Minerals, Livestock and Fisheries, and Labor as well as intelligence and security officials. President Al-Bashir met with UAE officials and attended the International Defense Exhibition and Conference. It was his first official visit to the UAE since 2008.

The Security Council has extended the mandate of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) until 15 February 2016. In a unanimous vote on Thursday (February 26) the Council noted that the continuing tensions in Abyei and along the border between Sudan and South Sudan still constituted "a serious threat to international peace and security." The resolution also demanded Sudan and South Sudan "immediately resume" the work of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee, and urgently commence the establishment of the Abyei Area Administration and Council to form an Abyei Police Service.

A meeting of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) countries held in Khartoum on Saturday (February 21) was attended by all members of the NBI, including Egypt for the first time for five years. (See article).

South Sudan peace talks in Addis Ababa continue

Ambassador Seyoum Mesfin, Chief Mediator at South Sudan's IGAD-mediated peace talks in Addis Ababa, opened the renewed session of talks on Monday (February 23). He demanded that President Salva Kiir and rebel leader Riek Machar meet "without further delay". The mediators have set March 5 as the deadline for Kiir and Machar to conclude the details of a final peace accord so that the pre-transitional period can begin on April 1, and a Transitional Government of National Unity set up. Kiir and Machar agreed at the previous round of talks at the end of last month to set up a Transitional Unity Government to take power by July 9. Ambassador Seyoum said at the opening of the latest round of talks for the warring factions that this is "the final opportunity to make progress and usher in a new era of peace in South Sudan, we must not fail." IGAD Chairman and Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn said he would encourage President Kiir to attend the talks which he had earlier promised to do. South Sudan Information Minister, Michael Makuei Lueth, said that President Kiir would come to address whatever issue that was outstanding as required, but he had other duties that made it impractical for him to attend all of the negotiations.

A statement by the Troika, of the United States, Norway and the United Kingdom, at the beginning of the week (February 24), underlined similar points, also expressing "deep concern and regret" that President Kiir had not honored his commitment to return to the talks. The statement said "it is time to conclude a peace agreement and bring an end to this needless war that is destroying South Sudan and imposing serious costs on its neighbors and the international community." It said: South Sudan's leaders have collectively failed to respond to the demands of their people. By continuing to fight, they are forcing 2 million South Sudanese to live as refugees or as IDPs and exposing millions more to serious food shortages. The country is facing an economic crisis. This is a far cry from the hopes and aspirations of the South Sudanese people at independence."

The statement went on "Now is the time to compromise. We call on South Sudan's leaders to demonstrate bold leadership and make the necessary compromises to agree the structure of the executive, executive succession, power sharing and transitional security arrangements, issues that have been highlighted by the parties' own negotiating teams as being key to achieving peace and establishing a transitional government." The Troika statement also called for the publication of the African Union's Commission of Inquiry's findings, and its recommendations on accountability. These, it said, were necessary to ensure that such violence against civilians cannot be undertaken with impunity. The people of South Sudan, and in particular the families of the victims, deserve no less and it will in the long run enable greater accountability and give rise to more robust political stability. Accountability and reconciliation need to be addressed in any peace agreement." In the communiqué of the AU Peace and Security Council on January 29, it was decided "to defer the consideration of the Report of the Commission of Enquiry to a later date." The Council also reiterated its readiness "to impose sanctions against those obstructing the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and the political process."

Despite the lack of one of the principals, some progress appears to be being made. South Sudan's Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Peter Bashir Gbandi said on Wednesday (February 25) that there had been significant progress in the latest round of IGAD-mediated talks between the warring factions in Addis Ababa. He said the negotiations had been continuing this week through thematic committees on governance, security and economic matters, as well as covering other outstanding issues. Through these committees, he said, "we have now agreed to de-escalate and withdraw forces from the frontlines." This, he added, would prevent further confrontations between the rival forces.

Mr Gbandi's comments came after President Salva Kiir issued an amnesty pardoning all those who took up arms against the government. South Sudanese president Salva Kiir, who is also the chairman of the ruling SPLM, issued executive orders cancelling a previous order dismissing senior party members, and extending an amnesty to all rival party members, some of whom were arrested, while others joined the SPLM-in-Opposition. In the order, President Kiir also expressed a readiness to resolve the current conflict and directed his negotiating team in Addis Ababa to expedite the process for a lasting peace agreement. The President's executive order was issued after he had met the former political detainees in Nairobi at the weekend, and also met with senior SPLM figures including Vice-President James Wani Igga in Juba on his return. The order also outlined security arrangements for nine representatives from the three factions of the SPLM, comprising three people each from the SPLM-in-Opposition, the SPLM-in-Government, and SPLM-former political detainees, to meet in Juba in 45 days' time to discuss the reformation within the party leadership, as was agreed at Arusha earlier in the month.

Dr Machar's SPLM-in-Opposition welcomed the presidential order revoking the earlier decision to dismiss senior members of the party, describing it as a positive step forward in a process that aimed to achieve peace and reconciliation. The SPLM-in-Opposition also noted that full implementation of any future final Arusha agreement on reunification of the SPLM would have to depend on the signing of a lasting peace agreement in Addis Ababa. An SPLM-in-Opposition spokesperson pointed out that the Arusha process only addressed issues relating to the SPLM. All other outstanding issues aimed at resolving the conflict, including issues of governance, political reforms, reconciliation, security arrangements, economic reforms, leadership structure and power-sharing arrangements, he said, were being tackled through the IGAD-mediated peace process in Addis Ababa.

...while the UN Security Council is briefed on the situation in South Sudan

Meanwhile, the UN Security Council was briefed on the situation in South Sudan on Tuesday this week (February 24) when Mr Hervé Ladsous, UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, introducing the UN Secretary-General's latest report on the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). Mr Ladsous said there was now an urgent need to reinforce mediation efforts. He also said it was equally important to impose consequences on the parties if they fail to show willingness to compromise. Mr Ladsous, underlined the need for accountability for war crimes and crimes against humanity, and said the two sides were mobilizing for new campaigns and there were reports of children being recruited. He described the security environment as a direct illustration of the parties' continued lack of political will and their serious failure of leadership that remained focused on pursuit of power rather than care of the people. The talks in Addis Ababa, Mr Ladsous said, remained stalled over power-sharing, security arrangements and constitutional reform. He expressed concern over the proposed postponement of elections and extension of current office holders in South Sudan. Mr Ladsous described a deteriorating humanitarian situation and said UNMISS continued to take every opportunity to expand "by presence"; 3,468 of the 5,500 newly authorized troops had been deployed.

Mr Ladsous said "The volatile security environment is a direct illustration of the parties' continued lack of political will [and] the Government and opposition do not seem to take the political negotiations seriously and appear unwilling to make the necessary compromises." He said "the likelihood of either side softening its stance remains low [and] in the light of the fragile security environment, the ongoing round of peace talks is not likely to achieve much progress." Mr Ladsous emphasized that there was "now an urgent need to reinforce the mediation efforts, as well as to impose consequences on the parties if they fail to show willingness to compromise and continue engaging in a conflict that will result in further loss of innocent lives." He therefore urged "the Council to consider issuing a strong Presidential Statement calling on the parties to immediately cease all military operations and make the necessary compromises to reach a comprehensive peace agreement during this round of talks, or face the consequences."

The Council was also briefed by UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Ivan Šimonović, who said the number of displaced had continued to grow, and was now reaching 2 million. The number of those seeking protection at UNMISS sites, mainly women and children, was over 110,000. Mr Šimonović urged the release of the report of the Commission of Inquiry of the African Union, as well as the findings of Government investigations, adding that these could form the basis of a process that could help end the cycle of violence and impunity in South Sudan and pave the way to reconciliation and sustainable peace. Mr Šimonović, detailed a litany of human rights abuses he witnessed first-hand during a recent trip to the country. He painted a bleak picture of South Sudan's crisis: whole families that were executed based upon their ethnicity; hundreds shot dead in a hospital; child soldiers threatening civilians; women raped. He said "many Government officials told me that the people of South Sudan fought for decades for their dignity, independence, and human rights. What I saw on my mission was certainly not what they have been fighting for." He added: "After decades of killing and other violations, there is a need for cultural change based on respect for human life and human rights. It takes two leaders to end a war in South Sudan, but it takes many for the peace to become sustainable." He stressed that the peace process, just as any future political arrangement, depended on the inclusion of all national stakeholders, from ethnic groups, women, elders, religious leaders, youth, and other civil society actors. He said "It is of the utmost importance that this Council remains seized of the question of accountability for past and present violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in South Sudan."

The Permanent Representative of South Sudan, Francis Mading Deng, said the Secretary-General's report portrayed a disturbing picture that challenged the dignity and value of South Sudan's independence. He said that while it gave the impression that the whole country was in turmoil in reality only three states in the

country were affected by the conflict. He said, there was a discrepancy between the primary responsibility of the State and the complementary support of UNMISS. The UN, he said, should work in collaboration “with the popularly elected and legitimate Government to address practical problems.” He added that “condemnation of the leadership and threats of sanctions would only aggravate the situation.”

UN Security Council debate on International Peace and Security

The United Nations Security Council held an open debate on Monday this week (February 23) on the subject of "Maintaining International Peace and Security: Reflect on History, Reaffirm the Strong Commitment to the Purposes and the Principles of the Charter of the United Nations."

The debate was held in the context of the 70th anniversary of the United Nations, and as UN Secretary-General Ban ki-Moon said in his opening address: “The United Nations was founded to prevent another world war - and it has succeeded in that,” adding, with some justice, that “despite the recurrence of genocide and repeated outbreaks of armed conflict, the past seven decades would surely have been even bloodier without the United Nations.” The Secretary-General said that as well as making a major contribution to peace and security the UN has been directly involved in helping people to live longer, healthier lives, in empowering women, in advancing international law and democratic governance and improving collective well-being.

Mr Ban Ki-Moon described how the world had “starkly” changed since the Charter was drafted and how those changes were reflected within the UN, with four times as many Member States in the organization and many new items, such as climate change, on the international agenda. Despite those changes, however, the aspirations contained within the Charter, he said, remained “valid, valuable and vital”, especially the commitment to the prevention of armed conflict through the peaceful settlement of disputes and the protection of human rights. “The Charter”, he explained, “is a living document, not a detailed roadmap [...] it is our compass, enshrining principles that have stood the test of time.” Despite this flexibility, the Secretary-General stressed that UN Member States needed to rebuild their sense of unity on the meaning of the term “collective security, that” he said “was the core purpose of the Organization” adding that “we no longer have a full meeting of minds [and] we need to reflect on what has changed.” States were falling short in their personal responsibility to prevent conflict, something about which, he said, the Charter was very clear. He underlined that the collective work of the United Nations was based on consent and respect for the sovereign equality of all members.

The Secretary-General said human rights action often caused concern among Member States because of fears that such action could harm national sovereignty. However, he stressed, early action to prevent conflict and protect human rights helped to strengthen sovereignty rather than challenge or restrict it. It was serious violations of human rights that weakened sovereignty, he said. He went on: “in today’s world, the less sovereignty is viewed as a wall or a shield, the better our prospects will be for protecting people and solving our shared problems.” He emphasized that the goal of UN human rights actions were in support of government officials, parliamentarians, civil servants, judges and others who lead the national institutions that were essential to sovereignty. He pointed out that human rights abuses killed and displaced people, divided communities, undermined economies and destroyed cultural heritages. Mr Ban Ki-Moon called for “a conceptual shift” in international understanding of UN human rights activity in order to transform the Security Council’s role in peace and security. “We must ask”, he said, “whether, for example, earlier efforts to address human rights violations and political grievances in Syria could have kept the situation from escalating so horrendously.” He went on “we must be willing to act before situations deteriorate. This is both a moral responsibility and critical for the maintenance of international peace and security. We cannot afford to be indifferent.”

The Secretary-General noted that distinctions between national and international concerns were beginning to disappear. He cited commerce, communication, public health and climate change as areas of transnational concern. Terrorism and extremism were also serious transnational issues and he highlighted the need to respond decisively, to combat extremism without multiplying the problem, and with full respect for human rights. The Secretary-General said that on many such issues of international concern, the UN’s 70th anniversary provided a chance to reflect seriously on the common interests of states, and on the imperative need to take transformative action on such issues as sustainable development and climate change. He called on member states to reaffirm their commitments to each other in the great cause of living together with dignity and peace for all.

Ambassador Tekeda Alemu, Permanent Representative of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the United Nations, like other speakers, expressed his appreciation of the Secretary-General's remarks. He cited the intention of the United Nations to be an organization of the peoples of the United Nations, and noted that over the past 70 years the organization had served as "an indispensable platform for advancing collective security and promoting multilateral cooperation among its member States in line with the spirit of its Charter," and "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war". Despite its ups and downs, he said, the United Nations remained "the only indispensable universal organization we have that we cannot live without."

At the same time, Ambassador Tekeda raised the question of how the international community could make the organization more relevant to address the challenges and threats faced by humanity in the 21st century. Certainly, the United Nations collective security system had helped reduce the danger of war, and it had made enormous contributions to keeping international peace. However, the significant changes in the global and geopolitical landscape in the seventy years since the establishment of the organization, the increasing number of intra-state conflicts and the threat of terrorism and violent extremism as well as other transnational crimes by non-state actors was now posing increasingly greater risks to world peace and security. Similarly, he said, "the prevalence of poverty and inequality, the spread of pandemic diseases, the impact of climate change and other socio-economic challenges" pose serious challenges to the security, even to the survival, of humanity as a whole. These serious challenges, he emphasized, meant there was a greater need for "the United Nations more than ever before." It also underlined the necessity for the organization to look at weaknesses and find the way to "make a greater difference, not only in the security area but also in the economic, social, human rights and humanitarian areas." He emphasized how critical it was for the reform of the United Nations to make it into an organization of the peoples of the United Nations, adding that the organization's strength could only depend upon the strength and readiness of its member states.

Ambassador Tekeda said 2015 could offer a unique opportunity in reaffirming commitments to multilateralism "by summoning the political will and political leadership necessary to achieve the transformative agenda that we have agreed to carry forward in the post-2015 period." In order to achieve this, it was necessary for all countries to fully cooperate on the basis of their respective capacities. He reminded his listeners that failure would have the most "serious repercussions for the peace and prosperity of our world."

Ambassador Tekeda spoke of the serious threat posed by terrorism and violent extremism to international peace and to the harmonious existence of mankind. He urged all UN member states to fight it together "without any double standards and "in the spirit of United Nations Security Council resolution 2178 (2014)." It was not just the need to fight terrorism and extremism, it was also necessary to address the root causes and manifestations of terrorism. Among these, of course is poverty, and Ambassador Tekeda emphasized that "ending poverty is not only a socio-economic issue", adding that was why the success of the post-2015 development agenda was so important. It was crucial, he said, for all member states "to work towards the realization of the ambitious goals that we have set for ourselves within the framework of that agenda and demonstrate the necessary compromises to agree on its means of implementation during the 3rd International Conference on Financing for Development to be held in Addis Ababa." Underlining the adverse impact of climate change, Ambassador Tekeda noted its linkage to the very survival of the planet and underlined the essential importance of reaching a globally binding climate agreement. "It is not", he said, "a matter of choice but of necessity to protect the environment and ensure the continued survival of mankind."

In conclusion, Ambassador Tekeda, reminded the organization of its historic responsibility to take bold steps in many areas, to reaffirm commitment to the purpose and principles of the Charter, and to "muster the courage and commitment to rise up to the challenge." He reiterated Ethiopia's full commitment to playing its part in all this, "as it has done over the past 70 years," quoting Emperor Haile Selassie remarks to the UN in 1963 that: "the value of the purposes and principles of the United Nations depends wholly on our will to observe and honor them and give them content and meaning."

Ethio-Canada Business Forum reinforcing 50 years of diplomatic friendship

The two-day Ethio-Canada Business Forum was concluded this week providing a detailed picture of the enthusiasm of both countries to make trade, investment and business links as key threads for further growth, consolidation and enrichment of bilateral relations. The Forum, bringing together a Canadian Trade Mission of twenty seven company representatives, headed by Senator Don Meredith, high-level Ethiopian Government officials and leaders of business organizations, underlined the renewal of 50 years of diplomatic relations and friendship with the demonstration of a concrete and practical economic partnership for mutual progress in

the future. The Forum, one of the events marking the 50th Anniversary of Ethio-Canada Friendship, was an important element of Ethiopia's economic diplomacy and demonstrated the interest of Canadian businesses in discussions among stakeholders of both countries for the advancement of mutual interest. The meeting also revealed Ethiopia's focus on the importance of firm cooperation with Canadian companies for technology transfer, the sharing of tangible experience and expertise in the areas of energy, and in such areas as infrastructure, agro-processing, mining, manufacturing and information communication technology as well as other spheres of common interest. The Forum was also indicative of the Canadian Trade Mission's interest in increasing investment, trade and business opportunities as well as identifying any problems and solutions in business involvement in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia's Minister of Mines, Tolossa Shagi, emphasized that Ethiopia needed Canada's experience and technological capacity to achieve the targets of the Growth and Transformation Plan as well as the exploitation of mineral resources for the wellbeing of the people. Ambassador Taye Atskeselassie, Director-General of American Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, welcomed the delegates to the Forum and expressed his thanks to the Canadian Government and business representatives for showing interest in investing in Ethiopia. Ambassador Taye noted that Ethiopia's economy had been changing at a fast rate. He pointed to the stable political and economic landscape, liberalized economy, a conducive tax and investment environment and associated incentives, the strong natural resource base and trainable labor force, as well as other trade potentials which all provided "excellent" reasons for Canadians to invest in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia's Ambassador to Canada, Ambassador Birtukan Ayano, said the meeting was an important milestone in forging business ties at a time while the two countries were celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Ethio-Canada Friendship. Ambassador Birtukan, who noted that Ethiopia considers Canada as one of its key development partners, said the Forum would promote Ethiopia's business opportunities. She pointed out that Ethio-Canada relations were beginning to show a promising trend with Canadian companies keen to explore trade, investment and business opportunities. She recalled the successful Canada-Africa and Canada-Ethiopia Business Fora held last year in Toronto, and said these had displayed a true picture of Ethiopia's mining and energy potential. They had also identified Ethiopia as a focus country for Canada's development cooperation. Senator Don Meredith, who emphasized the opportunity provided by the meeting to introduce Canadian companies to Ethiopia's investment and businesses opportunities, said the Business Forum would augment the growing commercial relationship between the two countries. The Senator said that members of the Canadian Trade Mission had made clear their interest to invest in Ethiopia.

Presentations were made by high level officials from a number of ministries and enterprises including the Ministries of Trade; Industry; Transport; Water, Irrigation and Energy; Finance and Economic Development and Mines, as well as from the Ethiopian Investment Commission, the Ethiopian Privatization and Public Enterprise Supervising Agency and Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation. The business to business meetings and other networking events with the Canadian delegation also helped to encourage the representatives of the Canadian Trade Mission to become partners and active players in Ethiopia's march towards achieving a carbon-free and green economy by 2020, as well as attaining a middle income status by 2025.

Ethiopia's stability, development and future destiny is inextricably and closely entwined with its neighbors and to Africa more widely, and the meeting was a concrete success in displaying Ethiopia's interests in wider integration with neighbors through rail, road, hydropower and other interconnections. They begin with development at home and then extend to the region, placing the welfare of the peoples of the region at the center of development. The forum, therefore, stressed the importance of Canadian companies engaging to benefit from the development of a clean, regional and energy infrastructural development corridor and from the emerging industry of mining and other natural resources, as well as reducing the lack of capacity and infrastructure deficits. This will enable all the economies of the region to take off. It underlines the fact that Ethiopia's integrationist agenda is determined to showcase real and tangible effects rather than being confined to rhetoric. It is making real and positive contributions for the socio-economic transformation of the continent of Africa.

Experience-sharing events and sector-based presentations, on mining, energy, investment opportunities, state enterprises for privatization, future infrastructure development, ease of doing business in Ethiopia and on trade and trade licensing, were testimony to the complementary nature of the engagement between the two countries. They underlined the value of harnessing the comparative advantages for greater progress. The Forum, taking note of the fact that the total trade volume between Canada and Ethiopia only amounted to US\$39.2 million in 2013 (with Canadian exports to Ethiopia worth US\$21.3 million; and Ethiopia exports to

Canada standing at US\$17.8 million), recognized the importance of expanding the depth, the scale and the scope of trade and business flows to match the long-standing relationship and friendship of the two countries. The Ethiopian side emphasized the need for the participation of Canadian companies as partners to help the country fast-track efforts to enter into the industrial value chains of the world. Indeed, the presentations and networking demonstrated a commitment to move from an aid partnership to a development model aimed at forging ties in the areas of energy, mining, infrastructure, agro-processing and manufacturing as well as ICT.

On Tuesday (February 24) after the successful conclusion of the Forum, the Canadian Trade Mission held bilateral talks with State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dewano Kedir. Discussions covered the overall importance and outcome of the business forum; the Trade Mission's plans for investment in Ethiopia; the political will for stronger and more business cooperation; and the potential and possible opportunities the Government of Ethiopia can offer Canadian companies. Senator Meredith described the two-day Forum as a foundation for further cooperation, noting that cooperation in trade and investment would help Ethiopia create much needed jobs for its youth and allow Canadian companies to benefit from the opportunities available. The representatives of the Canadian Trade Mission, he said, had been very satisfied with the discussions held with high-level government officials and were enthusiastic about the prospect of investing in Ethiopia. The Senator also appreciated Ethiopia's political commitment and its vision to reduce poverty and improve welfare. Ato Dewano, who noted that Ethio-Canadian business ties were still minimal, stressed the need to increase the bonds of economic cooperation. He pointed out that Ethiopia was moving ahead with clear policy guidelines in its determination to reduce poverty and backwardness.

This week's Forum proved that Ethiopia's extensive use of economic diplomacy is not just confined to raising levels of economic partnership. It is also directed towards opening windows of opportunity for the exchange of political, cultural and social interactions, and in this case, to put a 50-year-old diplomatic friendship on an all-round and solid footing.

President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti visits Somalia....

President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti started a 48-hour official visit to Somalia on Saturday (February 21) receiving a warm welcome at Aden Adde Airport in Mogadishu from President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, ministers and Somali federal members of parliament. His arrival coincided with the ceremonies to commemorate International Mother Language Day in Mogadishu. This was celebrated with songs, poems, dances and other colorful cultural exhibitions. UNESCO instituted International Mother Language Day in 1999 to alert all its member states of the danger facing one of the pillars on which their nationhood rests: preservation and promotion of their indigenous languages. The message is addressed particularly to those fragile nation states whose native languages are more likely to suffer extinction if serious and conscientious efforts are not taken in time at all levels of society. While Somali remains a vital and vibrant language, Somali literature and arts have inevitably been affected by the vicissitudes of political events over the last few decades.

A central part of the celebration was for the two presidents to lay the foundation stones for a new Language Academy in Shangani district in Mogadishu, the "The East African Somali-speaking Regional Academy". And the two leaders affirmed the importance of the institution whose mission will be to strengthen the promotion of the Somali language. It will be primarily responsible for setting up a Somali standard language based on technical and linguistic rules that may reconcile all communities that use that language. President Mohamud underlined the significance of developing the Somali language and having a standard version of written Somali. The current Somali orthography, established in 1972, is written in a Latin version with 26 letters in its alphabet. The conflicts of the last three decades are largely responsible for having a major adverse effect on Somali language development.

The two heads of states noted that the institution would be pivotal for Somali language development. This follows an announcement by president Mohamud a few weeks earlier that Somali would be the official language of instruction in the country, a move widely welcomed by Somalis around the world. President Mohamud said no nation can progress unless its language is developed: "If our mother language is not developed well, it gets lost and its usage gets lost as well. It is incumbent upon us to put an effort into the development of the mother language of Somali." President Guelleh, who has long been a campaigner for enhancing Somali literacy, strongly welcomed the initiative which, he said, would fully restore the image of Somali on the regional scene.

The Academy's mission will be to strengthen the promotion of the Somali language. It will be primarily responsible for setting up a standard based on technical and linguistic rules that can reconcile all communities that use the language. Somali is spoken in four countries of the sub-region: Djibouti, Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya. President Mohamud said the patronage of the President of Djibouti on the occasion was recognition of President Guelleh's personal commitment to the preservation and promotion of the Somali language. President Guelleh has long been a campaigner for enhancing Somali literacy, and President Mohamud underlined that he had organized regular meetings in Djibouti for intellectuals, writers and other Somali language professionals. President Mohamud said "President Guelleh has continued over the past 10 years to provide a platform and means necessary for the emergence and perpetuation of collaboration between writers and other linguists who shared the Somali language."

During President Guelleh's visit, the two presidents also visited the capital of Hiiraan region, Belet Weyne, where the Djibouti troops serving with AMISOM are based. AMISOM commanders, traditional leaders and Hiiraan region administration officials received the two leaders at the airport. President Guelleh met with the Djibouti forces and praised their brave work to restore peace and order in Somalia. Djibouti currently has a thousand troops serving with AMISOM and has pledged to provide another thousand. The President who visited the Djibouti soldiers' camp, hailed the work they had accomplished and their sacrifice on the battlefield. He said: "You have secured your zone and liberated other localities from the yoke of Al-Shabaab terrorists. You have equally offered considerable humanitarian assistance to the population within your region and given sufficient training to Somali soldiers and police. Because of this heavy sacrifice, your country and the entire Somali nation are proud of you." President Guelleh encouraged the Djibouti troops to continue on this path and appealed for more dedication for achievement of their "noble" mission.

A week earlier, on Thursday (February 19), the Chief of the Djibouti Defense Forces, Major General Zakaria Sheikh, had also visited Belet Weyne to see the work of the Djibouti troops serving with AMISOM. Major General Zakaria visited the AMISOM base at Eljalle on the outskirts of the town and, from Djibouti, forces have improved security in Belet Weyne city as well as acting as mediators between warring clans. They have conducted training for Somali National Forces and brought members of militias together for training and integration into the Somali National Army. They have also been responsible for the reconstruction of the airstrip at Belet Weyne and provided support to the establishment of local government administration.

...following a suicide attack at Mogadishu's Central Hotel

President Guelleh, who arrived in Mogadishu on Saturday only hours after the suicide attack on the Central Hotel, strongly condemned the attack and offered his condolences to the Government and people of Somalia. He said Djibouti and Somalia were "not only united by language, we are also united by our resolve to defeat the terrorists". The attack on the Central Hotel killed some 28 people including the Deputy Mayor of Mogadishu and politicians, and over fifty injured, among them Deputy Prime Minister, Mohamed Omar Arte, and Members of Parliament as well as staff at the hotel. The heavily guarded hotel is much frequented by Federal Government officials, and the attack, which involved a car bomb parked in the compound as well as a separate suicide bombing by a member of staff, took place as hotel residents and others were preparing to attend Friday prayers at a nearby mosque. Al-Shabaab has claimed responsibility. President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud condemned the attack and vowed the Government would continue the fight against Al-Shabaab; and a government spokesperson said "the president will take tough measures. He promised this will not be tolerated, and those responsible will be held accountable."

The indiscriminate attack was widely condemned. Ethiopia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a press statement expressing its deepest sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims as well as to the people and government of the Federal Republic of Somalia and wishing speedy recovery "to those injured by this heinous act." The statement said "terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, and hence the Ministry reiterates Ethiopia's determination to combat all forms of terrorism, in cooperation with the Somali Security Forces and AMISOM" The Ministry also reiterated its support to the Government and people of Somalia and AMISOM to bring peace and stability in the country.

The head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNPOS), Nicholas Kay, described it as "a cruel and despicable crime intended to rob Somalis of their hope for a better future", adding "despite such inhuman atrocities, Somalis are successfully rebuilding their Government institutions and security forces after more than two decades of state failure and conflict." Mr Kay, who is also the Special Representative of the UN

Secretary-General, said the United Nations in Somalia remained resolute in its support for the Somali people and would continue working to help Somalis realize their hopes and aspirations for a peaceful and stable future.

The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia and Head of AMISOM, Ambassador Sidikou, extended his deepest condolences to the families of the brave police officers that lost their lives defending their fellow countrymen. Ambassador Sidikou said “this is clearly a desperate and failed attempt to frustrate growing peace, stability, unity in governance and economic activities currently taking center stage in Mogadishu and Somalia as a whole. Their attempts are in vain because Somalia cannot turn back,” Ambassador Sidikou added: “With this attack, Al-Shabaab has demonstrated once again that it has no interest in Somalia’s positive development and the improved welfare of its people.” He urged the people of Somalia, the international community and all friends of Somalia not to be deterred by these extremists “whose cowardly attempts to create fear and perpetuate violence are doomed to fail.”

The Executive Secretary of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, Mahboub Maalim, said Al-Shabaab's latest act of terror “was an attempt to demoralize the Federal Government and people of Somalia, and to deter the international community from operating in the country.” However, in this “the criminals have failed. Such attacks against innocent civilians betray the desperation of Al-Shabaab, who faces the continued loss of territory, the defection of its fighters and the waning of its overall relevance in Somalia.”

The 9th Nile Day celebration in Khartoum

The 9th Nile Day was held on Sunday (February 22), in Khartoum. This year the event included Egypt, attending for the first time after five years of absence. The theme for the 2015 celebration was: “Water and Improved Livelihoods - Opportunities in Nile Cooperation; discussing the nexus between water and livelihood”, and the event was marked by different activities including a brass band-led procession; competitive boat riders; public speeches and exhibitions as well as speeches. The press release issued after the event noted that “a substantial part of the economies of these countries and the majority of livelihoods are water-dependent and will remain so in the foreseeable future. Together with land, it can be argued that water is the most critical input into a sustainable livelihood for the combined basin population of over 430 million people; more than half of these live along the River Nile and its tributaries.” Ministers and officials from the water ministries of the riparian states of the Nile Basin Initiative were present. The NBI was launched on 22nd February 1999 by Ministers in charge of Water Affairs in the Nile Basin countries as a transitional institution, until the Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) negotiations were finalized and a permanent institution created. The members of the NBI are Burundi, DR Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. Eritrea participates as an observer.

Opening the official celebration, the State Minister of Water Resources and Electricity of the Republic of the Sudan, Dr Tabita Butrus, said Sudan was happy and proud to host this year’s Regional Nile Day celebrations, the 9th in the series. John Rao Nyaoro, Executive Director of the Nile Basin Secretariat, noted that “continuous population growth, changing social dynamics and generalized poverty put increasing pressure on the quality and quantity of the water resources available” adding that additional challenges in terms of availability and management come from the fact that rainfall and evaporation-transpiration levels were uneven, increasing the vulnerability of the poor and rural populations in particular and threatening the livelihood of the 430 million people living in the Nile Riparian Countries. He emphasized that “effective and sustainable Nile cooperation presents opportunities for an integrated approach to and collective action in the management and development of the shared water resources.” This, he said, would in turn increase accessibility to water and so improve the livelihoods of Nile Basin citizens. The Guest of Honor at the celebrations, Ahmed Saad Omer, Minister of Cabinet Affairs, said Sudan believes in ultimate cooperation among Nile Basin countries in order to enhance access to water and improve the livelihoods of Nile Basin citizens. He said: “We should jointly face the challenges and jointly turn them into opportunities”.

Professor Dr Hossam Mohgazy, Egypt’s Minister for Water Resources and Irrigation, in his remarks underscored the need for Nile cooperation “for the sake of our children and grandchildren”. In this respect, he added, that from now on “Egypt will be at the heart of Nile Cooperation.” Sudan’s Minister for Irrigation and Electricity, Moatez Moussa said that the NBI members had agreed to prioritize the interests of their people and promote cooperation for the management and development of water resources for the benefit of all the peoples of the Nile Basin.

Ethiopia's Minister of Water, Energy and Irrigation, Alemayehu Tegen, who led the Ethiopian delegation, said in his speech: "We are gathered here today to celebrate Nile Day in commemoration of an important occasion in the history of the Nile Basin, when all countries of the basin with their varied interest, and known to have tense relations among themselves, came together to form a common platform for consultation, dialogue and cooperation for the common benefit of the basin, the people and the international community. He stressed the theme of the celebration "Water and Improved Livelihoods - Opportunities in Nile Cooperation" was a timely and relevant theme as Ethiopia is making huge investments in developing its water resources to alleviate poverty.

The Minister underlined the need for cooperation as the way to overcome challenges posed by increasing populations and the effects of climate change on water resources. He said that even in the absence of inclusive cooperation, and even if some countries do not willingly cooperate, "decisions and actions taken in a cooperative spirit and those brought about through cooperative processes are still better for the non-cooperating party than scattered independent actions". In relation to the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) he said "This grand initiative by Ethiopia is considered as a symbol of the national struggle toward eradication of poverty by committed citizens. The initiative has been dubbed the Grand Renaissance Dam of Africa by many. To maximize the benefits of this dam for the three Eastern Nile Basin Countries, discussions and consultations are going on. The spirit of cooperation and trust built in the NBI process has tremendously contributed to the steps we are taking in this regard."

The Nile Day celebration was expected to be preceded by a Nile-COM meeting. The Nile Council of Ministers (Nile-COM) is the highest decision and policy-making body of the NBI, made up of the Ministers in charge of Water Affairs in each NBI Member State. Nile-COM is supported by the Nile technical Advisory Committee (Nile-TAC), comprised of 20 senior government officials, two from each of the Member States. The Nile-COM was, however, postponed to June 2015. The 43rd Nile-TAC meeting was held over two days at the beginning of the week. It discussed ways to tackle the shortage of funds facing the NBI and underlined the need for member countries to honor their commitment to provide their contributions. The meeting commended the secretariat's adoption of a minimum functionality plan to cope with financial challenges.

This 9th Nile Day celebration was particularly important as it brought all member states together for the first time since Egypt boycotted meetings after differences arose over the Comprehensive Framework Agreement, and the return of Egypt was warmly welcomed by the other members of the NBI. As the speeches at the celebration made clear, because of the erratic nature of the river's flow, the booming population growth in the Nile basin, climate change and the absence of coordinated cooperation in watershed management, there can be no alternative for cooperation over the River Nile. For this reason, Ethiopia welcomes Egypt's decision to return to the Nile Basin Initiative. Ethiopia firmly believe that the goals of NBI in ensuring sustainable utilization of the Nile water, based on the principle of reasonable and equitable utilization, can be achieved through genuine cooperation among all riparian states. This requires signing and ratifying the Comprehensive Framework Agreement, an agreement which is the result of ten years of deliberation and embodies the aspiration of all the riparian states.

The National Electoral Board preparations continue

Regulations for elections in Ethiopia are included in three major proclamations: the "Amended Electoral Law of Ethiopia" (Proclamation No. 532/2007); the "Revised Political Parties Registration Proclamation" (Proclamation No. 573/2008); and the "Loss of Mandate of the Members of the House of Peoples' Representatives Proclamation" (Proclamation No. 88/1997). There are also a number of additional regulations: "Regulation on Licensing, Procedure and Code of Conduct for Local Election Observers" (Regulation No. 3/2010); "Regulation Concerning the Procedure for Determining the Appointment for Government Financial Support to Political Parties" (Regulation 5/2009); "Regulations on the Code of Conduct for the Mass Media and Journalists on the Manner of Reporting about Elections" (Regulation 6/ 2010). These and other regulations and directives concerning the organization of elections are comprehensively presented in a document entitled "Compendium of Electoral Legislation" published in 2011 by the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia.

Based on these proclamations, regulations and directives, all promulgated by the House of the Peoples' Representatives, the majority of preparations for this year's May election are now largely complete. The procedures have been steadily followed over the last few months by the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia according to the timetable laid down; and all these efforts are aimed at conducting a democratic, free and fair

election at the federal and regional levels.

Last week on Thursday (February 19) the Public Relations Director of the National Electoral Board, Ato Demissew Benti, announced the closure of registration of voters which had been underway since January 9. He said that over 34.8 million electors, accounting for over 97 percent of the eligible voters, had taken their election cards in preparation to cast votes in the election, adding that of the total electors registered, 16.7 million were female. The Public Relations Director noted that “fifty-seven of the 60 political parties registered to contest the election have fielded candidates that will compete for seats in the federal parliament and regional councils.” He said that “more than 6,000 candidates including 11 private contestants have been registered; over 1,308 of them women.” Of the total candidates, 1,884 will contest seats in the National Parliament, the House of People’s Representatives and 4,166 will contest seats in the Regional Councils of the nine Regional States and the two Chartered Cities.

The National Electoral Board has continued its further preparations. These have included the allocation of broadcast media air time and print media platforms for the political parties’ campaigning, training for election officials and briefings for the public on a regular basis. Proclamation No. 532/2007 Article 59 on the use of the Mass Media for election campaigns stipulates that utilization of the state-owned media should be in accordance with directives from the Ministry of Information together with the Electoral Board. A joint press briefing was held on Friday last week (February 20) by the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority emphasizing the proper utilization of allocated television airtime. The heads of Public Relations at the NEBE and of the Broadcast Authority gave details of the allocation and scheduling of the media platforms which will be more organized this time round. The briefing underlined the importance of the media discharging its professional responsibilities effectively and emphasized the contestants should make use of the platform appropriately.

The election law limits the maximum number of candidates in any one constituency in Addis Ababa to 12, and the NEBE decided that in constituencies where this figure had been exceeded, lots should be drawn to decide on the proper number of candidates. In Addis Ababa, a total of 328 candidates were fielded by 25 political parties. The NEBE therefore arranged for lots to be drawn to bring the numbers down to the correct figure. Candidates from the six parties which attracted the highest numbers of votes in the previous election were automatically qualified but the other candidates were drawn by lot. The Head of the Addis Ababa branch of the NEBE, Ato Getahun Gebremedhin, said the process followed appropriate legal procedures and that as the parties were all aware of the law, there had been no complaints.

As part of its job of enhancing civic awareness about the electoral processes and contributing to the country’s efforts to build a democratic system, the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia is also giving training to election officials who will staff the special polling stations in the military academies and in the higher education institutions. It has already conducted training for election officials to staff the Defense Force special polling stations. It will be giving training for those involved in higher educational establishments and at the special polling station at the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam at the end of March.

It was also announced on Wednesday this week that the televised debates between the parties will be starting on March 13. The Joint Council of the Political Parties has agreed on nine subjects as the agendas for the televised debates between the political parties during the debating sessions as part of the efforts to help voters make informed decisions in choosing where to place their vote. The subjects identified for debate in the televised election programs cover a variety of subjects: the Multi-Party System and Building Democracy; Federalism; Agricultural and Rural Policy; Urban Development and Industrial Policy; Good Governance and the Rule of Law; National Security; Foreign Policy; Infrastructure; and Education and Health.