

A Week in the Horn 31st January 2014

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News in Brief :

African Union

The 22nd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the AU Heads of State and Government met in Addis Ababa at AU Headquarters on Thursday and Friday this week (January 30 and 31). President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania has been elected the Chairperson of the African Union for 2014, replacing Prime Minister Hailemariam of Ethiopia. **(See article)**

The 24th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union opened Monday (January 27), at the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa. The Council, in its three-day meeting (January 27-29), elected new members of the AU's Peace and Security Council and prepared the agenda for the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government later in the week. **(See article)**

The first ever African Union Ministerial Retreat for the members of the AU's Executive Council of Foreign Ministers was held in Bahr Dar last weekend (January 25-26) under the theme: **"Defining Agenda 2063: Towards a peaceful, integrated and prosperous Africa"**, and the Ministers discussed a framework document outlining "Agenda 2063: A shared Strategic Framework for Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development". **(See article)**

The 24th Extraordinary Summit of the Inter Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) Assembly of Heads of State and Government was held on Friday (January 31). Chaired by Prime Minister Hailemariam, it was attended by the Presidents of Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia and Sudan, the Vice-President of South Sudan and Uganda's Foreign Minister. **(See article)**

Ethiopia

Prime Minister Hailemariam met with the US Deputy Secretary of State, William Burns on Thursday (January 30). Discussions focused on South Sudan and Somalia. Mr Burns said he appreciated Ethiopia's efforts to encourage peace and security in the region.

Prime Minister Hailemariam led talks with the Foreign Minister of Denmark, Mr Holger K. Nielsen on Tuesday (January 28) on bilateral affairs and regional issues. Mr Nielsen said his government was ready to continue support for more Danish investment and to help Ethiopia's goal of a green growth strategy to which Denmark also subscribes.

The Prime Minister of Finland, Mr Jyrki Katainen, and Finland's Minister for International Development, Mr Pekka Haavisto, at the head of a business delegation, visited Ethiopia this week, holding talks with Prime Minister Hailemariam, Foreign Minister Dr Tedros and other officials. Prime Minister Katainen also paid a courtesy call on President Dr Mulatu Teshome. An Ethiopia-Finland Business Forum was held on Tuesday (January 28) **(See article)**

Mr Jeff Immelt, the Chief Executive of General Electric International Inc., on a visit to Ethiopia, met Prime Minister Hailemariam, Foreign Minister Dr Tedros and Dr Kesteberhane, Minister of Health. Mr Immelt expressed interest in expanding GEC's activities and investments in Ethiopia, and signed an MoU with the Ministry of Finance and Development.

Foreign Minister, Dr Tedros Adhanom, met with Valerie Amos, Emergency Relief Coordinator and UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs on Thursday (January 30). Discussion focused on the current humanitarian situation in South Sudan and Somalia.

Foreign Minister Dr Tedros held discussions with UK Minister for Africa, Mark Simmonds, on Tuesday (January 28) on the situation in South Sudan as well as on strengthening economic ties between Ethiopia and the UK. A UK business delegation is due to visit Ethiopia soon.

On Monday (January 27), Foreign Minister Dr Tedros held discussions with New Zealand Foreign Minister, Murray Macculy. The Ministers signed a Cooperation Arrangement on Promoting Government to Government Partnership in Food Security, to lay down the framework for cooperation between the two countries in the area of food security.

Dr Tedros held talks on bilateral and regional issues with Professor Dr Ahmet Davutoglu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey on Friday (January 31).

The Third Ethiopia-Algeria Joint Ministerial Committee Meeting was held at the weekend (January 24-26), with delegations led by Dr Tedros Adhanom, Foreign Minister of Ethiopia and Mr Ramtane Lamamra, Foreign Minister of Algeria. **(See article)**

On Thursday (January 30) State Minister Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos held meetings with China's Special Representative on UN Affairs, and with Noro Mitsuiya, Vice Foreign Minister of Japan. He also met with Ambassador Berik Aryn, Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Egypt and Morocco, and Permanent Representative to the AU.

State Minister Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos met the Deputy Foreign Minister of Egypt, Ambassador Hamid Sanad Loza on Tuesday (January 28). Ambassador Berhane said "as families of the Nile Basin, our fates are intertwined, giving us more reason to cooperate than to diverge." Egypt has invited Foreign Minister Dr Tedros Adhanom to visit Cairo.

State Minister Ambassador Berhane met on Monday (January 27) with Mr Deepak Obhrai, Parliamentary Secretary of the Foreign Ministry of Canada. Discussions covered strengthening of bilateral relations and considered a Foreign Investment Protection Agreement, and avoidance of double taxation as well as trade and tourism agreements and a possible increase in Ethiopian Airlines flights to Canada.

State Minister, Ambassador Berhane Gebre-Christos met with Ms Tanja Rassmusson, Sweden's State Secretary for International Cooperation and Development on Tuesday (January 28). Ms Rassmusson said Sweden was

planning to focus more on trade and investment in its relations with Ethiopia, and wanted to cooperate on climate change issues.

State Minister Dewano Kedir met with an Irish business delegation headed by Sean Hoy, Deputy Director of the Africa Section of the Irish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, on Friday (January, 24).

Ethiopia's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Canada, Ambassador Birtukan Ayano, presented her letters of credence to the Governor General of Canada, David Johnston on Tuesday (January 28).

Ethiopia and Italy on Monday [27] signed a grant agreement for US\$9.52 million to support healthcare programs and help meet MDG goals in reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, and combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

Djibouti

Djibouti's Religion and Endowment Minister, Adam Hassan Adam on Saturday (January 25) met Somaliland's Minister of Information and National Guidance, Abdilahi Mohamed Dahir and Presidential Spokesman, Ahmed Suleiman Duhul, who were on a working visit for discussions on cooperation and working ties.

Djibouti has signed an agreement with the Chinese company Touchroad International Holdings to support a number of tourism and development projects in the country. Touchroad will finance the construction of a new shipyard at Obock, and new luxury hotels and an airport on the Ras Syan and Seven Brothers Islands.

Eritrea

President Isaias on Tuesday (January 28) met a Sudan government delegation of Mr Mekkawi Mohamed Awad, Minister of Oil, and Mr Mutaz Musa, Minister of Water Resources and Electricity. Discussions covered the setting up of a Technical Committee for Energy Cooperation, following an agreement between President Isaias and President Omar Al-Bashir during President Al-Bashir's recent visit to Eritrea (January 16-18).

Kenya

Kenya authorities have criticized Human Rights Watch's Annual Report on Kenya as "outrageous and incomprehensible", pointing out that Kenya was fully cooperating with the ICC, that the government was fast-tracking police reforms, and that last year's Kenya Information and Communications (Amendment) Act and Media Council of Kenya Act were intended to enhance factual reporting and "curb malice".

A court sentenced a Chinese ivory smuggler to a fine of 20 million shillings (US\$233,000) or seven years in jail, after he was arrested last week with an elephant ivory tusk weighting 3.4 kilos. It was the first conviction under Kenya's tough new anti-poaching law which imposes heavy sentences of up to life imprisonment for dealing in wildlife trophies and killing endangered animals.

Somalia

Prime Minister Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmed on Sunday (January 26) opened a two-day Cabinet conference to discuss the priorities, implementation and delivery of his government's 2014 Program. The meeting was also attended by President Mohamud and the Speaker of Parliament, Mohamed Sheikh Osman.

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) on Tuesday (January 28) started a training program in Kismayo for over 1,000 soldiers from the Interim Jubba Administration.

Somalia's former Hizbul Islam leader, Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, arrested in June last year after he defected from Al-Shabaab, is reported to have been moved from prison to house arrest in Mogadishu, after apparently

agreeing to renounce violence and terrorism. President Mohamud said last week that the future of Sheikh Aweys would be decided after the National Security Agency had finished questioning him.

Puntland's new President Abdiweli Gaas was inaugurated at the weekend and announced a new cabinet for the Puntland State of Somalia with a total of 46 Ministers and deputy ministers. **(See article)**

The United Arab Emirates has agreed to carry out development projects in ten strategic districts in Somalia, building schools, police stations, municipal compounds, health centers and children's playgrounds, among other facilities, with particular focus on districts liberated from Al-Shabaab. The agreement was announced at a press conference in Mogadishu on Monday (January 27).

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees says Somalia is still not safe for the repatriation of refugees on a large scale and has called on countries hosting Somali refugees not to repatriate them yet. UNHCR said on Wednesday (January 29) that Somali nationals should not be forcibly returned to Somalia "unless the returning state is convinced that the persons involved will not be at risk of persecution."

President Mohamud, who told the AU Summit that Somalia was making "great strides" towards peace and security, wants the U.N. Security Council to extend the partial lifting of an arms embargo beyond March, when the exemption is due to end, because Somali troops need more and better equipment to continue the battle against Al-Shabaab.

South Sudan

The South Sudan government said on Tuesday (January 28) that it would charge Pagan Amum, Majak D'Agoot, Oyai Deng Ajak and Ezekiel Lol Gatkuoth with treason for involvement in last December's alleged coup attempt. Three others, Vice-President Riek Machar, former Unity State Governor Taban Deng Gai and former Environment Minister Alfred Lado Gore, would be charged in absentia. Seven other detained politicians have been freed and arrived in Kenya on Wednesday.

The US State Department welcomed the release of the seven political detainees as "an important step towards an inclusive political dialogue under the auspices of IGAD", but U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, William Burns, said on the sidelines of the AU Summit that the US "will continue to urge the release of the remaining four detainees".

Ambassador Seyoum Mesfin, IGAD's Chief Mediator for South Sudan, said on Thursday (January 30) that the cease-fire in South Sudan was largely holding, though the South Sudan government and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement in Opposition rebels over the weekend accused each other of breaking the ceasefire just one day after it came into effect after the agreement signed in Addis Ababa on January 23.

UN Secretary General, Ban ki-Moon expressed concern over the reports of "sporadic" violence in part of South Sudan's Upper Nile and Unity states on Tuesday (January 28), and called for immediate cessation of hostilities, saying it was "critical that both parties implement the cessation of hostilities agreement in full and immediately."

Sudan

In a long promised speech, Monday (January 27), Sudan's President Omar Al-Bashir called for political and economic revival in Sudan and for opposition and rebels to participate in comprehensive and inclusive dialogue with free participation in elections and a political agenda of liberalization. He said the cornerstone must be peace as economic development would not be possible without peace. Measures to fight poverty should include upgrading competitiveness of the workforce, provision of cheap energy and focus on production of food crops.

The 22nd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union

The 22nd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union opened on Thursday (January 30) under the theme of **Agriculture and Food Security**, launching “2014 Year of Agriculture and Food Security, Marking the 10th Anniversary of the Adoption of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP)”.

In its two days of deliberation (January 30-31) the Assembly, which has elected the President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, as the Chairperson of the Union for 2014, will adopt decisions on the basis of the recommendations of the Executive Council and consider reports of the various bodies of the AU. These will include the Progress Report of the Commission on the African Union on Agenda 2063, and the Report of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) on its activities and the State of Peace and Security in Africa, including the activities of the Panel of the Wise and renewal of its membership, as well as the Report on the assessment of the African Standby Force (ASF) and the Operationalization of the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises (ACIRC).

The Assembly will also consider the Reports of President Macky Sall, President of the Republic of Senegal and Chairperson of the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee (HSGOC); President Dr Ernest Bai Koroma, President of the Republic of Sierra Leone and Chairperson of the Committee of Ten on the UN Reforms; President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, President of the United Republic of Tanzania and Coordinator of the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC), including the outcome of Climate Change Negotiations at the 19th Conference of Parties (COP 19) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Other reports considered will include the Report of the Commission on the Implementation of previous decisions on UNCCD and the outcomes of COP 11 held in Windhoek, Namibia, in September 2013; the Report of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia and Chairperson of the High-Level Committee on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Proposed Draft African Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda; and the Report on the International Conference on Maternal, New-born and Child Health, held in Johannesburg, South Africa in August last year.

The Chairperson of the Commission will also present her report on the Implementation of Decision on Africa's Relationship with the International Criminal Court (ICC), to be considered by Heads of State and Government. The Assembly will adopt the appointment of the ten members of the Peace and Security Council elected for a two-year term. Ethiopia along with Burundi, Chad, Gambia, Guinea, Libya, Namibia, Niger, Tanzania and South Africa were elected. It will adopt the decisions and recommendations of the 24th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council as well as the decisions and declarations of the 22nd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union.

In his opening remarks, Prime Minister Hailemariam, as the outgoing chair of the AU, noted the theme of this year's African Union summit, "Agriculture and Food Security" marking the 10th anniversary of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) and said that it was time for Africa to celebrate the progress made over the past decade in implementing CAADP's goals and objectives and renewing commitments to do more in the future. Emphasizing that agricultural transformation holds the key to the success of collective efforts to realize its vision, Prime Minister Hailemariam said more and more countries were allocating 10% of their national budget to the agricultural sector.

Reflecting on Ethiopia's Chairmanship of the past year, the Prime Minister said Ethiopia has achieved most of the priorities it set when it took over the chairmanship in January 2013. Top of the priorities was the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the OAU/AU. "As a proud host of our continental organization for the last 50 years," he said, it was a special time to assume the Chairmanship and mark this anniversary together with the Commission, member States and other relevant stakeholders. The Jubilee celebration had been marked by a collective reflection of the past, present and future under the overarching theme of "Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance".

Prime Minister Hailemariam said Ethiopia had assumed the chairmanship at a time when multilateral negotiations have started in earnest to formulate a global development framework for the post-2015 era. During this formulation process, he said, it was imperative for Ethiopia "to ensure that the progress made thus far in

achieving the Millennium Development Goals is sustained and that Africa's development priorities are fully taken on board in the post-2015 Development Agenda as well as in the formulation of the Sustainable Development Goals." Stressing the need for Africa to speak with one voice on the basis of an African Common Position, he said the Post-2015 development Agenda "is currently perhaps the most important process with respect to defining the nature of international development cooperation for the next decades." The Committee of African Heads of State and Government to lead efforts in canvassing support for Africa's development priorities in the context of the post-2015 development agenda under the chairmanship of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is a critical element in this. The Committee report will urge the Assembly to take the necessary action soon as negotiations on the formulation of Sustainable Development Goals is going to commence in March.

Prime Minister Hailemariam told the Assembly that there had been enhanced cooperation and partnership between Africa and its strategic partners during the past year. He cited the 3rd Africa-South America Summit, the 5th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V), the 3rd Afro-Arab Summit and the 12th Annual AGOA Forum. These partnership forums, he said, served as platforms to advance Africa's development agenda and further strengthen its partnerships to ensuring mutual benefit and win-win cooperation. Ethiopia had also participated at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Warsaw (COP-19) representing Africa, he said, and delivered Africa's key messages on the on-going global climate change negotiations at the G-8 and G-20 Summits held in Northern Ireland and St. Petersburg, advancing the continental development agenda.

The Prime Minister noted that the other major preoccupation during the past year was the issue of peace and security. While he was encouraged to note the progress that Africa has made in resolving some of the conflict situations on the continent, "I am nevertheless deeply concerned by the emergence of new conflicts which, if not addressed urgently, will have the potential to seriously threaten our collective peace and security and undermine the gains that we have made in recent years." He referred to the unfolding situation in South Sudan and Central African Republic and emphasized the need to find urgent solutions "to rescue these countries from falling into the abyss". He said: "Failure to do so will have serious implications for peace and security in the region and indeed on the whole continent." Helping these two States to restore peace and stability and address their internal challenges was primarily the responsibility of Africans, he underlined. In South Sudan, he emphasized that "both protagonists should know that the problem cannot be resolved through the barrel of a gun and they should be fully committed to sitting at the negotiating table without any preconditions so as to find a political settlement to the crisis." He called on South Sudanese political actors to rise to the occasion and prevent the country from falling over the precipice. The parties should demonstrate the necessary political leadership and compromise in order that the peace process, initiated by IGAD and supported by the African Union, the United Nations and other international partners, should succeed and achieve peace and durable reconciliation.

On the Central African Republic, he said "the senseless violence that has taken a heavy toll on the civilian population" remained a matter of concern for Africa. He emphasized the necessity to take urgent action to avert further escalation of the problems. The African-led Peace Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA) faced daunting challenges in restoring peace and security and ensuring a successful transition towards a constitutional order. He urged the international community to remain fully committed to supporting the Central African Republic in the difficult task of stabilizing itself and organizing elections to ensure a successful political transition.

Prime Minister Hailemariam commended the conduct of legislative and presidential elections in a number of countries, pointing out that elections had certainly helped some member States to come out of political crisis and others to consolidate democratic governance. In this regard, he welcomed the restoration of constitutional order in Mali, and urged ECOWAS, the African Union, the United Nations and other partners to continue their support to help consolidate the gains made and enable the country to address its many challenges. He also commended "the people of Madagascar for conducting a successful presidential election, which is critical in ending the country's political crisis." Looking forward to the holding of elections, which are expected to facilitate the restoration of constitutional order in Guinea Bissau in March, he expressed his appreciation of ECOWAS and other international partners for their sustained efforts to assist Guinea Bissau.

Prime Minister Hailemariam cited the adoption of the Strategic Plan of the Union for the years 2014-2017 and emphasized the need to mobilize all necessary efforts of member States, the Commission and other organs of our Union to ensure the implementation of the eight priorities identified in the strategic plan to make a difference to the lives of people. He indicated the importance of elaborating the Framework for Agenda 2063 through a consultative process involving all sections of African society and called on the leaders at the Assembly to add their input and contribution. This would provide a guide to Africa's efforts over coming years as the AU strives to achieve the socio-economic transformation of the continent. Emphasizing the need to build on the progress achieved in the past year and calling for more effort to address some of the still emerging challenges of the continent, Prime Minister Hailemariam handed over the Chairmanship of the African Union to the President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz. He pledged his full support for future work on these issues and for advancing the objectives of the Union.

In his acceptance speech, President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz expressed his gratitude at being elected the Chairperson of the African Union for 2014. He pledged to work to achieve the noble objectives to which Africans aspire, including the strengthening of the role and place of Africa in the world and the preservation of its unity in the context of democracy, freedom, peace, security, stability and good governance. President Aziz said he proposed to hold a major international conference, under the auspices of the African Union, devoted to migration and its impact on African economies and societies, as well as on the countries of destination, to draw up a shared vision on this phenomenon, to minimize its tragic dimension.

UN Deputy Secretary General, Ambassador Jan Eliasson, in his statement to the Assembly said the Summit was being held at a time of advancement and impressive growth for Africa while the rest of the world still struggled to recover from the economic crisis. He reminded the Assembly that this growth should now be translated into transformative economic development, more jobs, greater equality and better living conditions and said "the United Nations is your unwavering partner in this pursuit." He said that the AU Agenda 2063 could serve to mobilize Africa to fulfill its potential. It was a fitting tribute to the OAU/AU jubilee, and he noted Africa had already made major strides towards the Millennium Development Goals, especially in education, maternal and child health, and in gender equality, but many MDG targets remained unfulfilled. The Deputy Secretary General expressed his admiration for the leadership Africa had shown in formulating the post-2015 agenda and applauded the emerging African Common Position's focus on structural transformation and inclusive economic growth. There was hardly any higher priority for the United Nations than tangible and sustainable development in Africa, he said, and he pledged UN support to African-owned and African-led efforts to achieve this objective.

The 24th Session of the African Union Executive Council

The 24th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union opened on Monday (January 27), at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa. In his opening remarks, Ethiopia's Foreign Minister, Dr Tedros Adhanom, Chairperson of the Executive Council, expressed his sadness over the death last year of Nelson Mandela and reminded the Council of the need to remember his legacy of working for peace and stability. At a time when Africa was striving for the realization of its renaissance, Dr Tedros said it was unfortunate that peace and security had been deteriorating, especially in South Sudan and the Central African Republic. The situation in both countries was alarming and there was no justification for the continuation of the crises in either places even for a day, he warned. A failure to find solutions will have serious implications for peace and security in the region and indeed the whole continent. Helping those two States to restore peace and stability and address their internal challenges must be a priority for the continent, he added.

Dr Tedros congratulated the Government of South Sudan and the SPLM in Opposition for signing the Agreements on the Cessation of Hostilities and the Question of Detainees and reiterated a call for the full implementation of the agreements by both parties without preconditions. He urged the two Parties to fully cooperate with the IGAD mediation team to address the root causes of the crisis. The current situation in South Sudan, he said, needs wisdom and magnanimity. Recalling the many sacrifices paid by the people of South Sudan over recent decades, Dr Tedros said South Sudanese political leaders should rise above individual interests to save their country from falling over a precipice. Dr Tedros said "the parties should continue to demonstrate the necessary political leadership and compromise so that the peace process initiated by IGAD and supported by the African Union, the

United Nations and all other international partners succeeds." At the same time, the rest of the international community should "continue to put its weight behind the regional effort to find a peaceful solution." He emphasized it was crucial that "unity of purpose among all of us and the international community at large sends the same message to all the South Sudanese stakeholders to achieve the desired result."

The situation in the Central African Republic, where violence had taken a heavy toll on the civilian population, also remained a matter of concern, he said. Again, it was crucial to take urgent action to avert further escalation. Dr Tedros welcomed the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution 2127 (2013) which authorized the deployment of the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA) for a period of 12 months. He noted "with satisfaction the transfer of authority from the ECCAS Peace Consolidation Mission in Central African Republic (MICOPAX) to MISCA." The transfer took effect on December 19 last year. At the same time, he warned that MISCA would face daunting challenges in restoring peace and security and ensuring a successful transition to constitutional order. He urged the international community to remain fully committed to support the CAR in stabilizing itself and organizing elections to ensure a successful political transition.

On Africa's relation with the International Criminal Court (ICC), Dr Tedros recalled the Ministerial Contact Group's efforts to undertake consultations with members of the United Nations Security Council, individually and collectively, to put Africa's case. The Ministerial Contact Group established following the decision of the Extraordinary AU Summit of October last year argued that cases before the ICC did not solely concern the involved countries but had wider ramifications for peace and security on the continent. In addition, by making clear that the Security Council had the primary responsibility in the maintenance of international peace and security in accordance with the United Nations Charter and in line with article 16 of the Rome Statute, the Group argued the Council had been given the power to defer cases before the ICC for a year. The Group had conveyed Africa's request for deferral, but, regrettably, he noted, some members of the Council had decided to stand on the wrong side of history, rejecting a legitimate request from Africa.

On economic development, Dr Tedros noted that prospects for the continent remained strong. He emphasized the need to sustain the recent high-growth trajectory in order to lift millions of Africans out of poverty and ensure sustainable development. For this, he advised, Africans should bring about structural transformation through economic diversification and industrialization and ensure inclusive growth and the creation of jobs for its youth.

Dr Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, noted that "having just concluded our Anniversary year, held under the theme 'Pan Africanism and African Renaissance', we are looking towards the future". She said Africa was now looking to what must be done to realize its vision of "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena". Over the last year, she said, consultations had been taking place on Agenda 2063, with Africans from all walks of life looking at such questions as: "What sort of Africa do we want? How do we build this Africa? What role will we play towards the realization of this dream?" She called once again on all Africans and peoples of African descent in the Diaspora to contribute to the call to define the Africa they want. Dr Zuma affirmed that Africa was in a stronger position to harmonize a common position and engage on issues that matters to the continent and its people, "because Agenda 2063 provides us with an overarching vision of where we want to go and what needs to be done."

UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ECA, Carlos Lopes, also noted that in the midst of numerous challenges there were no doubt some success stories. The agricultural revolution allowed nations to take their peoples out of poverty through systematic improvements to production, storage, processing and use. Increases in agricultural productivity had contributed immensely to fast-tracking the structural transformation of economies as surplus from increased agricultural productivity fueled industrial growth. Dr Lopes also noted however, that Africa's agriculture had yet to be used as a true tool for transformation, even though it had within its reach the capacity, the people, the resources and opportunities to lead the way on sustainable development. A truly transformational agricultural sector required several prerequisites for a coherent policy drive, he said. Among these, he noted, re-emphasizing strategies and policies for structural agricultural transformation; and reducing the vulnerability of millions of African small-scale farmers and consumers to high or volatile prices,

while increasing the resilience to shocks. While recognizing Africa's industrialization must be commodity-based, Dr Lopes suggested the need to make the case that this was the way to redirect concern over climate change. Among his recommendations were to redefine industrial policy to avoid a blueprint approach, retaining opportunities for green growth and remaining firm against unfair trade policies and protocols. He also underlined the need to keep growth up and make it transformative. He said "Africa's agricultural transformation model must capitalize on our strengths and resources whilst taking advantage of new advances in science and leapfrogging obsolete technology."

During its two-day session, the Executive Council, the forum for the Foreign Ministers of AU, heard the annual report of the Council for the year 2013, considered the progress report of the African Union Commission on the Africa 2063 Agenda and other items adopted by the Council. It also adopted five items proposed by member countries. One of these was Ethiopia's proposal for the Establishment of an African Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (African CDCP). Ethiopia's Health Minister Dr Kestebirhan Admassu, told the Council this would help to coordinate continent-wide efforts to tackle health problems and enhance Africa's self-reliance in disease prevention and control. Other items were: Adoption of the Implementation of the Integrated African Strategy for the Seas and Oceans 2050 (Strategy AIM 2050); Extension of the Pan African E Network Project within the Frameworks of Partnership between India and Africa; Evaluation of the Ouagadougou 2004 Declaration and Plan of Action on Employment and the Fight against Poverty; and the adoption of the Encyclopedia Africana Project.

Adopting the Progress Report of the Commission on Agenda 2063, the Executive Council passed a decision to establish a ministerial committee to follow up the process of developing the framework document, incorporating contributions of member states. The framework document will be presented to the Ordinary Summit of the Union in July. After the success of the Bahir Dar Retreat, the Council decided to recommend that it should be institutionalized in the future. The Executive Council also adopted the report on the activities of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights and the African Court on Human and People's Rights; the Report of the Commission on the Situation in the Middle East and Palestine; and the annual report of the Commission and the Permanent Representatives Committee for the year 2013, as well as reports of Ministerial Conferences held over the previous year covering a wide range of issues including finance, regional integration, health and population control and the report of the ad-hoc Ministerial Committee on the scale of assessed contributions of member states. The 25th Ordinary Session decided that the next meeting of the Executive Council will be hosted by Equatorial Guinea.

The Executive Council also elected ten members of the Peace and Security Council (PSC). Ethiopia and Tanzania were elected as members of the PSC for the next two years for the East Africa Region; Burundi and Chad from the Central African Region; Guinea, Gambia, and Niger from the West African Region; Libya from North Africa; and South Africa and Namibia from the Southern African Region. Egypt, the Central African Republic and Guinea-Bissau as suspended states, were not eligible to participate in the vote. The PSC is composed of 15 members of which five are elected for a three-year term, while ten others are elected for two-year terms. According to the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the PSC, criteria for election includes, contributions to the promotion and maintenance of peace and security in Africa; experience in peace support operations; capacity and commitment to shoulder the responsibility that membership entails; and participation in conflict resolution, peacemaking and peace building operations in Africa.

The Executive Council meeting ended on Wednesday, and in his closing speech, Dr Tedros said he felt the Council could be satisfied with its "fruitful and productive deliberations on all the items on our agenda". He thanked members for their cooperation and their constructive inputs, and for their support during the year. He hoped Ethiopia's chairmanship had lived up to expectations of member states, and took the opportunity to extend his thanks to the Chairperson of the Commission Dr Dlamini Zuma and her team for their work during the year as well as to the entire staff of the Commission.

.....The First Ministerial Retreat for the African Union in Bahir Dar

With the aim of brainstorming and exchanging ideas on critical issues relating to Africa's Agenda 2063, and the state of the African Union, a three-day Ministerial Retreat of the AU Executive Council hosted by and under the

Chairpersonship of Ethiopia was held in Bahir Dar, capital of the Amhara Regional State (January 24-26). The overall theme was “Defining Agenda 2063 for Africa”, and the retreat was attended by AU Foreign Ministers and Members of the Executive Council, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Dr Carlos Lopez; Erastus Mwencha, Deputy Chairperson of the AU Commission; AU Commissioners, and members of the Permanent Representatives Committee and other officials.

Agenda 2063 seeks to elaborate the agenda for Africa for the next fifty years, to galvanize and unite all Africans and the Diaspora in action around a common vision of a peaceful, integrated and prosperous Africa, driven by its citizens and taking its rightful place in the world. The proposed overall framework will provide internal coherence and coordination for various continental, regional and national structures and plans adopted by the African Union, Member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs).

The discussions in the Bahir Dar retreat were guided by presentations from lead speakers on five sub-themes: “Learning from the Past: State of the Union, Achievements and Challenges over the last 50 years”; “Towards a Paradigm Shift: Keeping the Momentum for sustainable peace and structural transformation in Africa”; “Agenda 2063: strategizing for the realization of a peaceful, integrated and prosperous Africa”; “Threats and Risks: addressing internal and external challenges confronting Africa”; and “Critical Success Factors: creating the enabling condition to unleash Africa's potential”.

Ethiopia’s Foreign Affairs Minister, the Chairperson of the AU Executive Council, Dr Tedros Adhanom, in his opening remarks, highlighted Africa’s need to address such issues as economic emancipation, peace and stability, acceleration of rapid economic growth, governance and democratization, leadership and the need to build a critical mass of people with a developmental mindset, in order to realize the continent’s long term agendas. He emphasized the significance of Agenda 2063 for the future of Africa and the achievement of the African Renaissance. “If we want to claim the 21st century as ours and realize the African Renaissance, there is a need for a paradigm shift in our political and socio-economic governance and development”, Dr Tedros stressed.

Dr Dlamini Zuma, African Union Commission Chairperson, said that Africa had just emerged from the collective reflections on Pan Africanism and the African Renaissance that preceded the Golden Jubilee celebrations, and looked ahead towards the next fifty years. She noted that the Retreat presented an opportunity to revisit some of the debates in a convivial atmosphere. Dr Dlamini Zuma said that the decision to hold the retreat to discuss Agenda 2063 was well-timed, offering the opportunity “to enable this august body to add its collective contribution towards the Africa we want and the milestones we must set towards this end”. She pointed out that the Africa’s Agenda 2063 discussions were coming after a year of robust consultations with civil society on the future they wanted.

Representing the host Regional State, Mr Gedu Andargachew, President of the Amhara National Regional State, welcomed participants to Bahir Dar, noting that the event would offer a good opportunity for our people to enhance their understanding of our continental organization and its activities, and for participants to see something of the development of Ethiopia outside Addis Ababa.

Among presentations was an imaginative e-mail from the future (2063), to Kwame Nkruma written by Dr. Dlamini Zuma, underlining the dreams and aspirations of a peaceful, integrated and prosperous Africa, the dream shared by all Africans. The Chairperson noted in her e-mail “from the future” that “Planning fifty years ahead allowed us to dream, think creatively, and sometimes crazily - to see us leapfrog beyond the immediate challenges.” (<http://summits.au.int/en/22ndsummit/events/agenda-2063-e-mail-future-presentation-dr-nkosazana-dlamini-zuma-chairperson-au-co>).

At the end of the Ministerial Retreat, members of the Executive Council acceded to the continental consensus of the African vision and agreed that the dream of an Africa that is integrated, peaceful and prosperous was achievable, provided the future is constructed on the basis of action taken now. The Retreat noted that Africa’s transformation was taking place in the context of an unfolding global situation and various trends. These included ongoing realignments of the global economic, geopolitical, security and social landscapes; changes and advances in technology, production, trade, knowledge and labor markets; the opportunities presented by global

demographic trends; and the appearance of a growing global middle class in emerging and developing countries and regions. After analyzing previous and potential threats to the continent, the Retreat agreed that the challenges could be mitigated and turned into opportunities through collective strategies and effective public policies and actions. The Ministers agreed on the need to position Africa in the world by strengthening their common perspectives on partnerships that reflects the unity of the continent and on its priorities and perspectives on matters of global importance. This in turn would provide for increased bargaining power.

During the three-day meeting, key enablers that could be expected to facilitate Africa's drive for transformation were identified. These included, among others, effective management and the use of African resources to provide for the structural transformation of African economies and societies, for investment in human capital development, for the building and promotion of peace and security, and for effective and visionary leadership with political commitment and accountability coupled with effective, accountable and participatory institutions and governance, domestic mobilization of finances and resources, accelerated regional integration, paradigm shifts in attitudes and values, and taking charge of the narrative and the development of Brand Africa. Two specific propositions were made, one to establish a Ministerial Committee, which will work together with the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the African Development Bank to finalize Agenda 2063. The second to create an African platform where political and business leaders as well as all other concerned stakeholders could regularly meet to brainstorm about the continent's development and integration agendas.

Agenda 2063 is a broad strategic framework for collective action to fast-track Africa's socio-economic and political development. Participants of the Retreat identified a number of strategic initiatives to give added impetus to this process. Among key initiatives proposed was accelerating human capital development, encouraging regional integration, strengthening the financial independence of key continental bodies and expanding efforts to end conflicts.

In his closing remarks, Dr Tedros Adhanom expressed satisfaction at the successful conclusion of the Retreat. He emphasized that "dreams and aspirations will not be translated into a reality without making a paradigm shift in our political and economic governance," and urged that the meeting "should be the beginning of a strong political commitment to implementing our vision and meet the aspirations of our peoples". Acknowledging Africa's internal and external challenges still militated against the prospect for peace and prosperity, Dr Tedros underlined the responsibility of African leaders to lay a solid foundation for the realization of the continent's dream. We should demonstrate the necessary strong leadership, political commitment and selfless sacrifice to take the tough decisions to ensure a better future for the African peoples, he said.

The IGAD Extraordinary Summit on South Sudan

The IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government held its 24th Extraordinary Summit to discuss the situation in South Sudan on the sidelines of the AU Assembly on January 31 under the Chairmanship of Prime Minister Hailemariam of Ethiopia, current IGAD chair. The meeting was preceded by an IGAD Ministerial Conference the previous day.

The Assembly was attended by President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir of the Sudan, President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti, President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of Somalia, President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, Vice President James Wani Igga of South Sudan and Sam Kutesa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uganda. Also present were Ambassador Ismail Chergui, Commissioner of Peace and Security of the African Union Commission; Ambassador Mahboub Maalim, Executive Secretary of IGAD; and representatives of the People's Republic of China, the European Union, of the IGAD Partners Forum (IPF) and the Troika of the Governments of Norway, the UK and the US.

President Uhuru Kenyatta, current rapporteur of IGAD, presented a report on the situation in South Sudan. Congratulating South Sudan on the signing of the Agreements on Cessation of Hostilities and the Question of Detainees, he told the Assembly that seven of the detainees had arrived in Nairobi. He noted that there were accusations by both sides over observance of the ceasefire agreement. Stressing the importance of abiding by the agreements, he appealed to both sides to observe the letter and spirit of the agreement.

Ambassador Donald Booth, US Special Envoy to Sudan and South Sudan, spoke on behalf of the US government and the Troika, assuring the Assembly that the US Government and the Troika would support the operationalization of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (MVM) both technically and financially. He noted the MVM would report to the Special Envoys on the observance of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and that it would coordinate its activities with the mandate of UNMISS. He welcomed the release of the seven detainees and stressed that IGAD and its partners should work for truly inclusive dialogue, adding that “the rest of the detainees should be released through expedited process.” Ambassador Booth underlined that South Sudan should be encouraged to embark on establishing a framework and workable modalities that would enable it transition to a stable democratic state.

The Ambassador of Italy to Ethiopia, Renzo Rosso, speaking on behalf of the IGAD Partners Forum, said that although there was progress in the negotiations, peace remained fragile. He cautioned that if left unattended prolonged conflict might invite other spoilers at the risk of affecting the neutral mediating role of IGAD. He reaffirmed the IPF’s continued support to IGAD’s mediation efforts.

Speaking on behalf of Ambassador Jan Eliasson, the Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, UN Special Envoy to Sudan and South Sudan, Haile Menkorios stressed the importance of bringing to justice those who had committed crimes of extrajudicial killing, rape or illegal detention after an enquiry process as recommended by the African Union. He noted that more than 80,000 people had taken refuge in UN premises. He said that it was fitting that IGAD had taken measures to stop the conflict situation given its admirable record in peace and security matters in the sub-region as shown by the successful signing of the CPA. He thanked the relentless efforts of the Special Envoys, Ambassador Seyoum, General Lazaro Sumbeiywo of Kenya and General Mohamed Ahmed Mustefa Eldabi of Sudan.

Smail Chergui, the AU Commissioner of Peace and Security also commended IGAD’s mediation efforts, and said that as a member of the MVM, the AU will do its best to make the truce hold. He said the AU would also stand by IGAD in mobilizing resources from internal and external sources as it did earlier during the negotiations for the CPA. He said the AU would continue to support IGAD.

Ambassador Seyoum, Chairperson of the Special Envoys of IGAD, presented the Special Envoys report: “Ending the Crisis in South Sudan through Mediation as chair of the Special Envoys of IGAD”. He said that through the process of mediation, the negotiating parties and the international community had come to realize that IGAD’S mediation effort was the best opportunity to resolve the crisis. The Parties had committed to cooperate fully with the international community to alleviate the suffering of the people of South Sudan through emergency assistance and the rehabilitation of IDPs. They had come, he said, to the understanding that peace was the only battle worth fighting. Welcoming the release of the seven detainees he said “the issue of the detainees still remained a challenge.” Ambassador Seyoum said there was still a danger that cross-purposes among stakeholders might undermine and complicate the crisis.

The Special Envoys made a number of recommendations to the IGAD Summit. They urged both parties to respect and expeditiously implement the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement as well as provide all necessary support to ensure the implementation of the MVM as soon as possible. They called on the parties to urgently address the critical humanitarian crisis, provide protection and assistance and explore durable solutions for the predicament of the refugees and internally displaced persons in full collaboration and coordination with local and international humanitarian organizations. They commended the Government of South Sudan for deciding to release seven of the detainees on bail, but called on it to expedite the legal process for those remaining in detention. They urged the parties, IGAD and the African Union to work together to ensure that alleged human rights violations, abuses and crimes are investigated and those found culpable are brought to justice.

The Special Envoys also suggested they should be mandated to establish an initial Monitoring and Verification Mechanism presence in South Sudan within 48 hours. They urged Parties to ensure the progressive withdrawal of armed groups and all allied forces invited by either side from the theatre of operations, and to maintain the momentum of the peace process, by launching the Second Phase of the negotiations on February 7 in Addis

Ababa as agreed. They suggested the Special Envoys should be instructed to develop a framework for the next phase of negotiations including specific modalities on structure, representation, and a timeframe, so as to ensure dialogue is truly inclusive, and to ensure this is developed to involve a broad range of South Sudanese government, political, and civil society actors in a reinvigorated constitutional process.

The Special Envoys appreciated the 8-point roadmap outlined by President Salva Kiir on January 20 and the commitment of the SPLM in Opposition to wide consultations with all stakeholders and resolve the conflict in South Sudan in an all-inclusive manner. The Special Envoys therefore suggest the Summit might wish to instruct them to organize a series of public consultations to generate input for a framework of political dialogue and national reconciliation. These consultations might include political parties, traditional and religious leaders, and groups representing women, youth, intellectuals, refugees and IDPs, business communities and other stakeholders. They also suggest the IGAD Special Envoys should hold consultations with IGAD Member States and key partners to ensure a common approach to the next phase. The Special Envoys also suggest the Heads of State and Government of IGAD might wish to reaffirm their commitment to resolve the South Sudan crisis.

After deliberating on the report of the Special Envoys, the Summit welcomed the signing of Agreements on the Cessation of Hostilities and the Status of Detainees by the Government of the Republic of South Sudan and SPLM in Opposition on January 23, and noted this marked the first significant step in finding a lasting peaceful political solution to the crisis in South Sudan, and commended their commitment to the pursuit of a peaceful political solution to the crisis. The IGAD leaders also applauded the work of the IGAD Special Envoys for their tireless and sustained efforts to resolve the crisis.

The IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government then adopted the Recommendations of the Special Envoys by consensus.

The Third Ethiopia–Algeria Joint Ministerial Commission Meeting

The Third Ethio-Algeria Joint Ministerial Commission Meeting was held January 24-26 in Addis Ababa. It was conducted in two separate segments, with meetings between experts from both countries and between the Ministerial delegations. The experts' sessions, which were held on January 24 and 25 deliberated on the possible ways of strengthening the political relationship of the two countries, enhancing economic and technical cooperation and reinforcing people-to-people relationships through cultural and social exchanges. The experts considered in detail the range of topics under the Joint Commission's three sub-committees on political, economic and social issues to produce suggestions to be endorsed by the Ministers. The consensus reached by the experts was later translated into agreements signed by Ministers.

In his opening remarks at the Ministerial Meeting held on Sunday, January 26, Dr Tedros Adhanom, Ethiopia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, said that Ethiopia saw its relationship with Algeria as having the utmost importance. He said that the two countries' relationship was based on a shared belief in the need to promote peace and stability in Africa and on the need to firmly build up the institutions of the African Union and its development arm, NEPAD. In that regard, Dr Tedros praised Algeria's role on continental matters and its record in promoting the economic and political integration of the continent. Dr Tedros said that Algeria was playing "a key role in the African Union and has made major contributions in the search for solutions for the challenges we face: poverty, illiteracy, the search for democracy, human rights and stability".

Dr Tedros also reminded his audience of the decades-old existence of the Joint Commission and noted the long hiatus in its activities. He said that there had been reasons for its dysfunctional activity and the failure to implement previous agreements. He said a major cause has been the failure of the follow-up mechanism that was installed for the purposes of implementation, and "as a result we have not yet begun to exploit the full economic potential of our close relationship". Nevertheless, Minister Tedros said that, in spite of the failure to implement previous agreements on cooperation, economic and trade relations between the two countries, the political relationship was starting to show promising signs of strengthening.

Referring to the impressive economic growth of the past decade of both countries, Dr Tedros said that both economies had achieved their growth as a result of sound policies and strategies. This was an indication of a shared commitment which would allow for stronger economic cooperation. Emphasizing the need to extend cooperation in economic areas, Dr Tedros alluded to the force-multiplier effect of stronger business ties and said “I believe that this Third Joint Ministerial Commission Meeting will provide us with an overarching framework to guide our existing excellent cooperation across many areas of interest”.

Algeria’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ramtane Lamamra, said the bilateral relationship of the two countries’ could already be a model for others but there still remained unlimited potential for expansion. He said that the Third Joint Ministerial Commission presented a precious opportunity for the two countries to re-launch their relationship. Minister Lamamra said that Algeria regarded its relationship with Ethiopia with the highest consideration and said “we work very closely with Ethiopia and attach high value to Ethiopia’s contribution to the AU and IGAD.” Praising Ethiopia’s involvement in securing peace and security in the Horn of Africa, Minister Lamamra added that “Ethiopia’s Pan-Africanist commitment to the stability of Somalia is another example of Ethiopia’s devotion to strengthen the continent’s unity” He said “we [also] work very closely in the international arena to promote the common interests of Africa on such issues as climate change”. Minister Lamamra concluded his remarks by saying that the agreements reached between the two countries during the Joint Ministerial Commission Meeting would not only provide a legal framework for their future relationship but they would also provide much needed incentive for the two countries’ businesses to develop bilateral trade relations.

The success of the Third Joint Ministerial Commission Meeting was visible in the wide area of agreements reached and in the consensus it achieved. Ethiopia and Algeria have agreed to cooperate in capacity-building and experience-sharing between the diplomatic personnel of their respective Foreign Affairs’ Ministries and their respective diplomatic training institutes. They also agreed that their ambassadors and permanent representatives should hold frequent consultations on multilateral issues. Both sides emphasized the need to promote win-win cooperation on the Nile issues, on the basis of the principle of mutual benefit for all countries of the Nile basin. They also underlined Africa’s legitimate claim, in line with the Ezelweni Consensus, to achieve reform of the United Nations system to allow for more active participation by developing countries in global governance.

Agreements were signed for Cooperation between the Algeria Press Service and the Ethiopian News Agency; for Cultural Cooperation and on Tourism. Ethiopia will also be providing an update for the 1997 Comprehensive Trade Agreement; Algeria will respond by March. MoUs were agreed on Mineral and Petroleum Resources and on Youth Affairs, and between the Ethiopia Chamber of Commerce and Sectorial Association and the Algerian Chamber of Commerce and Industry to cover cooperation in agro-processing, textile, apparel, leather and leather products. Further MoUs are under consideration on Scientific and Technological Cooperation, Women and Children Affairs, Labor and Social Affairs, and on Vocational Training. The two parties also agreed to share experiences on Water Resource Management, Water Treatment, Waste Water Treatment and Recycling, water research developments, Dam Construction and Irrigation development as well as relations in sport. Draft cooperation agreements on Plant Protection and Plant Quarantine, and on Animal Health are also under consideration.

The Joint Ministerial Commission has agreed to hold meeting every two years, switching between Addis Ababa and Algeria, with a senior officials’ meeting every year to follow-up on the implementation of the decisions and agreements of the Joint Commission. The Ministers have agreed to hold the fourth session of the Ethio-Algeria Joint Ministerial Commission in Algiers at a date to be decided.

Ethiopia hosts an Ethiopia-Finland Business Forum

An Ethiopia-Finland Business Forum was held in Addis Ababa on Tuesday (January 28). Its focus was the exchange of views on how to deepen and reinforce the bilateral cooperation and partnership of the two countries in the areas of business, trade, and agriculture. The Forum was also intended to provide an opportunity for direct business to business talks. The Forum brought together Ethiopian Prime Minister, Hailemariam Desalegn, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Finland, Jyrki Katainen, on a two-day visit to Addis Ababa. He was heading a

delegation including the Finnish Minister of International Development, Pekka Haavisto, and representatives of more than 20 business representatives of Finnish private and public companies, and other high-level Ethiopian government officials and representatives of Ethiopian companies. Although Finland and Ethiopia have enjoyed a longstanding diplomatic relationship, the business and economic ties between the two countries have not been fully developed. The Ethio-Finnish Business Forum was organized to address this gap by gathering several ministries, government officials, organizations and representatives from a diverse selection of the business sectors from both countries to discuss points of connection and collaboration.

The Forum was opened by Prime Minister Hailemariam and Prime Minister Katainen of Finland. Prime Minister Hailemariam stressed that mutual help and understanding were the foundation and bedrock of Ethio-Finnish diplomatic relations, and both countries, he said, had remarkable bilateral cooperation and partnership in all spheres of mutual interest. At the same time, in spite of an agreement and ratification of an investment protection and promotion [agreement] as long ago as 1996, he noted that the business ties of the two countries, and more especially foreign direct investment, displayed attributes more associated with minimalism. He urged that the business and investment relations of both countries should be enhanced to strengthen and expand the already existing relations. He also pointed out that Ethiopia and Finland had failed to realize potential opportunities in the area of trade relations, and he suggested that both countries could strengthen their efforts to harness the potential benefit of closer trade ties.

Prime Minister Hailemariam said Finnish private and public companies could play their part in investing and benefiting in the fields of agro-processing, green renewable energy, information communication technology, tourism, manufacturing, mining and mineral resources, and indeed in all development projects that would benefit from technology transfer, expertise and experience. He also emphasized that Finland could benefit from Ethiopian exports including coffee, leather and leather products, and flowers. The Forum, he said, would help both countries find ways to increase and strengthen commercial relations with discussions and meetings that could offer a clear picture of the investment, trade and business climate of Ethiopia.

The Prime Minister underlined the Government of Ethiopia's keen interest in supporting the Finnish business community and Finnish investors in boosting contributions to the mutual benefit of both countries. He said the Ethiopian Government had a firm belief that the private sector could galvanize and assist Ethiopia's development efforts in the years to come. He assured the members of the Finnish business delegation that Ethiopia could provide substantial advantages to support foreign direct investment opportunities with the aim of intensifying and expanding exports. These assets included an abundant and trained labor force, friendly and helpful people, political and social stability, macro-economic stability, and adequate energy. The Constitution and the Investment Code of Ethiopia also guaranteed private investments against 'nationalization and expropriation', he added.

Jyrki Katainen, Prime Minister of Finland, noted that the Forum would be a vital opportunity for the authorities and the companies of both countries to discuss issues and exchange opinions and so expand and strengthen economic relations. He emphasized the great potential for growth in bilateral trade and an interest in long-term commercial partnerships and investment relations between Finland and Ethiopia. The Government of Finland, he said, was committed to sharing experience and know-how in business and technological industries with Ethiopia as well as in ecologically sustainable green energy technologies, investments in research, in equitable growth, and in sustainable development. He said the discussions would help both countries deepen and promote their commercial ties, adding that he appreciated the significance of the political and economic aspects of Ethiopia's developments.

Mulu Solomon, President of the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Association, welcomed the presence of the Finnish business delegation, noting that Ethiopia was now an epicenter and symbol of the continent of Africa in this period of the African Century and Renaissance. She said that it was the right time for Finnish companies to invest in Ethiopia to the mutual benefit of both countries, and to reach out to Africa which was now becoming a new global growth pole and major destination for foreign direct investment.

The Finnish business delegation, which comprised representatives of over 20 companies, included corporations with world class services in energy, infrastructure, logistics, ICT, mining, education, health, forestry and

agriculture. Some of these companies were new to Ethiopia and some have had an established presence for quite some time. For instance, ETEL Networks Corporation provides leading solutions for power transmission and distribution networks, fixed and mobile telecommunications and rail and road infrastructures. As part of its expressed commitment to Ethiopia, the company's representative shared the hope of establishing a future division in the country. Ramboll Finland, an international engineering, a design and consultancy company, was also present. Though the company has been active in Ethiopia for 20 years, it expressed added interest in assisting with water treatment services.

The Forum, which included two sectoral workshops on agriculture and on energy, was also briefed by Ato Fitsum Arega, Director General of the Ethiopian Investment Agency, on the general trend of Ethiopia's investment climate, including policies and incentives. He explained foreign investors could repatriate their 'profits, dividends, and principal interest payments on external loans.' He mentioned that 'customs duty exemption on imported capital goods' and 'income tax exemption' were other incentives provided by the Government to attract foreign investors. He also noted that the investment policy had been revised and adjusted four times to make the investment environment suitable for development projects and help both parties. He also indicated that foreign investors could participate in the country's fight against poverty in the areas of textiles and garment production, agro-processing, the health sector, and other manufacturing areas.

Delegates at the Forum made off-site trips to see industrial zones first hand and in business-to-business meetings during the day, Ethiopian and Finnish businesses had opportunities to make presentations on current projects and services, future areas of collaboration, and ask, and answer, each other's questions. Ethiopian Electric Power for example made a compelling presentation about future plans for regional interconnection and export visions. The sessions revealed that both the Finnish government and Finnish companies make a considerable contribution to research and development investment, one of the highest among the OECD countries. Both Ethiopian and Finnish companies found the Forum an excellent venue to discuss new ideas, strengthen existing ties, and offer "smart solutions" for Ethiopian companies' needs. They agreed that the meetings and round-table discussions were helpful for the two countries to work jointly and reap the benefits of investment and development in the fields of manufacturing, agro-processing, tourism, and renewable energy, providing the basis of for sustainable human development for present and future generations.

Ethiopia participates in the Education World Forum

An Ethiopian delegation led by Minister of Education, Shiferaw Shigutie, attended "The Education World Forum: Global Summit for Education Ministers" held in London (January 20-22). The theme of the event was "Planning for 2014: Policy-making catalyst for a decade ahead".

The plenary sessions, whose speakers provided overviews of their country's educational goals and achievements, covered issues ranging from reach and measurement to driving improvements in education and learning as well as the potential impact and reach of education. They stressed the need to improve learning and their belief that the use of technology would help in this. There was focus on the need to increase access to education for girls and young women who so often did not yet have the ability to go to school. The ministerial discussions raised a number of high-level issues including projects which examined the policies and actions that have worked well in different contexts and approaches that have been less successful. They reflected on issues associated with reading, writing and literacy, and the steps that education systems need to take to tackle the causes and effects of illiteracy. They focused on steps being taken to improve the accuracy and efficacy of skills and knowledge assessment with the overall purpose of supporting learning and determining progress. A panel looked at technology and innovation developments and the extent to which these could be applied in new subject areas, and at the need to stimulate real innovation.

During his visit, Minister Shiferaw held talks with Lynne Featherstone, DFID's Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State. Their discussions focused on strengthening the relationship between the two governments in the field of education with emphasis on education for girls, women and disabled persons. Minister Shiferaw affirmed Ethiopia's commitment to delivering results in this area. The Minister and his delegation also visited the British Council and were briefed by senior officials on the work of the Council. Talks covered child protection in schools,

improving relationships in schools and community responsibilities, the provision of effective education, education reform and measuring standards, training programs for teachers and head teachers, and for researchers, as well as research in science and technology, enhancing TVET, English language improvement and digital self-access teaching and learning.

The delegation also visited the School of Oriental and African Studies and met the Director, Professor Paul Webley, to discuss building collaboration in research and training in PhD and Masters Program between Ethiopia's Ministry of Education and SOAS. Ethiopia is interested to collaborate with SOAS in the provision of tailor-made programs for senior government officials and civil servants. They exchanged ideas on distance education and e-learning. An agreement was reached to send a group of experts from SOAS to Addis Ababa to pursue these areas of cooperation further.

The Ethiopian delegation, accompanied by Ambassador Berhanu Kebede, Ethiopia's Ambassador to the U.K., also visited Nottingham University where they held talks with Professor David Greenaway, President and Vice-Chancellor of the University, and Professor Martyn Poliakoff, Research Professor in Chemistry at the University and Foreign Secretary and Vice President of the Royal Society of Science. Discussions focused on enhancing and strengthening the existing cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Nottingham University. They agreed to revise the existing Memorandum of Understanding with special emphasis on PhD programs. Minister Shiferaw also held discussions with Ethiopian students at Nottingham University.

Dr Abdiweli Mohamed Ali Gaas inaugurated as Puntland's President

Puntland's newly elected President Dr Abdiweli Mohamed Ali Gaas and Vice-President Abdihakim Amay, were inaugurated at a ceremony held on Saturday last week (January 25) in Garowe, the capital of the Puntland State of Somalia. The Inauguration was attended by representatives of the International Community including the UN Special Envoy to Somalia, Mr Nicolas Kay, and the Ambassadors to Somalia of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Turkey as well as representatives from the AU, the US and IGAD, a delegation from Ethiopia's Somali Regional State, Somali Government ministers and other Federal Government officials, clan leaders and representatives of local communities.

Dr Ali expressed his special appreciation and gratitude to outgoing president Dr Abdirahman Mohamed Farole for his contributions to the democratic election process and for accepting the result of the election. Dr Ali who is a former Prime Minister of Somalia, defeated Dr Farole in the third round of voting by a single vote. In his speech, Dr Ali thanked the people of Puntland and the international diplomatic community for their assistance, and outlined the main factors his Government would be working for. These included the aim of transforming Puntland, creating a thriving economic environment on the basis of "peace and tranquility, an atmosphere conducive for investment, rehabilitation of roads, expansion of ports and the involvement of airports which are the gateway to attract capital and direct investment." He mentioned that he would emphasize the restructuring of all government institutions, would develop policies and credible development plans for parliamentary approval. "This", he added "will be the administration that supports and encourages entrepreneurship and business development," with water, health and free education as priorities.

President Ali revealed that a reconciliation meeting will be held for all Puntland's founders to bring back the 'spirit' of 1998, the year when Puntland was formed. He also spoke of the relationship between Puntland and the Federal Government of Somalia. Puntland severed its ties with the Federal Government in August last year, accusing it of failing to share power or resources including foreign aid with the regional state. The former president accused the Federal Government in Mogadishu of adopting a "defective" constitution. President Ali emphasized that "Puntland has never rejected the idea of Somali unity [but] we have to develop a framework of mutual respect between Puntland and Federal Government." Puntland, he said, deserves respect and should be consulted on the country's situation. President Ali concluded "My promise to the People of Puntland is that in January 2019, the citizens will elect the president directly; [with a] one-person-one-vote electoral system".

UN Special Envoy Nicolas Kay said that President Ali had been elected by the Puntland Parliament to lead the state towards a democratic election in 2019 and that, he added, was not an easy task. Unity, integrity and

reconciliation were needed as well as the delivery of basic services such as health, education, jobs and building the economy.

The Head of the Ethiopian delegation Ambassador Wondimu Assaminaw, congratulated Dr Ali on the successful and peaceful election process, and said that the dignified acceptance of the result by outgoing President Farole could provide a model for the rest of Somalia. Ambassador Wondimu mentioned the recent peaceful establishment of the Jubba Administration would also strengthen the Federal Government. Ambassador Wondimu stressed that Ethiopia will continue to work for a peaceful and prosperous Somalia and assist in the process of development and peace building.

Early this week, President Ali announced his new cabinet for the Puntland State of Somalia. A total of 46 Ministers and deputy ministers were appointed. They included two former presidents of the self-declared Khatumo administration in the Somaliland regions of Sol and Sanaag, Ahmed Elmi Osman and Abdinur Elmi Quake as Ministers of Interior and Fishing respectively. A former Minister of Petroleum, Hassan Osman Mohamud Alone, was appointed Minister of Security to replace Colonel Khalif Isse Medan, and two unsuccessful presidential candidates, Ali Haji Warsame and Shire Haji Farah, become Ministers of Education and Finance. The former chairman of the Minima Political Association, Dr Sadie Endow, becomes Minister of Health. The new government includes five women with Anise Abdulkadir Haji Mumin and Sahra Saed Nour as Ministers of Women and the Constitution.