

A Week in the Horn of Africa 11th December 2015

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News in Brief

Africa and the African Union

The Paris Climate Change Conference (COP 21), due to end on Friday (December 11), entered its most intensive phase on Wednesday and Thursday this week with negotiators moving towards a strong climate change agreement over keeping the temperature rise in check and avoiding dangerous global warming. The problem of translating political goodwill into the language of diplomatic agreement remained. (See article)

The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Summit concluded in Johannesburg, South Africa on Saturday (December 5). The two-day Summit was held under the theme: "Africa-China Progressing Together: Win-Win Cooperation for Common Development". **(See article)**

Ethiopia

The 10th Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Day was celebrated in Gambela in the Gambela Regional State on Wednesday (December 9) under the theme: "Participation of Nations, Nationalities and People's for enhanced Growth and Transformation." The ceremonies were attended by thousands of people, representing all the nations, nationalities and peoples' of Ethiopia, among them Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn and First Lady Roman Tesfaye, Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonen, and President Omar al-Bashir of Sudan, the Guest of Honor. **(See article)**

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn and Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta witnessed the signing of a Cross-Border Integrated Program for Sustainable Peace and Socio-Economic Transformation agreement by Kenya's Foreign Affairs Cabinet Secretary, Amina Mohamed and Ethiopia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Tedros Adhanom at the border town of Moyale on Monday (December 7). **(See article)**

A meeting of the National Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Committee chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonen said on Monday (December 7) that the number of people needing food aid due to the El Nino phenomenon drought will rise to 10.2 million in

January. The Secretary of the Committee said major relief efforts were underway in the worst affected 186 *woredas*.

Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonen said at the National Quality Infrastructure Program achievements and Prospects Conference in Addis Ababa on Monday (December 7) that the Government remained determined to make Ethiopia a manufacturing hub and to become a middle income economy by 2025, building technological capabilities in manufacturing and service providing enterprises was essential.

Ethiopia has formally joined the Northern Corridor Integration Projects initiative. Foreign Minister, Dr Tedros said at this week's 12th Northern Corridor Integration Project Summit in Kigali: "The integration of our region will help integrate and unite our continent." Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn will attend the next summit to be held in two months' time in Kampala. **(See article)**

Foreign Minister Dr Tedros Adhanom held discussions with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Johannesburg on Friday (December 5) on the side-lines of the FOCAC summit.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Ambassador Taye Atske-Selassie met with Ambassador Per Lindgarde, Sweden's Special Envoy on the Horn of Africa on Thursday (December 10). Discussions focused on bilateral relations and regional issues.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Regassa Kefale, held discussions with the SAMEER Group Investors on Wednesday (December 9).

The Italian export credit agency SACE will join Italian companies on a trade mission, organized by the Ministry of Economic Development and led by Vice Minister Carlo Calenda to Ghana and Ethiopia. Vice Minister Calenda said on Tuesday (December 8) Italy saw Ethiopia as a priority country in its plan to become one of Africa's leading trading partners.

Djibouti

President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti has announced that he will run for president in the national elections to be held in April next year. In a speech broadcast over the television on Thursday (December 3) the President said that he would run in the elections to finalize on-going development projects and strengthen the fight against terrorism and piracy in a new term in office.

President Ismail Omar Guelleh met with China's President Xi Jinping for bilateral talks on the side-lines of the FOCAC in Johannesburg at the end of last week. Discussions covered strengthening cooperative relations in economic, commercial and military areas as well as the regional security situation. President Jinping said "China is ready to work with Djibouti to strengthen cooperation, safeguard peace and stability and strengthen communication and coordination on major international and regional issues."

Eritrea

An African Union Commission delegation made a four-day visit to Eritrea last week to discuss "Domestication of Agenda 2063 and the First Ten Year Implementation Plan". The delegation met with the Ministers of National Development and of Transport and Communications, as well as with senior officials from the Ministries of Finance, Information and the Auditor General's Office.

Kenya

Defense Secretary, Raychelle Omamo, has signed a new Defense Co-operation Agreement with the UK's High Commissioner, Nic Hailey allowing for UK contributions to Kenyan and wider regional security, as well as the continuation of British military training in Kenya. The new agreement allows for strengthened defense engagement in border security as well as continued training and capacity building for Kenya and other AMISOM troop-contributing countries.

Somalia

President Mohamud and UN Special Representative Nicholas Kay co-hosted the Seventh High-Level Partnership Forum in Mogadishu on Tuesday. The Forum included 29 international delegations as well as senior Federal Government officials, Somalia's regional presidents and other officials. It reviewed progress over the past six months against the New Deal Somali Compact and its five Peace- and State-Building Goals, including the security and justice sectors, state formation, economic recovery and reconstruction and other areas. The next ministerial level meeting will take place in Istanbul, Turkey in February 2016.

AMISOM Force Commander Lt General Jonathan Rono said this week that the war against terrorism would be won faster and more effectively if better supported by the local communities which the troops serve. He was speaking during a visit to AMISOM Ethiopian National Defense Forces troops serving with AMISOM in Sector 3 headquartered at Baidoa, and covering the Bay, Bakool and Gedo regions. The Force Commander commended the troops for their successes.

The Pentagon announced on Monday this week that a US airstrike on December 2 killed a senior leader of Al-Shabaab, Abdirahman Sandhere 'Ukash' in an airstrike last week in Somalia.

The Somali Federal Finance Ministry has presented a \$216 million budget for 2016 to the Somali Federal Parliament for approval. The Deputy Finance Minister, Mohamed Hayer Ibrahim, said the sources were a combination of national revenue and foreign aid with 64% expected to come from local revenues.

Attorney-General Ahmed Ali Dahir has called for tough measures to fight corruption. He warned at a press conference on Thursday (December 10) there would be "accountability, investigations and those who abuse their power will never get away with it."

The inauguration of the new parliament for the Interim South West Administration was held on Tuesday (December 8) in the regional capital, Baidoa. Members of the 89-member assembly were sworn-in in the presence of the south west state President, Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden, traditional elders and ministers. Local traditional elders gave an assurance they will choose the rest of the assembly members in coming weeks.

South Sudan

Manassah Magok, Speaker of the National Assembly, represented South Sudan at the celebration of Ethiopia's 10th Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Day in Gambela on Wednesday (December 8).

Rebecca Nyandeng, wife of late John Garang de Mabior, founder of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), has called on South Sudanese rival leaders to launch a nationwide reconciliation process ahead of the SPLM extraordinary convention scheduled to take place on Saturday (December 12).

Sudan

President Omer al-Bashir attended the celebration of Ethiopia's 10th Nations, Nationalities and People's Day on Wednesday (December 9) in Gambela city, the capital of the Gambela Regional State, as the Guest of Honor. He also held bilateral talks with Prime Minister Hailemariam on issues of common concern.

Sudan's First Vice-President Bakri Hassan Salih held talks with South Sudan's President Salva Kiir on the side-lines of the China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Summit in Johannesburg at the weekend. Discussions covered ways to promote bilateral relations to serve their joint interests, the need to support peace and stability in both countries and implementation of the cooperation agreements signed between the two countries.

The third meeting of the Sudan-South Sudan Joint Political and Security Committee, scheduled for December 8, to discuss the operationalization of a buffer zone on the border between the two countries and the deployment of UN supported joint monitoring patrols, was postponed because of security considerations in South Sudan. The Committee agreed to reactivate the 10-mile-wide safe demilitarized zone at a meeting in Addis Ababa in September.

The New Justice and Equality Movement, a breakaway faction from the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), led by Mansour Arbab Younis, announced on Monday (December 7) that it had decided to join the national dialogue conference. It said this was "in order to contribute effectively to the peaceful and negotiated resolution of the Sudanese problem."

Ethiopians celebrate the 10th Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Day

Ethiopia, a cradle of ancient civilization and indeed of humanity, has immense historic, social, and religious resources and cultural diversity. The nation's unity in diversity consists of over 76 nations, nationalities and peoples, and much as these nations, nationalities and peoples have their own distinct cultures, histories, languages and way of life, they also have a history which they share in common. They have a proud record of managing to successfully defend their sovereignty and their country against foreign aggression. Equally, there have been times of misrule in which some of the nations, nationalities and peoples have been treated as second class citizens and deprived of equal opportunities in their own country. This has meant, they have had to wage an arduous struggle against their rulers to create a political system under which their long suppressed rights can be ensured, and their languages, cultures and history freely exercised and developed and the right to self-determination realized. The oppression and suppression that were imposed for much of the last century were finally done away with once and for all, on May 8, 1991 when the military dictatorship of the Derg regime was toppled by the joint struggle of the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia. This victory was reinforced and firmly defined on December 8, 1995 with the ratification of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, which formally guaranteed the rights and equality of the Ethiopian nations, nationalities and peoples.

This year Ethiopia has celebrated the 10th Ethiopian Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Day with great enthusiasm and verve across the nation and, in particular, in the Gambela Regional State on Thursday (December 9). The House of Federation decided a decade ago to create a forum for the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples of Ethiopia to promote their cultures, lifestyles and other values, and to strengthen their ties. The day was designed to contribute to the effort of creating one political and economic community in the country and indeed, celebrated as it is across the country, it has become an engine to boost tourism and investment in the host regions. Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Day affirms that the necessity of respect for the fundamental rights of individuals and of the nations and nationalities of the country, as well as the development of the country's various cultures and religions, for the attainment of these objectives. In fact this day provides a vital and important demonstration of the strong commitment and respect of the Federal Government and of its peoples for all the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia, and of their individual cultures, territories and modes of life. It also underlines the fact that Ethiopia has been and still is the common home for all. The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia ensures the human and democratic rights of all the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia without exception and it has granted equality and mutual cooperation to them all.

Thousands of people representing all the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia were present at the celebration being held in Gambela town, the capital of the Gambela Regional State. The ceremonies were attended by Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn; First Lady Roman Tesfaye; Deputy Prime Minister, Demeke Mekonen and other high-ranking government officials, and members of the diplomatic corps. The celebration was also honored by the presence of the President of Sudan, Omar al-Bashir, the Guest of Honor.

The Prime Minister said Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Day was a milestone moment marking a vow to establish a system of constitutional government that had managed to attain sustained development. The Day commemorated a historic moment for those peoples who had been disrespected and neglected by previous regimes, he said. They now had the opportunity to freely live and celebrate their cultures and traditions. The Prime Minister said the country had made a great leap forward since the enactment of the Constitution in terms of social, economic and political development, forming a government in which unity in diversity was reflected. He stressed that the adoption of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia had laid the foundation for Ethiopians to exercise their rights as well as allow them to benefit from the gains of development. The Prime Minister said the constitutional system had resulted in flourishing democratic nationalism and had strengthened the fight against poverty which had already managed to free millions of people from poverty. Underlining that the economic growth registered over the past decade was the result of the joint efforts and collaboration of all the nations, nationalities and peoples of the country, he called for the people to scale up their support for the continued growth and transformation of Ethiopia. The Prime Minister, who thanked Sudanese President Omar Hassen Al-Bashir for supporting the Grand Ethiopian Grand Renaissance Dam, Africa's largest, noted that the Government had undertaken many huge infrastructural developments. These were designed to fulfil the needs of the people and ensure equitable economic benefits for previously neglected regions like Gambela though much still remained to be done. The Prime Minister, who thanked the people of Gambela for their warm and hospitable reception of the guests who had arrived to celebrate the day from different corners of the country, called on the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia to play their part in the efforts to achieve sustainable peace and development in the region.

The Prime Minister also told the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation that celebrating the day at national level opened the door to a bright future for Ethiopia, creating a country in which its people could live peacefully and in harmony, thereby enabling the nation to realize its vision of creating one economic and political community. The Prime Minister said the past 20 years had been meaningful in terms of building democracy and ensuring economic growth that provided fair wealth distribution and asset accumulation. Both federal and state governments were working to make all the people of Ethiopia benefit from the country's ongoing economic growth and enjoy their rights. The Prime Minister emphasized that consolidating the democratic system is inseparable from development and prosperity.

The President of Gambela Regional State, Gatluak Tut, said that the Constitution had ensured human and democratic rights of citizens who had been oppressed by previous regimes. He said it had played a fundamental role, not only in ensuring citizens' rights, but also in the creation of a unified economic and political society. Gambela, he said, had been one of the most neglected regions under previous regimes. Currently, however, it was witnessing significant development and the fruits of democracy. He noted that peace and stability was maintained in the region in collaboration with the public; and conflicts along the Ethiopia/South Sudan borders were resolved through discussions and agreements at local and governmental level. The Regional President said Gambela now had an international standard stadium that could accommodate over 35,000, and the town had developed other infrastructure. In the region, nearly 38,000 previously scattered households had been gathered into villages for which social sector developments and infrastructure was fully available. President Gatluak noted that Gambela had drawn on the experiences from previous Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Day celebrations and was ready to host any national event in the future. The Gambela President, who extended his gratitude to those stakeholders who had played a role in assisting the Regional State to host the celebrations, noted that under the Constitution, the Ethiopian people were living in harmony and exercising their rights. He underlined that Gambela Regional State was peaceful and ready to accept investors who would like to invest in the region.

The Speaker of the House of Federation, Yalew Abate, said Ethiopia's federal system gives recognition to the ethnic diversities in the country, and the celebration of the day enables the nations, nationalities and peoples to exchange cultures and enhance harmony. In a panel discussion on the occasion he also stressed that the Constitution, the result of sacrifice paid by many, had laid a strong foundation for the establishment of a federal system. The double digit growth registered over the last decade was another outcome. The Speaker stressed that as this celebration coincided with the juncture at which the country had completed its first Growth and Transformation Plan and was preparing to make the second Growth and Transformation Plan a reality, it was important to foster public participation, and he called upon the Ethiopian people to enhance their participation in the Ethiopian Grand Renaissance Dam and other development projects.

The 11th Nations, Nationalities and People's Day next year will be hosted in Harar by the Harari Regional State.

Human Rights Day celebrated in Ethiopia on December 10

Human Rights Day is observed every year across the World on December 10. It commemorates the day on which, in 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the

Universal Declaration of Human Rights and two years later the Assembly invited all States and interested organizations to observe December 10 each year as Human Rights Day. This year, Human Rights Day is devoted to the launch of a year-long campaign to celebrate the **50th anniversary of the two International Covenants on Human Rights**: the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which were adopted by the General Assembly in December 1966. These two Covenants, together with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, form the International Bill of Human Rights, setting out the civil, political, cultural, economic, and social rights that are the birthright of all human beings. The year-long campaign: "Our Rights. Our Freedoms. Always." aims to promote and raise awareness of the two Covenants and revolves around the theme of rights and freedoms, the freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear, which underpin the International Bill of Human Rights.

These freedoms are as relevant today as when the Covenants were adopted. Certainly, many countries recognize human rights and the rule of law as the basis for development and stability. Equally, many countries around the world still have much to do to build political institutions, judicial systems, and economies that allow ordinary people to live with dignity. The growth of hate speech against religious and racial minorities and by opposition groups, the clawing back of economic and social rights in the name of economic crises or security, the failure to respect the right to privacy in the digital age, underline the relevance of the two Covenants and the necessity to respect them.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' statement for Human Rights Day 2015 stresses that he wanted the world to reflect on the meaning of freedom. UN Commissioner, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, said in his message "Freedom is the ideal that underpins what we now recognize as international human rights law, the norms and regulations that protect and guarantee our rights. The freedoms set out in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights are universal, the Commissioner said. "They apply to everyone, everywhere. Traditional practices, cultural norms, cannot justify taking them away. These freedoms encompass the fundamental – freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom of speech and freedom of thought, conscience and religion." He said the two Covenants, together with the other human rights treaties, had played an important role in securing better respect and recognition during the past five decades. He added that, of course, many challenges remained. While the drafters of the Covenants could have had little idea of issues such as digital privacy, counter-terrorism measures and climate change, nevertheless "respect for freedom continues to be the foundation for peace, security and development for all." He concluded: "Join us as we celebrate freedom, and help spread the message the world over that our rights, our freedoms are inalienable and inherent, now, and always."

In Ethiopia, the Chief Commissioner of Ethiopia's Human Rights' Council, Dr Addisu Gebreigzabghier, called for respect and protection of human rights for all through good governance and sustainable development. Very appropriately, in Ethiopia UN Human Rights Day is celebrated the day after the country's own Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Day. This was created a decade ago by the House of Federation to underline the ties between Ethiopia's nations, nationalities and peoples and to strength the country's unity in diversity. It exactly affirms respect for the fundamental rights of individuals and of the nations, nationalities and peoples of the country, as well as the development of the country. It demonstrates the strong commitment and respect of the Federal Government and of all the

peoples of Ethiopia for the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, which defines the human and democratic rights of all the nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia without exception.

In his speech on Wednesday, Prime Minister Hailemariam noted that the occasion commemorated a historic moment for those peoples who had been disrespected and neglected by previous regimes and who were now given the opportunity to live freely and fully exercise their rights, as well as benefit from the gains of development. The Constitution had provided for a flourishing democratic nationalism and strengthened the fight against poverty designed to fulfil the needs of the people and ensure equitable economic benefits for all. The Constitution had also been the basis for building democracy and ensuring economic growth over the last twenty years in Ethiopia. The Prime Minister reminded his listeners that consolidating the democratic system was inseparable from development and prosperity. The President of Gambela Regional State in which the Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Day, was celebrated this year, also emphasized that the Constitution had ensured the human and democratic rights of citizens who had been oppressed by previous regimes, and had been responsible for ensuring the rights of citizens as well as creating a unified economic and political society.

Under the Constitution, Ethiopia's nine regional states and two chartered cities have been able to establish their respective autonomous governments. Each regional government includes a State Council, the highest political authority and a State Administration which administers the state except in areas reserved to the Federal Government, such as defense, foreign affairs, national economic policy and the like. The Constitution enables the regional states to exercise their legislative and judiciary powers through regional councils and regional bureaux of justice and courts. This has provided for the decentralization of state power as well as offered a wide range of opportunity for the regional states, allowing them to implement regional political and economic programs based on the realities in each region. This has enabled the nations, nationalities and peoples of the country to freely practice their own cultures and promote their own heritage through the development of their own written literature and arts and in other areas. as well as provide the basis for implementation of the four universal freedoms - freedom from fear, from want, of speech and of thought, conscience and religion – that were celebrated this week.

An integrated Cross-border Program for the Ethio-Kenyan border

Ethiopia and Kenya launched the Cross-border Integrated Program for Sustainable Peace and Socio-Economic Transformation of the Northern Marsabit County of Kenya and the Southern Borana Zone of Ethiopia on Monday (December 7) in the border town of Moyale. Ethiopia's Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn and Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta oversaw the signing of the agreement by Ethiopian Foreign Minister, Dr Tedros Adhanom and Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Amina Mohammed.

The agreement for the Cross-border Integrated Program covers environmental protection, trade, development and peaceful coexistence in the border regions. It is one instrument for boosting economic growth, reducing poverty and promoting business activities in the Horn of Africa through cross-border cooperation. The initiative of this was set in motion by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, World Bank President Jim Kim and the IGAD Council of Ministers in October 2014. Ethiopia and Kenya embarked on the program in partnership with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the United Nations' Country Teams in

Ethiopia and Kenya. The program is spearheaded by both local and national governments of Ethiopia and Kenya, the UN Country Teams of Ethiopia and Kenya and IGAD, in collaboration with the relevant government ministries, the private sector and development partners of both countries.

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The agreement provides for a US\$200 million, five-year, program aimed at transforming the depressed, often violent and marginalized border areas into an engine of development for the two countries. It intends to build peace in this volatile region, develop a socio-economic relation-enhancement pact, and create better cooperation and acceptable coexistence for communities along and across the border areas. In addition a Marsabit County in Kenya-Borana Zone in Ethiopia Integrated Cross Border and Area-based Program is intended to achieve transformational change through strategic and integrated responses.

Launching the initiative, Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn noted that, “Cross-border cooperation is an integral element of the inevitable and already started process of regional integration between and among our sisterly nations.” Noting the historic marginalization of border areas due to their peripheral location and harsh environmental conditions, the Prime Minister stressed “My government is committed to addressing historical marginalization of this region and steering it away from poverty and into support for cross-border programs for sustainable peace.”

President Uhuru Kenyatta noted that, “The program being launched is transformative in nature. Poverty and violence have rained on this area and we must do everything to end conflict and ensure people in these marginalized areas have equal opportunities like all other parts of the country. Lasting security and development”, he said, “can only happen when local communities are involved.” Noting the on-going construction of the Merille-Marsabit highway was a part of the planned Cape Town to Cairo Highway, the President even suggested that “the program will see Moyale being turned into the Dubai of Africa.”

The UN Resident Coordinator in Kenya, Ms Nardos Bekele-Thomas said: “the Marsabit, Moyale, Borana Zone Cross-Border Program aims to promote peace and development in the greater Horn of Africa region.” She stressed that the new Cross-Border Integrated Program would encourage the socio-economic development of the area: “The frontier border region has experienced historical marginalization either due to geographic location or harsh environmental conditions; this has resulted in a systematic pattern of underdevelopment leading to poor quality of life.” She added that the program sought to address those issues and spur development. Speaking on behalf of Ms Ahunna Eziakonwa-Onochie, UN Resident Coordinator in Ethiopia, Ms Gillian Melsop, UNICEF Representative and acting UN Humanitarian Coordinator, appreciated the strong and effective leadership of regional and local government officials and the involvement of local communities. Highlighting the general overview of the program, she noted that, “The joint cross-border program we are launching today opens a new chapter of partnership and collaboration with the people of Marsabit and Borana Zone and a unique opportunity for the UN system and partners to overcome fragmentation and piecemeal development”. The IGAD Executive Secretary, Engineer Mahboub Maalim, emphasized that the initiative would replace fragmented and piecemeal border support and allow for joint assistance to the region to reduce vulnerability, increase resilience and promote inclusive economic growth, both in Kenya’s Marsabit County and Ethiopia’s Borana Zone of the Oromia Regional State.

Overall, the program will create better opportunities for trade, investment and tourism, facilitate cross-border movement of people and ensure effective use and management of natural resources. It will improve infrastructure links through the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopian Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor, control cross-border conflict, enhance the legal movement of people and **curb illegal human and arms trafficking**. It will also **encourage cooperation of environmental studies** on shared natural resources and strengthen cultural ties. It will significantly reduce the informal and contraband trade widely practiced among the border communities by formalizing the conduct of trade on both sides of the border. More generally, it will also widen and improve the existing trade relations between Ethiopia and Kenya, focusing on developing the area's untapped energy and mining resources and the meat and livestock trade along the border zones to create jobs for the youth of the area. Other expected outcomes of the agreement and the program include improved access to health and education facilities, the creation of a climate of peaceful and mutual coexistence among the Ethio-Kenyan border communities, improved environmental consideration of sustainable and inclusive use of resources consistent with the new Sustainable Development Goals.

The Ethiopian delegation to Moyale, which attended the launch of the Cross-border Integrated Program for Sustainable Peace and Socio-Economic Transformation of the Northern Marsabit County of Kenya and the Southern Borana Zone of Ethiopia, was led by Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn. It included Foreign Minister Tedros Adhanom; the Speaker of the House of Peoples' Representatives, Speaker Abadula Gameda; the Oromia Regional State President, Muktar Kedir; and other senior officials. The Kenyan representation was led by President Uhuru Kenyatta, and included the Cabinet Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Amina Mohammed; the Cabinet Secretary of the Interior and Coordinated National Government, Major-General Joseph Nkaissery; the Cabinet Secretary for Sport, Culture and the Arts, Dr Hassan Wario; the Chief of Staff and Head of Public service, Joseph Kinyua; the Governor of Marsabit County, Governor, Ukur Yatani; and other senior officials. Also present on the occasion were the IGAD Executive Secretary, Engineer Mahboub Maalim; the UN Resident Coordinator in Kenya, Ms Nardos Bekele-Thomas; the UNICEF Representative and acting UN Human Rights Coordinator in Ethiopia, Ms Gillian Melsop; the World Bank Regional Delegate, Ahmadou Moustapha Ndiaye; the USAID Mission Director for Kenya, Karen Freeman; and the Head of European Delegation to the African Union, Gary Quince.

The Forum on China Africa Cooperation in South Africa

The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Summit was held last week, December 4 and 5, in Johannesburg, South Africa, under the theme: "Africa-China Progressing Together: Win-Win Cooperation for Common Development". The Summit, the first time African and Chinese leaders have met together in Africa to look at ways to deepen cooperation, was described as fruitful and as elevating Africa-China socio-economic and political all-round relations to a higher level. The Summit was co-chaired by President Jacob Zuma of South Africa and President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China.

President Jinping told the opening session that Africa and China shared a common future and destination for mutual prosperity in all socio-economic and political areas. He underlined their cooperation should be based on, and guided by, mutual trust and respect, a win-win economic partnership, people-to-people relations and mutual cooperation in security and peace. He said that China strongly supported the idea that African countries should solve their challenges through their own methods and mechanisms. President Jinping said China

was determined to create new strategic partnerships, programs and strategies with Africa in the areas of industrialization, agriculture, infrastructure, trade and investment, public health, people-to-people relations, peace and security.

African Union Chairperson, President Mugabe of Zimbabwe, in a keynote speech said that the FOCAC clearly demonstrated real mutual respect and a win-win approach between Africa and China. He said the FOCAC should be strengthened with strong institutional-based relationships and business-to-business ties across all areas of concern for Africa and for China. He also emphasized that the FOCAC could play a vibrant role in making international economic and political systems, including the UN, fairer and more just and democratic.

South African President Jacob Zuma in his opening remarks said that the socio-economic and political relations between China and Africa had been growing at high speed and FOCAC should be strengthened to meet the growing demands and interests of the African and Chinese people. African Union Commission Chairperson Dr Dlamini-Zuma noted that China had been playing a crucial role in helping to eradicate poverty and backwardness from Africa. She stressed that China could and should play a pre-eminent role in Africa's Vision 2063 to realize a prosperous, integrated and peaceful continent. She said that within the framework of the FOCAC, Africa and China should work together aggressively to expand and increase employment opportunities for the youth of China and Africa.

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn emphasized that Ethiopia was delighted to see the Forum becoming the premier platform for dialogue between China and Africa and so effectively deepening the areas of cooperation between them. The Prime Minister spoke of the Ethio-China Strategic partnership and the way it was conceived on the basis of the principles of solidarity, equality, mutual respect, trust and benefit. This, he said, had "increasingly enabled us to understand each other better to understand better the common challenges we face as developing countries and on how to solve them." The Prime Minister said they had been able to register extraordinary achievements in all areas of China-Ethiopia cooperation. He referred to the strong bilateral relations between the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front and the Communist Party of China and the ways Ethiopia had benefited greatly from Chinese modernization, transformation and management programs in agro-extension services, crop and livestock management and in the development of economic zones in building up Ethiopia's manufacturing capacity development. The Prime Minister also noted the support China had provided in infrastructural development citing the railway with Djibouti and the Light Rail Transit in Addis Ababa, as well as the training provided for technicians to run and maintain these and other developments. He emphasized that all the projects and programs designed with China's assistance were green and designed to be part of the country's Climate Resilient Green Development Strategy.

The Prime Minister thanked President Jinping for his vision and for the comprehensive approach he had announced at the Summit. He welcomed the IMF's registration of the Chinese Yuan as a world reserve currency; Ethiopia, he said, was ready to work with Chinese financial institutions to benefit from cooperation. Overall, the Prime Minister said, Ethiopia much appreciated the demand-driven nature of the cooperation it had with the People's Republic of China. Flexibility on the Chinese side was, he said, the key to the successful win-win cooperation that the country had forged with China. China, he said, had supported Ethiopia in its just concluded Five-Year Growth and Transformation Plan and he was confident China would continue to support the country's Second Growth and Transformation Plan. The Prime Minister underlined the paramount importance Ethiopia attached to the

partnership of Africa and China, and he stressed Ethiopia's unwavering commitment to take this partnership to a higher level "as we in Africa aspire to achieve our Agenda 2063 and as China progresses towards realizing the two centenary goals".

During the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation Summit the leaders thoroughly discussed and agreed upon the **ten new strategic partnership areas** proposed by the Chinese President. The main focus areas were the China-Africa industrialization program, infrastructure expansion, financial services, green development cooperation, trade, investment facilitation, poverty reduction cooperation, public welfare and public health, people-to-people exchanges, and the peace and security program. At the Summit, China pledged US\$60 billion dollars for proposed major cooperation areas with Africa. This included US\$5 billion dollars for grants and zero-interest loans. China pledged to cancel all remaining government debts of the least-developed African countries in 2015 and to provide food aid worth US\$156 million dollars to African countries suffering from the El Nino-induced food crisis. In addition, it promised to train more than 200,000 technicians in different areas of the continent and offered a further 40,000 training opportunities.

The Summit, which concluded on Saturday (December 5), adopted the Johannesburg Declaration and Action Plan drafted by the FOCAC Ministerial meeting two days earlier in Pretoria on Thursday (December 3). At the Sixth Ministerial meeting of the Forum, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, Wang Yi, presented an account of the implementation of the follow-up actions from the Beijing Declaration and the Beijing Action Plan (2013-2015) adopted at the 5th FOCAC ministerial conference in Beijing in July 2012. It was after that meeting that the Chinese government announced a package of new measures for cooperation with Africa in five key areas. Those covered investment and financial cooperation, the African integration agenda, people-to-people relations, peace and security and development assistance. The minister noted that China and Africa had deepened strategic and mutual friendship in all socio-economic and political areas. He said that there had been a number of high-level political consultations and official visits, which demonstrated the high political willingness and commitment of leaders from both areas. He also noted Africa and China had supported each other on international issues of peace and security, development and climate change. He said China had firmly supported African countries in choosing their own independent paths of development and stressed that the FOCAC had brought tangible progress to the peoples of both areas. China, indeed, had become the biggest trading partner of Africa and the China-Africa trade volume now topped US\$200 billion. China had further opened its markets to Africa, providing zero-tariff treatment to 21 African countries. The Chinese Foreign Minister said that China had implemented partnership agreements in the areas of science and technology, education, the environment and natural resource conservation. During discussions it was also noted that during the past three years, China had offered US\$31.52 billion in credit lines to African countries, far exceeding its earlier US\$ 20 billion commitment. Chinese investment in Africa has now topped US\$32.35 billion with over 3,000 Chinese companies operating across the continent.

Ethiopian Foreign Minister Dr Tedros Adhanom said that the FOCAC had become a platform for the new partnership between Africa and China and it had surpassed expectations. The Foreign Minister pointed out that most of the targets of the Beijing Declaration and the Beijing Action Plan had been successfully implemented. He underlined that Africa now needed China's firm support in its priority areas of industrialization, infrastructure development, food security, economic integration and in fighting terrorism. The South

African Minister for International Relations and Cooperation, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, said that the FOCAC summit would elevate the Africa-China relationship to a new level. This, the Minister said, would have an important and beneficial impact and give impetus to Africa's agenda 2063 to help realize a prosperous, integrated and peaceful continent. The participants at the ministerial meeting appreciated the strong commitment and willingness of China to work with Africa in all aspects, and described the implementation of the follow up actions on the Beijing Declaration and the Beijing Action Plan as fruitful.

COP21: progress towards a strong climate change agreement

As expected, COP21 appears likely to go on into the weekend, although governments have been moving steadily closer towards a strong climate change agreement. The problem now is translating political goodwill into the language of diplomatic agreement. With agreement in sight over keeping the temperature rise in check and avoiding dangerous global warming, the Paris meeting entered its most intensive phase on Wednesday and Thursday with efforts to find common ground among the 196 countries represented at COP21.

The deal taking shape in Paris was indicated in the draft released by the French negotiators and it included the aspiration to limit warming to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels. This has been a key demand of the low-lying and most vulnerable countries which face the threat of being drowned at the 2C internationally agreed target. According to the bloc of vulnerable countries, the Climate Vulnerable Forum, well over a 100 countries, support the 1.5C goal including a number of industrialized countries among them, Canada, France and Germany. The Maldives Environment Minister said that there had recently been so many disasters that the bigger countries were finally looking at 1.5C.

Laurent Fabius, the French Foreign Minister, and other officials have embarked on a bout of intense shuttle diplomacy; the US Secretary of State has also been playing a hands-on role to encourage a deal. He said negotiators were searching for the right language for the text. Last year's COP meeting in Lima ran more than 36 hours over time and there the negotiators were essentially working on a document intended as a temporary compromise. This time, the negotiators are looking for a durable agreement that will start in 2020 and be reviewed at regular intervals to ensure that countries are meeting their emissions-cutting goals into the middle of the century and beyond.

Equally, there is still a struggle to deal with most difficult problems. There are **six key areas** over which the most detailed discussions have been and are taking place. The first of these is the matter of the temperature rise. Small islands and low-lying states are at risk of disappearing under rising seas even at the currently agreed 2C temperature goal, and have long argued for tougher limits on warming. Last June, a group of more than 40 countries adopted the slogan "1.5 to stay alive". They now have the support of more than a hundred countries, one of which is Ethiopia. The draft has three options: below 2C; well below 2C with efforts to reach 1.5C; and 1.5C.

Getting to 1.5C or even 2C requires achieving near zero greenhouse gas emissions by the second half of this century. The draft released on Wednesday had two main options. The first calls for countries to peak global greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible, with developed countries making deep emissions cuts by 2050 with an end goal of net zero emissions. The scale and timing is left open. Under the second option, countries merely commit to the vague goal of reaching climate neutrality over the course of the century.

Finance is another major difficulty. Developing countries need funding to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, and build the infrastructure to protect people from climate impact. The cost will run into trillions of dollars to transform the global economy. The developed countries have committed to providing \$100bn a year from private and public sources by 2020, though the amounts remain unclear. Developing countries demand stronger guarantees of delivery on pledges in 2020 and beyond and want more funds for the climate impacts they are already experiencing. Developing countries are looking to developed countries to do much more.

Some low-lying vulnerable countries are already facing irreversible and permanent damage from climate change and land loss could force millions to relocate. Those countries want the agreement to recognize the dangers and offer some measure of protection to cover loss and damage, but there is strong resistance from developed countries to anything that suggests a requirement for compensation and liability.

The issue of follow-ups to any agreement also remains in dispute. Industrial countries have been pushing for public reporting of all countries' emission reductions and suggesting a stock-taking in 2018; developing countries would like to see this take place in 2024. Some developed countries have suggested putting forward tougher emission plans at five-year intervals to improve the possibility of getting to zero emissions by 2050. Some developing countries want these improved plans to take place every decade.

This, of course, relates to the highly controversial issue of differentiation. In other words: Who should bear responsibility for climate change, the countries that industrialized first and were responsible for the historic emissions, or more recently developing countries, now among the world's largest emitters? The bigger developing countries argue they did little or nothing to cause climate change but are now being asked to trim their growth and development to reduce emissions. The US insists that the current structure of the agreement, which relies on voluntary pledges put forward by each country, acknowledges those differences in economic history. Prakash Javadekar, India's Environment Minister says "Today many countries are suffering because of a temperature rise of 0.8C and that temperature rise has taken place because of historic emissions over 150 years. That cannot be wished away; historic emissions are responsible."

Ethiopia joins the Northern Corridor Integration Project

The 12th Northern Corridor Integration Project Summit opened on Monday (December 7) in Kigali, Rwanda. During the first two days of the meeting, senior regional officials, private sector leaders and permanent secretaries of the four Northern Corridor states, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya and South Sudan, carried out a review of progress. They drew up a status report of the 14 development projects earmarked by the initiative after a meeting at Entebbe in June 2013 to improve connectivity, especially for the landlocked members of the NCIP. Among these projects several are already underway including the Single Customs Territory, One Area Network, and construction of the Standard Gauge Railway. The Railway will be a 2,000 km railway to connect Rwanda and Uganda to the Kenyan port of Mombasa. The operation of the One Area Network has already been credited for a significant increase in the number of calls and revenue within the region. It covers Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and South Sudan which have agreed to eliminate additional taxes and levies on international calls, text and data within the region.

The Ministerial session of the Summit, to present projects spearheaded by their respective countries, was held on Thursday (December 9) and it was at this session that Ethiopia's Foreign Minister Dr Tedros Adhanom announced that Ethiopia has applied to join the Northern Corridor Integration Project as one of the Partner States. Dr Tedros noted how strongly Ethiopia supported the agenda of regional economic integration. This, he said, was clearly indicated in its Foreign Policy and Strategy and was demonstrated practically by the on-going major projects it was already involved in including standard gauge railway projects, trans-boundary highways, power generation and transmission lines, all geared towards encouraging regional interconnection. At this point, Ethiopia would be involved in initial participation in the NCIP's Standard Gauge Railway, Power Generation, Transmission, and Interconnectivity projects implementation, but it would expand this in due course depending on relevance of the projects and the timing of implementation.

The joint communiqué issued at the closing of the Summit welcomed the announcement by the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia that it wanted to join the Northern Corridor Integration Project as a Partner State and immediately accepted the application. It was an indication of the growing importance of integration in regional development, underlined by the progress made in implementation of the 14 projects highlighted by the Summit. Overall, these projects range from infrastructure development to harmonization of the regional framework in several different aspects. The review focused mainly on the Standard Gauge Railway, Information Communication Technology, Oil Pipeline and Refinery, and Development and Financing. On the Standard Gauge Railway Development, the Summit took note of the steady progress made in the construction works of the Mombasa-Nairobi section, which has reached sixty percent completion. The Heads of State directed the Ministers to finalize preparation of bankable project proposals for the remaining sections on the Eastern, Western and Southern routes and the Mirama-Kigali section.

The Summit also noted progress made in the ICT sector and commended the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the NCIP and the Northern Corridor Technology Alliance (NCTA), for collaboration of governments and the private sector in the field of ICT. On the Refined Petroleum Products Pipeline Development, the Summit directed Ministers to continue exploring alternative financing options including Public Private Partnerships to raise funds for the development of the project. It suggested that this cluster be merged with the Private Sector Cluster.

With reference to On Project Financing, the Summit directed that the Ministers of Infrastructure should expedite the conclusion of bankable project proposals to pave the way for the commencement of finance mobilization. On Power Generation, Transmission and Interconnectivity, the Summit welcomed the completion of the Mirama-Shango transmission line and the installation of voltage control equipment in Western Kenya. The Summit further noted the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between NELSAP, Uganda and South Sudan for the 400kV Olwiyo-Juba Transmission line. The Summit directed the relevant Ministers to ensure that steady progress was maintained and called for power trading to commence by April 2016. On Immigration and related issues, the Heads of State welcomed the signing of the bilateral agreement on a One-Stop Border Post between Kenya and Uganda. They directed the Ministers to operationalize completed One-Stop Border Posts at Malaba, Busia and Mirama Hills/Kagitumba. They also directed that the creation of the Private Sector Cluster should be coordinated by the Ministries of Finance.

The closing session of the 12th Northern Corridor Integration Project Summit heard brief speeches from President Kagame of Rwanda and from Aggrey Tisa Sabuni, Presidential Advisor on Economic Affairs to President Kiir of South Sudan. President Museveni of Uganda and President Kenyatta of Kenya were also present. The Summit was also attended by representatives of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and Tanzania; Dr Richard Sezibera, Secretary General of the East African Community; Mr Gabriel Negatu, Regional Director, African Development Bank; and Mr Donat Bagula, Executive Secretary of the Northern Corridor Transit and Transport Coordination Authority; as well as private sector representatives from partner states and the East African Business Council. The next Summit of the Northern Corridor Integration Project will be hosted by Uganda.

Eritrean refugees still risk arbitrary detention and torture if returned to Eritrea

Conscription in Eritrea has been the subject of a great deal of criticism from international NGOs, Eritrean human rights groups and even the UN Monitoring Group on Eritrean sanctions, as well the UN Human Rights Council, which issued a damning report on human rights in Eritrea earlier this year. Last week, Amnesty International issued a report on conscription in Eritrea, under the title, “Just Deserters: Why indefinite national service in Eritrea has created a generation of refugees.” And it provides detailed evidence that conscription in Eritrea remains indefinite and unending for most conscripts. Indeed, unending conscription is the main reason now cited by the tens of thousands who flee the country every year. According to the UNHCR, 5,000 people were fleeing Eritrea every month at the end of 2014; and in November 2014, the UNHCR said that 90% of Eritreans arriving in Europe were between 18 and 24 years old.

Eritrea is, in fact, one of the biggest refugee producing countries in the world, despite being a country with no on-going armed conflict. Yet, as the report underlines, the huge numbers of young people fleeing indefinite national service in Eritrea are adding to the global refugee crisis. The report reveals, despite claims last year by Eritrean officials that conscription would be limited to the 18 months originally intended, that national service continues to be indefinite, often lasting for decades. Conscripts include boys and girls as young as 16 as well as the elderly. Conscription often amounts to forced labor. It provides details of the attempts to flee national service that have resulted in Eritreans making up the third-largest number of refugees trying to reach Europe after Syrians and Afghans.

Yet the report notes that despite the reality on the ground, European states are increasingly rejecting asylum applications from Eritrea. Michelle Kagari, Amnesty International’s Deputy Regional Director for East Africa, the Horn and the Great Lakes is very clear: “The situation facing conscripts in Eritrea is desperate and this exposes the lie behind claims made by certain host countries that most Eritreans arriving at their borders are economic migrants.” These people, she says, “many of them children, are refugees fleeing a system that amounts to forced labor on a national scale and that robs them of choice over key aspects of their lives.” Eritrea, she says, “is hemorrhaging its youth. Children are walking alone, often without telling their parents, to other countries, to avoid lives of perpetual forced labor. That they choose to undertake such precarious and unsafe journeys to supposed safe havens reflects the gravity of the human rights violations they would face if they stayed at home.” She noted that “Conscription continues to be indefinite for a high proportion of conscripts and sometimes lasts for decades. Older people are re-conscripted, and those who try to escape are arbitrarily detained without charge.”

The conclusion is that all states should recognize that this system of indefinite conscription into national service should be recognized as a human rights violation. National service was established by law in 1995. Officially, it requires every adult Eritrean to undertake an 18-month period of conscription. In practice, since 2000 it has been extended indefinitely for the vast majority of conscripts. The country has no provision for conscientious objection to allow for alternative civilian service for those who object to military service on religious, ethical or other grounds.

The report is based on dozens of interviews with Eritreans who have fled the country in the last year, since mid-2014. It details the harsh conditions facing conscripts and the brutal methods used by the Eritrean authorities and military against those who attempt to evade it. Some of the interviewees spoke of being conscripted for more than 10 or 15 years before fleeing the country. Others had husbands or fathers still conscripted after 20 years of service. In some cases, multiple family members are conscripted at the same time and geographically separated, denying them the right to enjoy a family life. One 18-year-old woman said that the new requirement for older women to report for duty meant that every member of her immediate family was conscripted or had fled the country. The report describes how national service impacts negatively on children. Many children drop out of school early to avoid conscription and girls are married off early in the hope that this will render them ineligible for conscription. Other children, whose parents have been conscripted for a long time, have had to assume economic responsibility for their families. The report provides graphic detail of the experiences of former conscripts and their treatment, including the way National Service conscripts consistently face human rights, including arbitrary detention without charge, trial for attempted evasion, desertion or over-staying leave.

It states categorically that “National Service remains the key factor causing people to flee from Eritrea. Almost every person interviewed in 2015 had fled to avoid or desert from National Service because of its indefinite nature.” The report makes it clear that assurances given by members of the Eritrean government in late 2014 that conscription would be limited to the mandated 18 months have not been translated into any discernible changes in practice. Neither conscripts from recent rounds of conscription, nor their family members had heard of this supposed guarantee; and there had been no public announcement about it. The report also noted that the supposed guarantee includes no change in practice for those conscripted earlier, many of whom had been in service for up to 20 years and who continued to serve indefinitely. In September, the Wall Street Journal said the Eritrean Government rejected a US\$227 million plan from the European Union to facilitate the demobilization of long serving conscripts because it “would violate the principle that no one is exempt from patriotic duties.”

The government’s claim is that the system of national service is necessary for self-defense in light of the longstanding hostility with Ethiopia. This claim, of course, is particularly nonsensical given that Eritrea has consistently devoted much of its foreign policy efforts in recent years to destabilizing its neighbors particularly Ethiopia. Eritrea has also persistently refused to hold any dialogue with Ethiopia on the way to demarcate their common border. Indeed, the vast majority of the conscripts do not undertake military duties. The report makes the point that not all conscripts undertake military duties. Most are deployed in civilian roles. These can include teaching and the civil service, but many more are involved in farming and construction, providing cheap, forced labor, for government and party companies. All those working in these jobs are paid at the normal national service rate and the report underlines that the national service conscripts are “abysmally” paid. Every former conscript interviewed

emphasized that it was impossible to meet the basic needs of a family on the salary received. The basic monthly conscript salary is 450-500 Nakfa per month, before deductions. At the official rate of exchange this might amount to around US\$30 a month. In fact, at the actual rate of exchange this amounts to no more than US\$10 dollars for a month's work. Either way, everybody agreed it was impossible to provide for a family and barely possible for an individual to live on.

One of the more recent developments, highlighted by the report, is the re-conscription in the last year or two of older men throughout the country into the "People's Army." This falls outside National Service but like national service conscripts, members are apparently assigned unpaid duties. These include construction work and guarding of civilian organizations, such as banks. Men as old as 67 have been conscripted for this, as well as some women, and failure to participate, as with national service, attracts severe penalties.

The report also expresses concerns over the way some European countries were now increasingly rejecting asylum requests by Eritrean despite the reality of the dangers that any returnees face on the ground if returned to Eritrea. In 2014 and earlier this year, some countries, including the United Kingdom and Denmark, claimed there had been an improvement in the experience of National Service conscripts and other Eritreans to the point where those fleeing no longer have grounds for asylum. In fact, a report by the Danish Immigration Service in 2014 which claimed there had been improvements in Eritrea was heavily criticized and was withdrawn after two of its three authors resigned in protest over its 'positive' conclusions. Despite this, European states have been increasingly rejecting asylum requests. After UK guidelines regarding the granting of asylum to Eritreans were changed in March this year to say Eritreans could return to Eritrea safely, the number of rejections rose sharply. In the first quarter of the year, 703 applications were granted and 160 rejected. During the next six months, the number accepted was 676 but 1,179 were rejected.

This report's conclusions are unequivocal: there have no discernible changes in National Service practices or in treatment of prisoners in Eritrea. Any policy of refusing asylum and returning refugees to Eritrea is a policy that endangers thousands of lives. There is overwhelming and detailed evidence that people caught fleeing the country or avoiding military service are often "detained for long-periods in inhumane conditions; in some cases deserters are held in underground cells or shipping containers." Conscription into National Service in Eritrea continues to be indefinitely prolonged. Conscripts continue to be deployed in a range of civilian as well as military roles in a system that amounts to forced labor. They continue to be paid low wages insufficient to meet a family's basic needs. They remain at risk of human rights violations within National Service, and detainees, including children, are held in appalling conditions, often underground or in shipping containers and subject to risk of torture or other ill-treatment. There are no grounds for the authorities in European countries to assert that Eritreans who have fled National Service conscription are economic migrants. National Service in Eritrea: "robs Eritreans of choice over key aspects of their lives" because "they are trapped within a system of indefinite forced labor." National Service in Eritrea is so pervasive that anyone who has fled from it faces the risk, if returned to Eritrea, of again being subjected to the human rights violations which take place within it, as well as the risk of harsh punishment. So: "those of National Service age who have fled from conscription into indefinite National Service in Eritrea have strong grounds for being given international protection."

Conference on Structural Transformation of African Agriculture and Rural Spaces

The Conference on Structural Transformation of African Agriculture and Rural Spaces (STAARS) was held in Addis Ababa on Friday and Saturday (December 4-5). Organized by the African Development Bank, in collaboration with Cornell University, the African Economic Research Consortium, the Partnership for Economic Policy, and the World Bank, the conference aimed to connect top-tier researchers, academics and policy-makers from Africa and around the world “to advance the dialogue on how to foster the structural transformation of agriculture in Africa.” It also focused on providing information for evidence-based policy-making to improve the performance of Africa’s agriculture to enhance food security, inclusion and employment, particularly for youth and women.

More than twenty papers were delivered, and debated, covering numerous aspects of policy-making across Africa with a wide range of policy options discussed. Ethiopia was the subject of three papers in particular: “The **land certification program** and off-farm employment in Ethiopia”, “Urbanization and agricultural transformation in Africa: Evidence from a staple crop (Teff) in Ethiopia” and “From rural to Urban, not through migration: Household livelihood response to urbanization in Northern Ethiopia.”

Eyerusalem Siba from the US Brookings Institute in her paper, “The land certification program and off-farm employment in Ethiopia”, underlined the significance of Ethiopia’s land certification and the positive impact it had made on off-farm employment. A large portion of the thesis used an econometric model and regression analysis to show the impact land certification has on the livelihood of the farmers and their activities in off-farm activities. The debate covered whether the land certificate could or should be rented, sold or used as collateral and also considered the matrix of land certification and off-farm employment. There was agreement that Ethiopia’s land certification could be seen as exemplary and “other African countries should learn from it”. There was also considerable discussion on the motive of the land certification and its importance for building confidence for farmers. A number of participants argued that the certification should comply with the changing dynamics of households. This, according to the response given by a representative from the African Development Bank, was something that could be solved if agro-processing is effectively implemented as intended under the country’s recently launched Second Growth and Transformation Plan. The study recommended a closer look into the mechanisms through which the First Growth and Transformation Plan had improved the well-being of farmers in general during the five years of the Plan.

The second paper presented was Joachim Vandecastelen’s paper from KU Leuven University on “Urbanization and agricultural transformation in Africa: Evidence from a staple crop (Teff) in Ethiopia.” As the shift towards cities steadily increases in Africa with estimates that by 2040 half of Africa’s population will live in a city, Joachim Vandecastelen argued that urban proximity has a remarkable effect on agricultural productivity. His study demonstrated, for example, that effective price of *Teff* grown around big cities showed a huge increase. His paper provided a clear demonstration of the proposition that cities are engines for agricultural transformation.

The third paper was entitled, “From rural to urban, not through migration: Household livelihood response to urbanization in Northern Ethiopia.” The presenter, Ms Tsega G. Mezgebo, looked at the growing urbanization from a different perspective to Joachim Vandecastelen. Her paper revealed that though “Urbanization is generally seen as a positive

overall process, with economies of agglomeration leading to higher welfare in the longer-run” there were problems. Indeed “...the process limits the availability of arable land for existing farming communities in peri-urban areas, and natural resource-based livelihoods are presumed to eventually vanish and be replaced by higher-productivity, non-farm activities.” The study underlined the crucial importance of identifying factors that can contribute to a smooth transition from rural to urban livelihoods for those who are directly affected around the periphery of urban conglomerations.

A recent study by the World Bank noted that Ethiopia had recently achieved remarkable economic growth with rapid urban expansion. It said that the country’s annual urban population growth was about 4.9% in 2013. This compared with 4.1% in sub-Saharan Africa as a whole; and the World Bank expected this growth rate to continue in the near future. The study recommended that grants of money for those who have given their land for urbanization programs should be accompanied by provision of necessary skills and knowledge so that peri-urban farm households could benefit effectively from the emerging non-farm employment opportunities. During the discussion on Ms Tsega’s paper, there were suggestions that it was important for policy-makers to consider providing training in urban agriculture and investment advice when designing or revising land compensation packages.

During the session there was a high-level-policy roundtable to discuss market distortions and government intervention, financial access and “youth agri-preneur” possibilities. Influential figures in the finance, market and investment sectors, including Professor Lemma Senbet of the African Economic Research Consortium, Professor Chris Barret from Cornell University and Professor Danbala Danju, the Chief Executive Officer of the Bank of Agriculture of Nigeria, participated in a wide-ranging discussion of the problems of government intervention, the difficulties of dealing with market distortions and similar problems.

The conference’s closing presentation was given by Dr Park Hwa Soo from Korea Africa Economic Cooperation. STAARS originated in South Korea. Dr Soo shared South Korea’s engagement with the African Development Bank through Korea Africa Economic Cooperation since the 1980s. He noted this had been formulated around technical cooperation and the provision of resources for the implementation of Multilateral Debt Reduction Initiative (MDRI). He also underlined Korea’s activity in supporting structural transformation of African agriculture dialogues and debates, activity, which was helping to build networks of skilled African policy researchers through improved access to data and strengthening the links of development institutes across the continent.