

A Week in the Horn

3rd February 2017

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News in brief

Africa and the African Union

The 28th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union opened on Monday (January 30) in Addis Ababa, under the theme "**Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in the Youth**". Dr Dlamini-Zuma, outgoing Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, opening her last Assembly, underlined the importance of making 2017 the year of youth as Africa has 200 million young men and women aged between 15 to 24 years. She emphasized the need to provide Africa's youth with opportunities to expand their knowledge of science, mathematics, engineering and technology and close the gap between industry and educational systems. The AU is appointing a Special AU Envoy for Youth. (See article)

UN Secretary-General Guterres told the opening session of the AU Assembly of the importance of putting the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Africa's Agenda 2063 into perfect synchronization, elevating the level of their strategic partnership, and enhancing the UN's partnership with Africa's eight Regional Economic Communities. He said the UN system stands committed to supporting Africa's effort to harness the potential for greater benefits for the youth of Africa, and added that the UN would intensify cooperation and coordination to reinforce the nexus between peace, security and development.

The President of Guinea, Alpha Conde, was elected as the new chairperson of the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government at the 28th Ordinary Session of the Assembly on Monday (January 30). He replaced Chadian President, Idris Deby. President Conde said he would work to speed up responses to the challenges facing Africa including the threat of terrorism and migration. Morocco was re-admitted to the AU as the 55th member in a consensus reached on Monday. (See article)

The Foreign Minister of Chad, Moussa Faki Mahamat, was elected the 15th Chairperson of the African Union Commission on Monday (January 30), defeating Ms Amina Hassan, Cabinet Secretary of Kenya, Abdoulaye Bathily, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Central Africa, and two other candidates. The election went to a seventh and final round of voting. Speaking after his election, Mr Mahamat promised to

place security and development top of his agenda. He said he dreams of an Africa in which "The sounds of guns will be drowned out by cultural songs and rumbling factories." (See article)

AU Heads of State launched an agency to tackle global threats such as Ebola on Tuesday (January 31) and endorsed the **Addis Ababa Declaration on Universal Access to Immunization**, a pledge to ensure that everyone in Africa received the full benefits of immunization by 2020. This will involve establishment of Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, regional health centers around Africa, increase funding for immunization, improve supply chains and delivery, and prioritize vaccines. The Agency will liaise with regional centers in Zambia, Gabon, Kenya, Nigeria and Egypt. Dr Moeti, WHO regional director for Africa, said this demonstrated a strong commitment by African leaders to "save lives across the continent".

The AU Assembly adopted a non-binding decision calling for countries to consider a collective withdrawal from the International Criminal Court. It also said the AU should hold talks with the UN Security Council to push for the ICC to be reformed with a majority of countries wanting the meaning of immunity and impunity amended in the Rome Statute. The strategy also calls for countries to strengthen their own judicial mechanisms and expand the jurisdiction of the **African Court of Justice and Human Rights** "in order to reduce the deference to the ICC." Last year, South Africa, Burundi and Gambia all announced plans to leave the court.

AU Heads of State and Government on Tuesday (January 31) reaffirmed their commitment to reinforce the fight against terrorism in Africa following a briefing by African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smail Chergui, to the media.

The Committee of African Heads of State on Climate Change (CAHOSCC) meeting on Tuesday (January 31) on the side-lines of the 28th AU Assembly, adopted two new initiatives, tabled by the outgoing CAHOSCC Coordinator, President El-Sisi of Egypt, that would see a "unified Africa" diversify its sources of funding to confront climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the African Adaptation Initiative (AAI) and African Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI). Ethiopia underlined its strong commitment to strengthening its role on climate change and its readiness to work on the speedy implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement (COP 21). (See article)

African Heads of State and representatives of Government attended the 26th session of the Heads of State and Government of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Forum on the margins of the 28th African Union Summit. The Chairperson of the APRM Panel of Eminent Persons, Mustapha Mekideche, said the revitalization process of the APRM, launched in 2016, would continue in 2017. APRM Forum Chair, President Kenyatta, said the number of reviews on governance had significantly improved with five more member states applying to be reviewed. (See article)

The African Leaders Malaria Alliance (ALMA) meeting on the side-lines of the 28th AU Assembly in Addis Ababa in Addis Ababa honored Ethiopia, Swaziland, Uganda, Botswana, Cape Verde, Comoros, DRC and Chad for their significant progress in the fight against malaria. Ethiopia, Swaziland and Uganda are estimated to have decreased malaria incidence and mortality by **more than 40 percent in the past five years**, and they are on track to eliminate malaria by 2020. (See article)

Prime Minister Hailemariam told the First Session of the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI) Board of Directors on Sunday (January 29) that implementing projects earmarked by AREI would enable Africa to bridge the gaps in the power supply chain. Adequate and sustainable energy provision was necessary to provide for Africa's industrialization. He said Ethiopia fully accepts the agenda items of AREI and was committed to implement them fully. Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea and Namibia are Board Members of AREI.

The recent **Eastern Africa Power Pool** Ministerial meeting said that the proposed power grid project to connect Cairo to Cape Town with a single power line would commence in April with a meeting to launch the groundwork being held in Kampala, in April.

Ethiopia

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn and President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of Egypt, meeting on the side-lines of the 28th AU Assembly, agreed to continue to work together to enhance bilateral relations. They stressed the need to widen and deepen cooperation in all fields of their bilateral and regional relations, including political, economic and security areas, and underlined the importance of capitalizing on the achievements at leadership

and institutional level and of enhancing mutual confidence. They said they were following the tripartite technical talks closely and reaffirmed their commitment to the **cooperative spirit over GERD**. They stressed the need to boost people-to-people relations and for closer communication and continuous consultation at all levels as well as the important role to be played by the media. They also agreed on the need to maintain a regular exchange of visits at different levels.

President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, during a meeting with Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn on the sidelines of the 28th AU Summit on Tuesday (January 31) said the relationship between Ethiopia and Rwanda, based on solidarity and fraternity, was so strong that it can "surpass insurmountable challenges". The two leaders discussed regional, continental and international issues of mutual interest. President Kagame said they would work closely together to embark on continuous improvements for rural areas as well as on their pro-poor policies and practices.

United Nations Secretary-General Guterres, meeting Prime Minister Hailemariam on Sunday (January 29) commended Ethiopia's positive role in the maintenance of peace and security in the Horn of Africa region, and hailed its exemplary role in **hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees from neighboring countries**.

At a high-level event held on the margins of the 28th AU Summit, UN Secretary-General Guterres and UN Emergency relief Coordinator Stephen O'Brien on Sunday (January 29) commended the Ethiopian Government and humanitarian partners on the response to last year's El Niño drought, and called on international partners to join the Ethiopian Government in the funding of the **2017 Humanitarian Requirements Document**, which seeks \$948 million to assist 5.6 million people facing the new drought in south and south-eastern parts of the country. (See article)

Ms Priti Patel, UK Minister for International Development, visited Ethiopia this week. She met Prime Minister Hailemariam and visited the Hawassa Industrial Park. During her visit, she launched **DfID's first Economic Development Strategy, emphasizing trade and development rather than aid**. She announced extra UK aid in response to the current drought. (See article)

Foreign Minister Dr Workneh Gebeyehu met Mr Koen Vervaeke, Managing Director for East Africa at the European External Action Service on Friday (January 27). The two sides discussed regional issues with particular emphasis on the election in Somalia, and underlined the importance of effective implementation of the Strategic Engagement signed in June, 2016, to bolster their long-standing ties. Mr Vervaeke praised the moves taken by the Government of Ethiopia in addressing the problems in some parts of Oromia and Amhara Regional States.

Foreign Minister Dr Workneh held talks with Algeria's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ramante Lamamra, on Friday (January 27). He thanked Algeria for its support for Ethiopia's bid for a non-permanent seat at the Security Council and for Dr Tedros' WHO campaign. Foreign Minister Lamamra said the two countries should strengthen trade ties and bilateral relations through exchange of investment, air transport and exchange of skills in hydro-carbon development.

Foreign Minister, Dr Workneh and Mangala Samaraweera, Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Wednesday (February 1) with the view to undertaking diplomatic consultations on bilateral issues and establishing a Joint Ministerial Commission. Foreign Minister Workneh said Ethiopia was keen to take lessons from Sri Lanka's successful experience in tea production, and textile and agro-processing industries.

Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of UNAIDS, Michel Sidibe met Foreign Minister Dr Workneh on Tuesday (January 31). He praised Ethiopia's achievements in the health sector and welcomed its work with UNAIDS. He said UNAIDS was to continue to support Ethiopia in a bid to help the country meet the global plan to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030. Dr Workneh thanked UNAIDS for its support.

Foreign Minister Dr Workneh and Ambassador Osuga Takeshi, Director-General for African Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, on Tuesday (January 31) underlined the need to elevate their long-standing bilateral relations and expand cooperation. Ambassador Takeshi said Japan would continue to extend support to Ethiopia through ODA and JICA.

Foreign Minister Dr Workneh held bilateral talks with Mauritius Foreign Minister, Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo on Sunday (January 29). They agreed to solidify Ethio-Mauritius ties with practical cooperation in sugar production, tourism and renewable energy development. Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo proposed the setting up of a joint commission.

Foreign Minister Dr Workneh met with Dr Saad Ali Shire, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Minister of Somaliland, on Saturday (January 28). They discussed expanding cooperation in political and economic areas as well as peace and security issues.

Foreign Minister Dr Workneh met with Mr Aliko Dangote, the owner of the Nigerian Dangote Group, on Saturday (January 28) for talks on enhancing the business and investment environment and ways to generate jobs.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Mrs Hirut Zemene met with Foreign Minister Mohamed Bacar Dossar of the Union of Comoros on Tuesday (January 31). Mr Dossar said the Comoros was committed to turning the general agreement signed by both countries into practical cooperation. He said they should strengthen ties in areas ranging from education, health and transport to trade and tourism.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs Hirut Zemene and Ambassador Monica Juma, Principal Secretary at Kenya's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, met on Sunday (January 29), on the margins of the 28th AU Assembly and reaffirmed their commitment to work closely in a bid to strengthen cooperation on bilateral and regional issues. They discussed ways to maintain peace and stability in South Sudan and stressed the need to implement the Special Status Agreement signed between the two countries.

State Minister Hirut Zemene received copies of the credentials of the Colombian Ambassador to Kenya who is also accredited to Ethiopia on Saturday (January 28).

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Aklilu Hailemichael, met with the Ambassador of Morocco, Mrs Nezha Alaoui M'Hammdi, on Thursday (February 2) and discussed ways to follow up on activities within the economic cooperation framework established with King Mohammed VI's visit to Ethiopia. Dr Aklilu said Ethiopia is keen to draw lessons from Morocco in areas of engaging the Diaspora for national development. Ambassador M'Hammdi noted the Joint Economic Commission meeting in Morocco later this year would help identify new areas of economic cooperation.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Aklilu Hailemichael met with the Chief of Cabinet of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), Mr Ovais Sarmad on the margins of the 28th AU Summit on Tuesday (January 31). The two sides reaffirmed their commitment to cooperate in engaging the Diaspora in national development, and boosting partnership on migration management, and mitigation of Climate Change. The IOM is currently working with the Government in Diaspora engagement, migration and management of displaced people and repatriation of citizens.

The African Development Bank and Ethiopia signed a financing agreement on Monday (January 30) for 2 billion Birr, 65% extended as a grant and the remaining 780 million birr as a loan. The funds will be used for upgrading 220 kilometers of the Jimma–Chida and Sodo–Sawula roads. Dr Abraham Tekeste, Minister of Finance and Economic Cooperation, said this would benefit small-holder farmers, agro businesses, transporters, and women entrepreneurs.

An Ethio-Indian Business Forum was held on Friday (February 3) at the Hilton Hotel, Addis Ababa, organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Association and the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. 17 Indian companies attended.

His Grace Aba Daniel, the Archbishop of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Diocese of Dire Dawa Western Harargie, Kenya and Djibouti, and Ambassador Shamebo Fitamo, Ethiopia's Ambassador to Djibouti laid the foundation stone for the construction of a cemetery for the Ethiopian Christian community in Djibouti, and inaugurated the Church of Mariam there. The ceremony was also attended by Hassen Omar Mohammed, Djibouti's Minister of the Interior.

Eritrea

President Isaias, in an interview on national television last week, strongly criticized Europe for its role in economically sabotaging his country and depleting its human capital. He described both French President Francois Hollande and German Chancellor, Angela Merkel as "mentally disturbed" and claimed they were responsible for the continuing flight of Eritrean youth out of the country as part of a deliberate policy to weaken Eritrea "with the aim of creating poverty and famine".

Eritrea's Foreign Minister Osman Saleh arrived in Moscow for a three-day working visit at the invitation of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Monday (January 30). (See article)

A Ministry of Information statement on Thursday this week (February 2) said the harvest in Eritrea this year had been "bountiful", almost a bumper harvest. It said the Bahri (eastern escarpment) rains in autumn 2015, the short rains in the highlands in Spring 2016 and the main Kremti rains (June and September 2016) "were abundant in terms of geographical distribution, frequency and timing." Reports of a severe crop shortfall in Eritrea were "grossly inaccurate."

The Ministry of Energy and Mines and Colluli Mining Share Company signed an agreement to engage in potash mining operations in the Bada area of the Northern Red Sea Region on Monday (January 30). The agreement was signed by Minister of Energy and Mines, General Sebhat Ephrem; the Minister of Finance, Berhane Habtemariam, representing the Eritrean National Mining Company (ENAMCO); and Seamus Cornelius, Chairman of the Australia-based Danakali Mining Company. ENAMCO and the Danakali Mining Company jointly own Colluli Mining Share Company.

Kenya

Kenya has agreed to resume participation in the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) following a meeting between President Kenyatta and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Sunday (January 29) in Addis Ababa. Mr Guterres asked President Kenyatta to continue to be engaged in South Sudan, and "to urge the leadership of Africa's newest nation to pursue inclusivity as a way of sustaining peace".

Somalia

Twenty-four candidates for the presidency successfully completed the registration process on Sunday (January 29). The election, by the 329 members of Somalia's parliament, will be held February 8. Candidates set out their campaign agendas to the members of the Parliament this week. On February 6, the candidates will also be able to take part in a presidential debate which will be covered by various media outlets. (See article)

Michael Keating, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, together with Ambassador Francisco Madeira, Special Representative and Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and Asha Gelle Dirie, Founder and Executive Director of the Asha Gelle Foundation, tasked by the President to help women secure 30% of the seats in Parliament, briefed the UN Security Council on the situation in Somalia on Friday (January 27). (See article)

A report released by FAO this week in Nairobi warns that the number of people who need food aid in Somalia has now reached 6.2 million, more than double the number in July last year. It calls on donor nations to provide urgent support in nutrition, health support, food supply and sanitation to avert the looming famine in Somalia, which threatens in the second half of this year.

The British Secretary for International Development Ms Priti Patel, at the end of a visit to Mogadishu on Saturday (January 28), said she was "deeply concerned" at the worsening drought situation in Somalia. She said the UK planned to step up support to Somalia to "provide basic food, clean water and nutrition" through the World Food Program, U.N. Children's Fund and the Food and Agricultural Organization.

AMISOM has strongly commended the role played by Burundi in support of the process for restoration of peace in Somalia. Deputy AU Special Representative for Somalia, Lydia Wanyoto, praised the recent successes of the Burundi troops, including security for the successful state formation process of Hir-Shabelle, when

meeting the Burundian Chief of Defence Forces, Lt. General Prime Niyongabo on a working visit to Somalia last weekend.

AMISOM's police component launched the third phase of training for Jubaland State Police recruits in Kismayo on Monday (January 30). The first two phases were concluded last year with 400 police officers trained and now deployed across the state. This third phase involves the training for three months of a further 201 recruits.

South Sudan

King Mohammed VI of Morocco arrived in Juba, South Sudan, for an official visit on Wednesday (February 1). He held talks with President Salva Kiir on deepening bilateral relations. Last month, Morocco set up a multi-disciplinary field hospital in Juba to provide medical services in paediatrics, internal medicine, surgery, cardiology, traumatology, dentistry, ophthalmology and ENT medicine. During his three-day state visit, King Mohammed VI also signed agreements and MoUs on general cooperation, promotion of investment, avoidance of double taxation, vocational training, agriculture, industrial cooperation, mining and commerce as well as a \$5m feasibility study of the plan to move the capital from Juba to Ramciel in Eastern Lakes State.

The African Union, IGAD and the United Nations (UN), after a joint consultative meeting on South Sudan on Sunday (January 29), expressed "deep concern" over the continuing spread of fighting. They underlined that there could only be a political solution to the conflict within the framework of the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS), and called for immediate cessation of hostilities and inclusivity of the political process.

Government and rebel forces have blamed each other for clashes in Malakal on Tuesday (January 31). The fighting came a day after the United Nations warned the situation remained tense in Malakal, which it described as "largely deserted." The IOM said this week that renewed violence in Upper Nile had once again hindered the ability of relief agencies to provide assistance to populations seriously in need.

Information Minister, Michael Makuei Lueth, said on Friday last week (January 27), after a meeting with the independent Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, that the Government preferred peace to establishing the Hybrid Court. He said implementation of transitional justice now would never bring peace and stability in South Sudan and the Government would not participate in the transitional justice workshop scheduled this month in Addis Ababa. The Peace Agreement provides the establishment of a Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing, an independent Hybrid Court, and Compensation and Reparation Authority.

Sudan

The rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) on Monday (January 30) rejected any meeting with the implementation committee on the National Dialogue. It said the AUHIP mediation should meet the opposition before trying to organize any meeting with the committee to discuss the new constitution or participation in the transitional National Consensus Government. It also demanded the mediation work with the Government and opposition [be] on an equal footing.

The Sudanese government and the European Union on Monday (January 30) agreed to continue strategic cooperation and coordination at all levels after a meeting between foreign ministry under-secretary Abdel-Ghani al-Nai'm and the EU envoy to Khartoum, Jean-Michel Dumond. After discussions on combating illegal migration and human trafficking and development, they "agreed to cooperate strategically and to continue full coordination at all levels during the coming period". Mr al-Nai'm called for increased efforts to cancel Sudan's external debt and promote investment. He welcomed the EU's initiative to open a European chamber of commerce in Khartoum. A senior EU parliamentary delegation will visit Khartoum in April.

The African Union Summit acknowledges youth as builders of Africa's future...

The 28th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU), held under the theme: "**Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in the Youth**" took place on Monday and Tuesday this week (January 30-31). The Summit sent out a clear signal that Africa places greater importance on youth in the thinking [on] and building of its future, in making Agenda 2063 and the first ten-year implementation plan a reality. The Assembly assessed the progress made and the challenges that it faces on the way forward. It elected the new Chairperson of the Assembly of the African Union, President Alpha Conde, President of the Republic of Guinea, on Monday (January 30). President Conde took over from President Idriss Deby of Chad as the Chairperson for the year 2017. It also decided to admit the Kingdom of Morocco as a new member state of the AU by consensus. Its decision followed a report of the Chairperson of the Commission and an opinion provided by the Legal Counsel of the AU. The Assembly welcomed the request from Morocco and, in accordance with the Principles and Objectives of the Constitutive Act, admitted Morocco as a member state of the AU without a vote.

This Session of the Assembly, calling for stronger unity and demonstrating a spirit of partnership to maintain peace and security, advance broad-based and inclusive development, and pool African strengths and wisdom for a conflict-free continent, witnessed a number of major breakthroughs. These ranged from institutional reform of the AU to the revitalization of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), from progress on the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps for Silencing the Guns in Africa by the Year 2020 to the promotion of African contributions to sustain investment in the youth of Africa, and universal access to immunization as a cornerstone for health and development in Africa.

The Assembly, taking note of the recommendations of the Executive Council on the implementation of the decisions on the International Criminal Court (ICC), adopted a non-binding ICC Withdrawal Strategy. It urged member states to secure funding for the activities of Eminent Persons Group on the Continental Free Trade Area after taking note of the report on implementation of the CFTA and the Update on the Proposed Mechanism for the Elimination of Non-tariff Barriers in the CFTA. It endorsed the Ministerial Declaration on Universal Access to Immunization as a cornerstone for health and development in Africa, urging member states to support implementation of the declaration. In order to make the youth the builders and managers of their own future and help them bring Agenda 2063 to fruition, the Assembly urged member states to take firm and sustained steps for resource mobilization within the context of supporting, encouraging and protecting Africa-Africa investment.

With regard to the state of peace and security in Africa, the Assembly, taking note of the report of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) on its activities, emphasized the need for all AU member states to continue to focus more effectively on conflict prevention, on early warning and early response, in order to prevent future occurrences of full-blown conflict. It commended the PSC for the holding of the Retreat on Practical Steps to Silence the Guns by 2020 last year in Lusaka, Zambia, which endorsed the African Union Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Guns as a guideline for Africa's efforts in this direction. It also called on member states, the Regional Economic Communities and Regional Mechanisms for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution in collaboration with the AU Commission, to take necessary measures to fully implement the Master Roadmap. The Assembly endorsed the relevant conclusions and recommendations of the 4th High-Level Seminar on Peace and Security in Africa, held in Oran, Algeria last year aimed at strengthening coordination between the PSC and the African Members (A3) of the UN Security Council as well as enhancing their role in the promotion and defence of African interests and common positions on peace and security matters of concern to Africa, in the decision-making process of the UN Security Council. The current African members of the Security Council are Egypt, Ethiopia and Senegal.

The Assembly also reaffirmed its commitment to reinforcing the fight against the scourge of terrorism on the continent. In a briefing to the media, the Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smail Chergui, said the fight against terrorism was one of the top priorities of the work of the African Union Commission. The Summit had reaffirmed the same. He said last year's Kigali Summit had agreed on the establishment of a Special Fund to combat terrorism and this work was in progress. Once in effect, the Commissioner said, the continent would have another important tool to fight terrorism and extremism. He noted the Commission was working on building up the capacity of member states as a key element for maintaining peace and realizing stability. The Assembly, he said, commended the work of AMISOM in the fight against terrorism in Somalia, adding that AMISOM had successfully secured the election process in Somalia. On South Sudan, Commissioner Chergui said that among other priorities, it needed healing, contemplation and accountability, and he

underlined that the AU Commission could not tolerate impunity. He praised the efforts of IGAD and commended the UN for its commitment to bring stability to South Sudan. He said the Commission would continue to work with the government of South Sudan to bring peace and stability. He also noted the efforts to bring normalcy in Libya.

The decision taken on the revitalization of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) was another important breakthrough in this year's ordinary session in the area of African governance, widening the APRM approach from the previously narrow approach to help capture the local and indigenous knowledge embedded in Africa's cultures. The Assembly, embracing the positive contributions and recommendations following the debate of the Special Summit of the Forum of Heads of States and Government on Revitalization of the APRM, welcomed the repositioning of the Mechanism to play a monitoring and evaluation role for the AU Agenda 2063 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals Agenda 2030. Translating the political will of APRM into financial contribution for greater ownership of the Mechanism was another commitment welcomed by the Assembly, which reiterated that the APRM remained the premier African good governance tool. The Assembly acknowledged the Peer Review's Reports of Djibouti, Chad, Kenya, Sudan and Senegal and congratulated the three member states as well as the Panel of Eminent Persons that led the review work.

Another important outcome of this year's Ordinary Session was the study on the institutional reform of the AU and the proposals for a system of governance for the AU undertaken by President Kagame of Rwanda. The Assembly took note of the recommendations to further strengthen the AU in five areas: focus on key priorities with continental scope; realign AU institutions in order to deliver those priorities; connect the AU to its citizens; manage the business of the AU efficiently and effectively at both political and operational levels; and finance the AU sustainably and with the full ownership of member states. The Assembly, reiterating the importance of African Common Positions as the most effective way of advancing Africa's voice and representation in the world, adopted the recommendations in the report as amended by member states during the Retreat of the Assembly on the Institutional Reform of the AU.

Climate change was high on the agenda this year. The Assembly, taking note of the report of the Coordinator of the Committee of the African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC), President Abdel Fattah El Sisi of Egypt, on climate change action in Africa and preparation for Global Climate negotiations, endorsed its recommendations and key messages. It welcomed the tabling of the African Adaptation Initiative (AAI) and the Africa Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI) and urged developed countries to support the implementation of these two initiatives aimed at encouraging a "unified Africa" to diversify sources of funding to confront climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Assembly elected Mahamat Moussa Faki of Chad as the new Chairperson of the African Union Commission. He was elected after seven rounds of voting. The other candidates were Amina Mohamed of Kenya and Abdoulaye Bathily of Senegal as well as Botswana's foreign minister, Pelonomi Venson-Moitoi and Mba Mokuy of Equatorial Guinea. A statement issued by Kenya's State House spokesperson, Manoah Esipisu, announced "Kenya congratulates him on a race well won. We pledge to work with him to defend the pan-African agenda of integration for Africa, as well as democracy, sovereignty and prosperity for its entire people". The new Chairperson has served his country and the AU in various capacities. He was previously chair of the AU's Economic, Social and Cultural Council, and, most recently, Foreign Minister of Chad, a position he has held since April 2008. He also served as Prime Minister of Chad June 2003-February 2004. He attended university in Congo-Brazzaville where he studied law.

The Assembly elected Ghana's Ambassador Thomas Kwesi Quartey as Deputy Chairperson of the AU Commission and Commissioners for the African Union Commissions, as well as appointing members to the African Union Advisory Board on Corruption, judges for the African Court on Human and People's Rights (AfCHPR) and a member of the African Union Commission on International Law (AUCIL). The newly sworn-in Commissioners are: Ambassador Smail Chergui, Commissioner for Peace and Security; Ms Minata Cessouma Samate, Commissioner for Political Affairs; Ms Amani Abou-Zeid, Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy; Ms Amira Elfadil Mohammed Elfadil, Commissioner for Social Affairs; Albert M. Muchanga, Commissioner for Trade and Industry; and Ms Correa Leonel Josefa Sacko, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture. The Assembly decided that the two remaining Commissioners, for Economic Affairs, and for Human Resource, Science and Technology, should come from the Eastern Region and the Central Region at the Thirty-First Ordinary Session of the Executive Council prior to the Twenty-Ninth Ordinary Session of the Assembly in July.

During the closing ceremony, the Chairperson of the Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, said that being Chairperson was a heavy task but he gave his assurance that he would dedicate and commit himself to serving the Union. The Chairperson of the African Union, President Conde, gave the vote of thanks and welcomed the King of Morocco. He highlighted some of the various decisions that were discussed, including the adoption of the Report on the proposed institutional reform of the African Union. In conclusion, he mentioned that Member States of the African Union are now committed to financing the operations of the Union with their own resources, underlining that this was "important for Africa's independence and self-respect." The outgoing Chairperson of the Commission, Dr Dlamini Zuma, extended her sincere thanks to the people and Government of Ethiopia, saying that "Whatever we have accomplished as a Commission could not have been done in a calm and good atmosphere, without the support of the Government and People of the Federal Democratic of Ethiopia and particularly the People of the City of Addis Ababa and the local Administration." She congratulated the Heads of State and Government for a successful 28th AU Assembly, which she said, had dealt with important issues critical to the well-being of Africa and African people, especially its youth. She emphasized the historic decision to reunite the African community of states, with its decision on the membership of the Kingdom of Morocco by consensus. This, she said, provided a platform to strengthen African solutions to African problems. She said it had been "an absolute and humbling privilege" to serve as Chairperson of the Commission, adding "For us as African to serve, there is no service more important, more honorable or more rewarding than to serve our Continent and the citizens of Africa." Dr Dlamini Zuma concluded: "We leave behind a Union that has Agenda 2063 which reflects the aspiration of African citizens; a Union on its route to self-reliance; a Union pushing ahead on integration and a Union engaged in fundamental reforms to enable it to better serve the African agenda and Peoples. We are a Union on the way to silencing the guns." She added, "I am satisfied with the strong foundations in place for Africa's success."

There were numerous side-line meetings and bilateral discussions held on the margins of Assembly and over the weekend. These included the 26th Summit of the African Peer Review Mechanism Forum, the Committee of Heads of State and Government on Climate Change, the meeting of the Committee of Ten Heads of State promoting Education, Science and Technology, and the Session of the Peace and Security Council at heads of State and Government level on Saturday (January 29). The meeting of the African Leaders Malaria Alliance took place on Monday and the High-Level Event on the Implementation of the Common African Position on Ending Child marriage on Tuesday. The 18th Ordinary General Assembly of the Organization of African First Ladies Against HIV/AIDS (OAFLA) also convened on Tuesday today at the Headquarters of the African Union (AU) to deliberate on the theme "Building on 15 years of engagement to harness the demographic dividend of Africa through promoting the needs of adolescents and their access to youth-friendly health services".

... the meeting of the Committee of African Heads of State on Climate Change...

On the side-lines of the 28th AU Assembly, the Committee of African Heads of State on Climate Change (CAHOSCC) discussed at great length the challenges of climate change and the threat to the environment. With Africa already experiencing some of the most severe impacts of climate change, Africa established the Committee to influence global negotiations. This week's meeting on Saturday (January 28) sent a clear message: the impact of global warming, rising surface temperatures and extreme weather will be felt as acutely in Africa as anywhere in the world." African leaders pointed out that climate change will increase the risks associated with extremes, heat, heavy rain and drought. It will also make poverty reduction more difficult and decrease food security. They collectively agreed that the economic impact of climate change will be most severe in developing countries because the economies of poorer nations are less able to adapt to changes affecting industry and jobs.

The Committee also discussed the results of the 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC – COP 21) which was adopted by many African countries in December 2015. The Committee commended the agreement as the basis for collective international dealing with the challenge of climate change in the coming years in a way that would enhance efforts to minimize the negative effects, while still striking a balance with the right for developing countries to implement their development plans. It underlined the necessity of exerting every effort to realize the Paris Agreement and all the resolutions that were adopted there to respond to climate change. There was some concern expressed that this should not, however, lead countries to take either collective or unilateral measures, such as imposing taxes on carbon, that would negatively reflect on the exports of developing countries or cause immense harm to agricultural and transport sectors in African countries. The Committee also considered COP22, held in Marrakesh, Morocco as one of the first steps to put the Paris Agreement into effect.

Ethiopia highlighted its commitments to protect the environment and respond to climate change. It expressed the country's firmly-based commitment towards strengthening its role on climate change and highlighted its strategy to build a climate-resilient green economy. It emphasized the country's strong track record in the fight against global warming, and noted its readiness to work on speedy implementation of the Paris Climate Agreement (COP 21). It underlined its special emphasis on efforts to implement mitigation and adaptation, climate financing, capacity building and transfer of technology. Ethiopia pointed out that it is among the most vulnerable countries to the negative consequences of climate change. It is, therefore, playing a major role in the Climate Vulnerable Forum which aims to increase the presence and visibility of member states at international, regional and domestic levels. Ethiopia's delegation specified that the country strongly advocated the importance of taking urgent action to address the negative effects of climate change.

The Committee of African Heads of State on Climate Change adopted two new initiatives aimed at encouraging a "unified Africa" diversifying its sources of funding to help confront climate change and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These were the African Adaptation Initiative (AAI) and African Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI). They were tabled by the outgoing Coordinator of CAHOSCC, President Abdel Fatah El-Sisi of Egypt, and their adoption was seen as an important step towards creating African ownership of the process under the African Union framework.

...and Ethiopia wins ALMA Awards for two consecutive years

ALMA, the African Leaders Malaria Alliance is a coalition of forty-nine African Heads of State and Government working to leverage Africa's collective knowledge and influence to bring about action and accountability in the fight against one of the continent's most dangerous diseases - malaria. ALMA intends to eradicate malaria by 2030 and it has already put in place three principal pillars as the basis for its efforts to achieve this: providing a forum to review progress and address challenges in meeting malaria targets; implementing a monitoring and accountability system through the ALMA Scorecard for Accountability and Action to track results, identify bottlenecks, and facilitate appropriate action; and identifying and sharing lessons learned, for effective implementation of national programs.

On the side-lines of the 28th African Union Summit, on January 29, the African Leaders Malaria Alliance honored eight African countries that have shown particular commitment and innovation in the fight against malaria. According to ALMA, Botswana, Cape Verde, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, **Ethiopia**, Swaziland and Uganda achieved a reduction in the incidence of malaria of 40% or more between 2010 and 2015 and Chad displayed strong leadership in the fight against malaria. Joy Phumaphi, Executive Secretary of ALMA, said the significant reduction in three countries which had some of the highest incidences of malaria in Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Uganda, showed what could be achieved with political commitment, sufficient funding and sound measures to control the disease.

2016 was a transition year from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The ALMA award committee therefore decided that it was an opportune time to award those countries that had attained the malaria target for the Millennium Development Goals. Ethiopia was, therefore, one of the recipients of the award for attaining Malaria Millennium Development Goal target of a 75% or higher reduction rate in the incidence of malaria.

Ethiopia has made significant progress enhancing and sustaining universal coverage of key malaria control interventions, including vector control with insecticide-treated nets. It has substantially expanded integrated community case management of malaria through health extension workers, with support from development of the country's health system. Its strong public-sector healthcare systems, which have also proved successful earlier in implementing other development interventions, have helped the country fight malaria. It has also carried out insecticide resistance monitoring since 2014 and has recently completed a national insecticide resistance monitoring and management plan.

Joy Phumaphi, noted that Ethiopia had been a leader in its commitment to improving the health of its citizens through strengthening its health sector. Congratulating Ethiopia for achieving remarkable progress in the fight against malaria, Dr Mustapha Sidik Kaloko, Commissioner for Social Affairs at the African Union Commission, said, "I welcome ALMA's continued partnership in the fight to end malaria. In this regard, the Catalytic Framework is providing strategic direction to guide countries to achieve malaria control and elimination." The Catalytic Framework provides a roadmap for African countries to increase domestic resources, expand the

use of innovation and technology, and improve health infrastructure to eliminate malaria from the continent by 2030.

In fact, since 2000 malaria mortality rates across the continent have fallen by 62% across all age groups and by 69% among children under five. The increase in the number of people sleeping under long-lasting insecticidal nets or protected by indoor residual spraying as well as the expanded diagnostic testing of children and treatment of pregnant women has contributed significantly to lowering incidence of malaria and mortality in Africa. These achievements have also come at a time when countries are providing more domestic funding to fight malaria. Nevertheless, malaria remains a critical threat in Africa and the continent still has the highest global malaria burden. In 2015, 195 million of the 212 million new malaria cases and 394,000 of the world's 429,000 malaria-related deaths were in Africa.

High-level event on the humanitarian situation in Ethiopia

A high-level event on the humanitarian situation in Ethiopia, led jointly by Ethiopia's Deputy Prime Minister, Demeke Mekonnen and UN Secretary General, António Guterres, was held at the UN Economic Commission for Africa on Sunday (January 29) on the margins of the 28th Summit of the African Union. Also present were UN Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Stephen O'Brien, donors, UN agencies and Government officials including Ethiopia's Commissioner of the National Disaster Risk Management Commission, Mitiku Kassa.

While commending the Ethiopian Government and the humanitarian community on the response to the 2016 El Niño-induced drought in Ethiopia, the Secretary General called for total solidarity with the Ethiopian people and the Ethiopian Government as the country faces a new drought. He said the High-Level event "must express our total solidarity with the Ethiopian people and the Ethiopian Government." He said this was a matter of justice because of "the enormous generosity of the Ethiopian people themselves" with Ethiopia now the largest African refugee-hosting country and a country with the most determined policy of keeping all its borders open, even in the most difficult security situations. In a country with huge challenges of development, he said, you can also see thousands of young Eritreans, Somalis and South Sudanese who have received already a diploma or are now in Ethiopian universities supported by the Ethiopian Government.

Mr Guterres pointed out the current crisis had not caught the Government and the people of Ethiopia unprepared, even if the magnitude of the crisis was above its capacity to resolve. He noted: "Ethiopia has persistently applied a policy of building resilience in relation to the natural disasters that unfortunately with climate change have come to be more and more frequent and intense." Last year the government, agencies, donors, all worked to address both the most pressing needs on the humanitarian perspective and the long-term development and resilience response to the challenging problems that the Ethiopians are facing. If this approach was copied in many other parts of the world, we would be much more effective, not only in humanitarian aid but also much more effective in relation to building resilience and to promoting development.

The Secretary-General also said that showing solidarity with Ethiopia was a matter of self-interest "because the link between humanitarian and development with peace and security is growing everywhere, and to invest in building the resilience of populations and to invest in the best humanitarian needs in situations of stress like the one we are facing, is also to contribute to strengthen[ing] peace and security." He said Ethiopia was a "pillar of stability" in the region and the international community could not allow the effect of drought to be a promoter of additional instability, social unrest, or conflict as this would have dreadful consequences "in relation to the conflicts in the area, in connection to displacements of populations, in a world that is so little inclined to receive more migrants, and to global terrorism that is now a threat everywhere." He urged the participants to "transform this session of solidarity into a commitment to work together, not only to address the pressing humanitarian needs of Ethiopia, but to join efforts in addressing the huge challenges from a development perspective, a sustainable development perspective and from [the] peace and security perspective the world faces today."

Following a three-day visit to the Somali Regional State, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr O'Brien said he had witnessed the "immense impact" the drought is having on people's lives and livelihoods. Below average rains in south and south-eastern parts of the country caused by the negative Indian Ocean Dipole have led to a new "lowland" drought. Among the most affected areas are parts of Somali and Afar regions and a number of lowland areas of Oromia and Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples regions. It has led to severe

shortages of water and pasture in the pastoral and agro-pastoral communities. Deteriorating livestock body condition and loss of livestock are also being reported as well as high levels of acute and moderate malnutrition. He called for the international community to act now before it is too late.

"We need to act now before it is too late," said Mr O'Brien, calling on international partners to join the Ethiopian Government in funding the 2017 Humanitarian Requirements Document, which seeks \$948 million to assist 5.6 million people, whose lives, livelihoods and well-being depend on support from relief partners. He noted that while the humanitarian response to the 2016 El Niño drought has been very effective, Ethiopian farmers and herders in affected areas were still living on the brink, unable to build back their livestock herds, or reinvigorate their small farms, and struggling to sustain themselves and their families. He said: "We have no time to lose. Livestock are already dying; pastoralists and farmers are already fleeing their homes in search of water and pasture; children - more often girls - are dropping out of school to support with household chores, and hunger and malnutrition levels will rise soon if assistance does not arrive on time, particularly among women who are more likely to suffer from health problems and malnutrition during droughts."

FAO Deputy Director-General, Climate and Natural Resources, Maria Helena Semedo, told participants that with only one-quarter of expected rainfall received in the Horn of Africa in the October-December period, "The magnitude of the situation calls for scaled up action and coordination at national and regional levels". She said: "This is, above all, a livelihoods and humanitarian emergency - and the time to act is now. We cannot wait for a disaster like the famine in Somalia in 2011." The FAO estimates that over 17 million people are currently in crisis and emergency food insecurity levels in member-countries of IGAD. Close to 12 million people across Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya are in need of food assistance. Much of Somalia, north-east and coastal Kenya, the south-east of Ethiopia as well as the Afar region are still to recover from El Niño-induced drought of 2015/16, while South Sudan and Darfur region of Sudan are facing the protracted insecurity. In addition, acute food shortage and malnutrition also remain a major concern in many parts of South Sudan, Sudan (west Darfur) and Uganda's Karamoja region. The FAO warned that if the response is not immediate and sufficient, the risks are massive and the costs high.

Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen, who expressed his gratitude for the generous support and partnership from the international community, underlined the Government's fullest commitment to support the 2017 response to the new drought. As well as addressing the immediate needs of this latest drought, Mr Demeke said Ethiopia was also committed to work with its neighbours who are facing the same drought to search for longer-term responses to the recurrent challenges of drought in the region.

UK Minister for International Development in Ethiopia

Ms Priti Patel, UK Minister for International Development, was in Ethiopia to attend the AU summit. During her visit, she met with government officials as well as representatives of civil society. She also held talks with Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn and announced extra support to prevent the hunger caused by this year's drought. A statement from the UK embassy in Addis Ababa said the UK currently provides emergency nutrition treatment for 25,000 malnourished children, clean water for 100,000 people and vaccinations and treatment for 600,000 cattle in Ethiopia. Ethiopia has been among the top five recipients of UK aid for the last five years.

Ms Patel also met with Dr Arkebe Oqubay, Board Chairman of the Industrial Parks Development Corporation and visited the Hawassa Industrial Park where she said "British support has helped create 60,000 jobs and investment opportunities for UK firms." Ms Patel also launched the Department for International Development's (DFID's) first Economic Development Strategy during her visit. This underlines that investment in economic development will help developing nations speed up their rate of economic growth, trade more and industrialize faster, and ultimately lift themselves out of poverty. By helping the world's poorest countries grow their economies, this investment will help create the UK's trading partners of the future, boost global prosperity and address some of the root causes of global issues such as mass migration and instability that affect the UK.

Ms Patel said: "There is no task more urgent than defeating poverty. The UK has a proud record of supporting people in desperate humanitarian crises, but emergency help alone won't tackle the global changes we face. She said that over the next decade a billion more young people will enter the job market. Africa's population is set to double by 2050 and as many as 18 million extra jobs would be needed. Failure, she added, would consign a generation to a future where jobs and opportunity were out of reach, potentially fuelling instability

and mass migration with, she said, direct consequences for Britain. Developing countries want to harness trade, growth and investment opportunities, and so DfID would work across government to increase the number and quality of jobs in poor countries, enable businesses to grow and prosper, and support better infrastructure, technology and a skilled and healthy workforce.

Through its new strategy, DfID expects to build the potential for developing countries to trade more with the UK and the world, create economic opportunities in fragile and conflict states where jobs and livelihoods are desperately needed, build partnerships with businesses, work closely with the City of London to become the leading financial centre for the developing world, focus investment in job-creating sectors such as manufacturing, infrastructure and commercial agriculture to provide strong foundations for sustainable growth, and strengthen institutions, tackle corruption and help countries mobilise their own domestic resources to support their development.

In its Strategy Report, DfID notes that "Ethiopia hosts 750,000 refugees, the greatest number in Africa. To assist these refugees and the Ethiopian economy, the UK will provide £80 million in partnership with others to create 100,000 new jobs, up to a third of which will be available to refugees. This will help build two industrial parks and provide training. This will strengthen Ethiopia's manufacturing ambitions, foster growth, and contribute to tackling the global migration crisis."

Ms Patel has been a strong proponent of trade in preference to aid. And the statement from the UK Embassy underlined that the UK "puts trade and jobs at [the] heart" of the fight against poverty. She emphasized how Britain will work with African partners to create jobs, build livelihoods and agree new trade deals which benefit the world's poorest people. Ms Patel added: "Developing countries want to harness trade, growth and investment opportunities and Britain will lead the way to lift huge numbers out of grinding poverty to prosperity. At an event co-hosted with the Ethiopian Government and United Nations Population Fund, Ms Patel also committed to step up the UK's global leadership on family planning by hosting a high-level event in London this summer. Together with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, this aims to increase access to family planning for some of the 225 million women and girls who want to avoid or delay pregnancy but aren't using modern contraceptives.

Twenty-four Candidates in Somalia's Presidential election on February 8...

Following the closure of the three-day registration process for candidates for the presidential election on Sunday (January 29), the Presidential Elections Committee announced that a total of 24 candidates had fulfilled the necessary requirements, which included a \$30,000 registration fee. The Committee said these would now participate in the election which has been set for February 8. The winner will require at least two thirds of the votes from the joint Houses of Parliament, the House of the People with 275 members and the Upper House, the Senate of 54 members, that is they need at least 219 votes. If no candidate obtains this, a second round of voting will be held, with the four candidates, who had the highest number of votes in the first round, taking part. Any candidate who obtains a two thirds majority in the second round would become president. Failing a majority, however, the Provisional Constitution calls for a third round for the two candidates with the highest number of votes in the second round. The result will then be decided by a simple majority.

Each candidate has been addressing a joint session of Parliament this week, with their presentations also being broadcast on state-TV. Each candidate has been allocated 15 minutes to outline their policies. The candidates include outgoing President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, Prime Minister Omar Abdirashid Sharmarke, former transitional President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and former transitional Prime Minister Mohamed Abdullahi 'Farmajo'. Other contenders include Abdurahman Mohamed 'Farole', a former President of Puntland, former Mogadishu mayor Mohamed Ahmed Nur 'Tarzan' and a former ambassador to Kenya Mohamed Ali Nur, the Director of the Centre for Reconciliation and Dialogue. There are no women standing for the election. Two women, Fadumo Dayib and Anab Dahir, originally announced their candidatures but both later withdrew.

The acting President, the Speaker of the House of the People, Mohamed Osman 'Jawari' announced on Sunday that a nine-person committee including former presidential candidate Fadumo Dayib and Professor Abdi Ismail Samatar and other well-known personalities, had been set up to ensure the electoral process was transparent and accountable to the people of Somalia. Ms Dayib's appointment was, however, withdrawn on Wednesday after "a review of the list". The committee will work closely with the Presidential Election

Committee to promote an open and transparent process and would produce a report on the integrity of the process. The UN warned presidential candidates last month that any involvement in corruption or other malpractices would reflect badly on the new administration and jeopardize relations with the international community.

...with UNSC told the stage is now set for Somalia to move to a new phase

Michael Keating, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, briefed the UN Security Council on the situation in Somalia on Friday last week (January 27). He said the recently concluded parliamentary election was a "mirror" to Somalis, showing them the good and the bad regarding how power is exercised, and the relations between elders, clan power brokers, politicians, business, ordinary citizens, women and men. He said people did "not like everything they have seen, least of all the levels of corruption, and the absence of institutions that can ensure legal and financial accountability." He stressed the importance of carrying out the last stage of the process, the presidential election, transparently and according to the agreed rules, designed to ensure free and fair elections, adding: "If voting ... is seen as compromised by corruption, coercion or external interference, then the country could face a protracted period of uncertainty." He added: "The election of a President accepted as legitimate by the population and by the international community will set the stage for Somalia to tackle the serious challenges ahead."

Mr Keating said that despite the problems seen in the recent parliamentary elections, the process had produced "very encouraging" outcomes, marking an important milestone in the country's evolution and post-conflict transformation. The number of voters had increased significantly with the electorate expanded from just 135 male elders in 2012 to over 14,000 individuals, 30% of them women, in 2016. He underlined that almost a quarter of the members of parliament were now female. This, he said, was "A truly remarkable achievement, the result of effective political mobilization of women, supported by the UN and the international community and some Somali leaders." He also pointed out that the new Parliament was younger, more diverse and was likely to be more responsive to the electorate than the previous one. In short, he said, "this Parliament is more legitimate and representative than any since the last elections were held in 1969."

Mr Keating also gave details of the humanitarian challenges facing Somalia and of the five million people estimated to be in need around the country with an estimated 320,000 under-fives acutely malnourished. Referring to the humanitarian community appeal for Somalia launched earlier this month, Mr Keating said that any perceived inability of the federal and local governments to respond would damage their legitimacy and this could be exploited by al-Shabaab. Indeed, he cautioned, "In a nutshell, failure to support the drought response could halt and even undermine the pursuit of key state-building and peace-building objectives."

Overall, Mr Keating reiterated that progress in Somalia remained fragile and reversible and fraught with complexity, but, nevertheless the stage is "gradually being set for Somalia to move to a new phase in sustaining peace, preventing and resolving violent conflict, and in building a functional, federal State." He concluded: "Ultimately, it is the Somalis who will determine their own fate - but your support is central to their chances of success."

The Security Council also heard briefings from Ambassador Francisco Madeira, Special Representative and Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and Asha Gelle Dirie, of the Asha Gelle Foundation. Ambassador Madeira underlined that the political environment was that of hope and confidence. He said the national priorities were now focused on completing the constitutional review, forming political parties, establishing local governments, continuing dialogue with Somaliland, strengthening revenue collection and building State institutions. He said 15% of new parliamentarians were under 35 and 24% were women, two social categories representing the majority of Somalia's population. He also warned that recent political gains could be compromised if the current political unease in regional states was not tackled. Tensions, he said, could activate armed groups wishing to exploit problems.

Asha Gelle Dirie, Founder and Executive Director of the Asha Gelle Foundation and Chairperson of the Committee of Goodwill Ambassadors, tasked by President Mohamud to help women secure 30% of the seats in Parliament, told the Council this had entailed mapping the distribution of seats per clan and launching "an advocacy campaign involving civil society actors, political lobbyists, as well as Federal and state Women's Affairs Ministries, to secure the support of political leaders and clan elders. She said the result had been a "substantial and unprecedented achievement for Somali women, and for Somali society as a whole." At the same time, she said, despite real progress, massive structural transformation was required to advance

women's representation in politics and the democratization process. She said the lack of any legally binding provision had made it extremely difficult to enforce the political decision to reserve 30% of parliamentary seats and while women had presented a unified position during the electoral process, the lack of funding and logistical support had posed a significant challenge during the campaigning period.

Eritrea's Foreign Minister in Moscow

Eritrea's Foreign Minister Osman Saleh arrived in Moscow for a three-day working visit at the invitation of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Monday (January 30). Their talks covered international and regional issues, focusing on preventing and defusing conflicts in Africa, specifically in the Horn of Africa and South Sudan, as well as in the Middle East, including Syria and Yemen. They also discussed trade and economic cooperation between Russia and Eritrea, including joint mineral extraction projects in Eritrea, and the creation of a favorable investment climate for Russian enterprises. During his visit, Minister Saleh, who brought a written message from President Isaias to President Putin, also met with senior officials of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Ministry of Agriculture as well as representatives of the Russian business community.

A statement from the Russian Foreign Ministry said the two countries shared close or convergent approaches to the objective of building a multi-polar world as a way of making the system of international relations more just and safe. It noted they cooperated within the UN and other international organizations. It said the priority issues at the talks were Russian-Eritrean political, trade, economic and cultural cooperation, including the implementation of joint projects in Eritrea, as well as an exchange of opinions on current global and regional issues, in particular ways to prevent and settle crises in Africa, first of all in the Horn of Africa, and the fight against international terrorism. Training Eritrean nationals in Russian educational institutions was an important aspect of the bilateral relations.

At a joint press conference, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov described their talks as constructive and informative. He said they were intended to promote bilateral relations, primarily economic, investment and cultural ties, taking into account the high level of political dialogue attained over the past few years since the signing of the Protocol on Consultations in February 2014. He noted the promising spheres of cooperation, such as mining, banking and personnel training and said Russia agreed to provide assistance to the business communities' efforts to develop and strengthen direct contacts. He said Russia wanted to continue developing mutually beneficial cooperation on the basis of mutual respect, trust, and consideration of each other's interests in expanding commercial and political spheres. Mr Lavrov stressed Russia's interest in helping resolve problems in Africa and settle conflicts. The discussions had covered the situation in Africa and they had agreed on the need to find exclusively political and diplomatic solutions to crises in the Horn of Africa, South Sudan and Sub-Saharan Africa. He said "Russia and Eritrea shared a common approach to the situation in the Middle East and North Africa region, in regard to the joint fight against international terrorism."

At their joint press conference, Mr Saleh said it was important to hold talks when there were many "very difficult international problems and global changes" in the world. He said: "We see that the influence of Russia on the global situation in the world has significantly increased and we believe that this can help us to fight against threats and challenges," adding: "the situation in the area of the Horn of Africa, both domestic and international, has significantly improved and continues improving."

East African Power Pool interconnections progressing well

Tanzania's Minister for Energy and Minerals, Professor Muhongo, opening the 24th Eastern Africa Power Pool (EAPP) Steering Committee Meeting in Arusha, Tanzania, two weeks ago, said the proposed **power grid project to connect the North and the South points of Africa with a single power line extending from Cairo to Cape Town would commence in April**. He said the meeting to launch the groundwork would be held in Kampala, in April, and the project might be functional within three years from now. It will require the cooperation of the 19-member body Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC).

The Steering Committee, energy stakeholders and partners present at the meeting, discussed the planned inter-state power grid to connect Tanzania and other countries, and considered the status of the EAPP Interconnection Code Compliance Program. It also addressed priority areas for mobilization of funds and explored development of renewable energy resources and alternative transmission financing modalities. At

the closing session, Professor Muhongo underlined that EAPP was also looking to standardize charges among its member states in order to facilitate smooth exchange of power within the region. He handed the over Chairmanship to Engineer Muloni, Uganda's Minister of Energy and Mineral Development who will chair the Council of Ministers for the next year.

The steering committee meeting was held in conjunction with the 12th EAPP Council of Ministers' meeting attended by Dr Engineer Seleshi Bekele, Ethiopia's Minister of Water Irrigation and Electricity; Engineer Tarek El Molla, Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources of Egypt; Dr Tabitha Boutros, Minister of State for Electricity and Dams, Sudan; Engineer Irene Muloni, Minister of Energy and Mineral Development of Uganda, and Professor Muhongo as well as representatives from the other EAPP member states. The Eastern Africa Power Pool was established in 2005 to coordinate cross-border power trade and grid interconnection and currently has 11 members - Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Rwanda, Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda. Its secretariat is based in Addis Ababa.

The EAPP Council of Ministers approved the EAPP master plan in January last year. It offers a blueprint for power integration across the region over the next 25 years, and provides for the construction of transmission lines to be implemented between 2016 and 2017 and commissioned by 2020. The lines being constructed include Sudan-Ethiopia; Rwanda-Tanzania; Uganda-South Sudan and Uganda-Kenya. In October 2015, the Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation and the Kenya Electricity Transmission Co. awarded a \$450 million contract to German-based multinational conglomerate, Siemens, in a consortium with construction company Isolux Corsan to develop a 1,000km high-voltage direct current (HVDC) transmission line between Ethiopia and Kenya. The project is scheduled for operation in late 2018. In fact, most of the interconnection projects are now progressing well and the EAPP believes that before 2020 all of EAPP's member states, except Libya and Egypt, will be interconnected by power trading. Libya and Egypt are already connected, but the proposed link between Egypt and Sudan is only now at the stage of a feasibility study.

The EAPP is serving as a model for the other regional pools to speed up their power plans. There are four other operating power pools apart from the EAPP, the Southern African Power Pool (SAPP), the West African Power Pool (WAPP), the Central African Power Pool (CAPP), and the North African "Comité Maghrébin de l'Electricité (COMELEC). **The World Bank estimates that properly organized regional power trade could save US\$2 billion annually in costs and reduce the marginal costs of power by between 20 and 40 percent for some countries, while at the same time reducing carbon emissions by 70 million tonnes annually.**

The Secretary General of the East African Community, Ambassador Liberat Mfumukeko, emphasized the importance of the EAPP to the EAPP Ministerial meeting. He said the provision of "adequate, reliable, affordable and sustainable energy services is a key priority area in our energy sector for realizing the vision we have for East Africa as well as electricity interconnectivity across borders to promote the broader EAC objective of attracting investment and promoting competitiveness and trade." He also urged the EAPP to engage with the EAC Secretariat and its Partner States in the formulation of the EAC's 10-year Strategic Action Plan, which will address the underlying challenges within the energy sector across the region.