

A Week in the Horn

7th March 2014

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News in brief

African Union

The AU High-Level Committee of Heads of State and Governments on the Post 2015 Development Agenda held a meeting on Friday last week (February 28) in Ndjamena, Chad, co-chaired by President Ellen Sirleaf Johnson of Liberia and President Mohaamed Ould Abudulaziz of Mauritania, current AU Chairperson. Those present included Prime Minister Hailemariam of Ethiopia, President Deby of Chad, President Pohamba of Namibia, and the Prime Minister of Algeria and the Chairperson of The African Union Commission. (See article)

The African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), chaired by former South African President Thabo Mbeki, announced on Sunday (March 2) that it can no longer continue its mediation to end the conflict in Sudan's Two Areas due to the gap in the positions of the two parties. It therefore referred the issue to the African Union Peace and Security Council.

Ethiopia

Ethiopian President Dr Mulatu Teshome on Monday (March 3) conveyed his own and the Government and Peoples of Ethiopia's condolences to the Chinese government and people on the terrorist attack against civilians in the South-Western city of Kunming on March 1.

Foreign Minister, Dr Tedros, on a visit to Angola, delivered a message **to** President Dos Santos from Prime Minister Hailemariam on Thursday (March 6) on strengthening bilateral air services between Ethiopia and Angola. Discussions covered development of economic relations between Ethiopia and Angola and Dr Tedros said Ethiopia was considering opening an Embassy in Luanda. Dr Tedros also met with representatives of the Ethiopian community in Luanda.

Foreign Affairs Minister, Dr Tedros Adhanom, met on Wednesday (March 5) with Israel's Agriculture and Rural Development Minister, Yair Shamir, who said his visit was in line with the new policy that Israel was following aiming to deepen relations with African nations. Mr Shamir was heading a delegation of Israeli companies involved in agriculture, irrigation, poultry, fisheries, agro-chemicals and large-scale agriculture project integrators.

Dr Tedros met Sri Lankan Deputy Minister of Finance and Planning, Dr Sarath Amunugama, on Tuesday (March 4). Dr Amunugama said Sri Lanka was keen to bolster its ties with East African countries and in particular with Ethiopia.

The State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dewano Kedir, and the President of Addis Ababa University, Dr Admasu Tsegaye, on Friday (February 28) signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the promotion of **equitable and reasonable use, development and utilization of trans-boundary natural resources including the Nile waters**.

Alemayheu Atomsa, who retired as President of the Oromia Regional State last week, died on Wednesday (March 5).

Ethiopia has submitted a proposal to the International Coffee Council, offering to host the 4th World Coffee Conference in 2015 in Addis Ababa. [WE HAVE SINCE HEARD THAT ETHIOPIA'S PROPOSAL WAS ACCEPTED AND ADDIS ABABA WILL HOST THE CONFERENCE IN 2016]

Ethiopian Airlines, the fastest growing and most profitable airline in Africa, announced that it has finalized preparations to start four weekly flights to Vienna, Austria starting on June 2. This will be the 9th European city served by the airline, bringing its total number of international destinations across five continents to 80.

The Ethiopian Aviation Academy graduated 21 pilots, 21 aviation technicians, 68 marketing professionals and 20 cabin crew on Tuesday (March 4). The Academy's capacity has expanded from 200 trainees to over 1,000 and it plans to increase this to over 4,000 trainees annually by 2025.

Ethiopia and Kenya secured a US\$5 million grant from the Geothermal Risk Mitigation Facility for Eastern Africa on Monday (March 3) to develop renewable energy and reduce costs in the use of fuel to generate electricity. The program will co-finance surface studies and drilling projects aimed at developing largely untapped indigenous and renewable energy resources.

A survey carried out by the W Hospitality Group reveals that Ethiopia, along with Uganda, Nigeria, Angola and Ghana are the top five countries in sub-Saharan Africa and are identified as key investment destinations for global hotel chains scouting for opportunities in Africa.

Friends of Ethiopia from the business and media community, both Germans and Ethiopians living in Frankfurt and its surroundings, met on February 28 at the Consulate General Office of Ethiopia in Frankfurt, to form a German-Ethiopia Business Network to promote business links between Germany and Ethiopia.

Djibouti

Prime Minister Mohamed Kamala Abdoukader outlined government policy for 2014 to the National Assembly on Saturday (March 2), stressing an analysis of administration and implementation of a National Investment Program of 35 billion Dj. Frs. over four years to fight poverty. Major aims included continuation of the fight against unemployment and poverty and reforms to improve and modernize public services. He outlined the government's Vision of Djibouti 2035, intended to make Djibouti a major regional economic and financial hub with multimodal transport infrastructure, specialized ports, a new airport, two rail corridors, and the creation of a large urban center with modern roads, electricity, water and sanitation facilities.

Eritrea

President Isaias Afwerki arrived in Doha for a working visit to Qatar on Sunday (March 2) and held talks with the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Temin Bin Hammed Bin Khalifa Al-Thani. Talks were said to have focused on bilateral ties, relations of partnership and issues of mutual interest as well as on the stalled Qatari negotiations between Djibouti and Eritrea which have been the subject of UN Security Council sanctions.

President Isaias received on Thursday (March 6) Mr Peter Beshir Bande, Foreign Minister of South Sudan who brought a message from President Salva Kiir.

Foreign Minister, Osman Saleh, addressed the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva this week. (See article)

Eri-TV announced on Thursday (March 6) that Major General Gerezgiher Andemariam “Wuchu”, Chief of Staff of the Eritrean Defense Forces had died, aged 64.

Europol has issued a warning to EU law enforcement authorities about the kidnapping of irregular migrants from Eritrea and the subsequent extortion of money from relatives or friends residing in Europe by organized crime groups of Bedouin origin, exploiting irregular migrants who had been kidnapped in Eritrea and Sudan by groups of Rashaida origin.

Kenya

The Speaker of Kenyan Parliament Justin Muturi held a meeting with the Speaker of the Somali Federal Parliament, Professor Mohamed Sheikh Osman Jawari and his second Deputy Speaker in Nairobi this week to discuss strengthening relations between the Kenyan and Somali parliaments, trade relations and free movement of people within and between the two countries.

The Africa Development Bank Group on Wednesday (March 5) approved a Country Strategy Paper for Kenya, detailing the Bank's priority areas of support to Kenya for the next five years designed to support Kenya's ambitions and address its main developmental challenges by promoting job creation.

Somalia

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud met with high-level delegates from the European Union, IGAD and senior government officials on Thursday to discuss the parallel conferences in Baidoa. The EU and IGAD both expressed support for the establishment of a three regional federal state in South West Somalia and to continue to support the Addis Ababa agreement on the Jubaland Administration.

The Special Representative of the African Union Commission for Somalia, Ambassador Mahamat Saleh Annadif, reiterated AMISOM's commitment to supporting the Federal Government over the three-region federal state of Bay, Bakool and Lower Shebelle regions, rather than a six-region state which would also include Gedo, Middle and Lower Jubba regions.

A delegation led by Prime Minister Abdiwali Sheikh Ahmed of Somalia arrived Sunday (March 2) in Abu Dhabi, the capital of United Arab Emirates. The delegation included Defense Minister, Mohamed Sheikh Hassan Hamud and MPs. During the three-day visit, the Premier met with UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential affairs, Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan and discussed bilateral co-operation.

A delegation led by the State Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Burii Mohamed Hamza, headed to India this week to participate in the forthcoming India-Africa summit in New Delhi, March 9-11).

The outgoing Mogadishu mayor Mohamud Ahmed Nuur “Tarzan” on Tuesday (March 4) handed over to his successor, General Hassan Mohamed Hussein Mungab. The ceremony was attended by Government ministers, MPs and traditional elders.

The UNITED Nations Security Council agreed on Wednesday (March 5) to extend suspension of the arms embargo on Somalia for a further eight months to October 25, (See article)

The government launched a Joint Security Operations Office on Monday (March 3) to co-ordinate joint security operations by government forces and AMISOM. The Director of the National Security and Intelligence Agency, General Bashir Mohamed Jama, said this was part of a major operation to improve security in Mogadishu.

Ethiopian AMISOM peacekeepers have organized a 3-day human rights, civilian protection, gender violence and sexual abuse, international humanitarian law and military discipline training seminar for over 50 Somali National Army soldiers, including 4 women. The training was conducted by Major Girma Wendimu,

Sector 3 Training Center Commander, who has conducted similar training for Ethiopian peacekeepers in Somalia.

At the weekend, AMISOM concluded a two-week training course in Community Based Policing for 160 members of the Somali Police Force concentrating on dealing with discovery of explosives, protection of the public and minimizing civilian casualties as well as injury protection.

Uganda is going to send a further 410 extra troops to Somalia to Mogadishu to provide a specific guard force for UN personnel and facilities to relieve AMISOM troops from this task.

South Sudan

IGAD Special Envoys to the South Sudan Peace Process proposed calling of an extraordinary IGAD Summit to assess progress made towards a Declaration of Principles and Framework for Dialogue. Consultations are going on over the deployment of a protection and stabilization force from the region. (See article)

The United Nations peacekeeping mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) has called on all parties to respect the work and inviolability of UN premises. UNMISS is protecting some 43,000 civilians in its premises in Juba.

South Sudan President Salva Kiir, together with Minister of Defense, Kuol Manyang Juuk, and Army Chief of General Staff, James Hoth Mai, briefed members of the army and said the army should exhibit commitment to duty and obedience to a constituted authority, adding that it should reject tribal politics and unite to defend the constitution of the country.

The UN announced on Monday (March 3) that it will provide US\$4.6 million to help meet the urgent needs of South Sudanese refugees in Kenya. The grant from the Central Emergency Relief Fund will go to agencies operating at Kakuma where an estimated 20,000 South Sudanese have arrived since mid-December. Hundreds of South Sudanese cross daily into Kenya.

Sudan

Clashes between the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka in Abyei on Saturday (March 1) killed up to a dozen people and wounded thirty more. South Sudan's Ambassador to Khartoum said the fighting was between local residents; the Sudanese army claimed South Sudanese troops had been involved.

The launch of the Common African Position on Post-2015 Development Agenda

The African Union High-Level Committee of Heads of State and Government on the Post-2015 Development Agenda held a meeting in the Chad capital, Ndjamen, on Friday (February 28). The meeting was chaired by President Ellen Sirleaf Johnson of Liberia. Also attending were President Mohamed Ould Abudulaziz of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and Current Chairperson of the African Union, President Idriss Deby of Chad, President Hifikepunye Pohamba of Namibia, South Africa's Deputy President, Kaglema Motlanthe, Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, Algerian Prime Minister Abdelmaek Selala, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union Commission and representatives of Guinea, Congo, and Mauritius, as well as representatives of the UN.

The meeting was held in response to the African Union Heads of State and Government decision on January 31 which "requested that the High-Level Committee meet before the end of February 2014, in Ndjamen, Chad to streamline the Document including the pillar on Peace and Security." This decision came after deliberations on the report of the Chairperson of the Committee and it further "stressed that the Common African Position Document on the Post 2015 Development Agenda is in line with African Vision 2063 and should include specific goals to be attained within this framework making use of the technical work already initiated by the Commission, in collaboration with strategic partners."

In the opening session, AUC Chairperson, Dr Dlamini Zuma, noted that structural transformation was needed for Africa to tackle poverty effectively. Highlighting the importance of sustainable development goals, Dr Dlamini Zuma noted that "the Millennium Development Goals were a sufficient condition to tackle

poverty but not critical.” She added that Africa must be resolute in its vision while underlining the importance of the proposals on gender mainstreaming, finance and partnership for full realization of the Common African Position. The Chairperson of the High-Level Committee, President Sirleaf, said the Common Africa Position was developed to reflect the aspirations of the people of Africa. She noted that the Committee had held wide consultations with academia, civic society members and different segments of the populace, and added that “The document that we are launching today shows that Africa is no more a bystander in global affairs.”

President Sirleaf, in her speech, underlined the importance of ownership of the Common African Position and agreed with Dr Zuma that the document would not be complete without recognition of the role of women. Mindful of the challenges in disparity of interests, President Sirleaf also stressed that “We must look at how our priorities affect other regions and how their development agenda affects Africa. Our strong conviction in the justice and efficacy of our position must not be tempered by lack of flexibility, which also has its limits.” President Idriss Deby also noted the need for acknowledging the importance of the role of women in the Common African Position. The Committee also discussed ways to best strategize the advocacy and negotiations necessary to ensure the Common African Position is taken seriously in the Rio 2015 Summit on the formulation of development goals. The Committee also discussed the report of the meeting of Sherpas held over the previous three days (February 25-27).

Dr Carlos Lopez, Executive Secretary of UNECA, in his remarks, detailed some of the challenges Africa may face in the negotiations for the Sustainable Development Goals as these are crafted both for developing and for developed countries. He said reconciling the positions of the wealthy and those on the lower rungs of the economic ladder could be the biggest challenge that Africa might face in ensuring inclusion of a Common African Position in the global negotiations. He also emphasized the need to anchor the negotiations in the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. He noted that Africa needed to work on the Common African Position as “a useful vehicle for a converged and a harmonized approach to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Post-2015 Development Agenda, and the main challenge is for Africa to get its act together to influence the process in a meaningful way.” Another priority was for Africa to improve on measurement and statistical data collection to measure development progress.

Dr Amina J. Mohamed, Special Assistant to UN Secretary General, praised the adoption of the Common African Position. She spoke on issues of identifying financial sources other than Official Development Assistance for the Post-2015 development goals and stressed the need to work on systems of accountability as the Sustainable Development Goals will not be legally binding. In assisting Africa’s negotiations on the SDG’s, she emphasized the importance of mobilizing African assets, including influential African experts holding offices in relevant international organizations. The AU Commissioner for Economic Affairs, Anthony Mothae Maruping, presented strategies for developing cross-regional alliances and advocacy for the Common African Position.

During the discussion, Prime Minister Hailemariam expressed his appreciation to the African Union Commission and to the UN Economic Commission for Africa for their efforts in crafting the CAP. He thanked the Sherpas for finalizing the document and emphasized the need for coordination and vigilance to ensure Africa’s development needs were prioritized and taken on board in the negotiation process.

The meeting launched a document that detailed six-pillars: structural transformation and inclusive growth; science, technology and innovation; human-centered development; environmental sustainability, natural resources management and risk management of natural disasters; finance and partnership; and peace and security. The High-Level Committee decided to continue working on the strategy for negotiation, advocacy and forging alliances and to meet on the margins of the upcoming AU summit which will be held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in June. The Summit also agreed that African groups in New York and Geneva should continue to work actively on the negotiation process. A communiqué issued after the meeting emphasized that the launching of the Common African Position of the African Union, with the relevant framework allowing Africa to speak with one voice and coordinate the efforts to achieve the aspirations of the African peoples in socio-economic development, should be based on inclusive growth in the context of Post-2015 sustainable development agenda. It requested that partners support Africa in its implementation.

Conclusion of the Second Phase of South Sudan peace talks

The IGAD Special Envoys announced the conclusion of the second phase of the South Sudan peace talks on Monday (March 3). These had been going on over the previous two weeks in Addis Ababa between the Government of South Sudan and the SPLM/A (In Opposition). Phase II of the South Sudan Peace Process commenced in mid-February in Addis Ababa in accordance with the instructions of the IGAD Heads of State and Government in their communiqué of January 31. Ambassador Seyoum Mesfin, IGAD chief mediator, in a briefing to the media on Wednesday (March 5) said "peace talks had been adjourned to March 20". He said the recess would allow the parties' time to reflect on the documents that provide the basis for the negotiations as well as allow the Envoys a critical opportunity to hear from civil society and ensure that civil society views are reflected in the Declaration of Principles and the Framework for Dialogue. He said a civil society conference will be organized by the IGAD Special Envoys and IGAD Partners during the second week of March in Addis Ababa.

Ambassador Seyoum noted that prior to the launching of the second phase of the dialogue, a series of shuttle diplomacy and consultations were carried out by the Special Envoys to engage the Parties as well as other stakeholders. Consultations were conducted with President Salva Kiir, with Dr Riek Machar, with the SPLM leaders (Former Detainees) and other stakeholders including women's groups, youth and religious leaders with a view to get the views of a wide cross-section of opinion. The shuttle missions and the consultations, according to the Envoys, provided opportunities to explore and develop a framework for the negotiations. In addition, the consultations provided opportunities for the Parties to contribute "inputs on a framework and modalities for an inclusive political dialogue." Participants, said Ambassador Seyoum, made important progress towards a "Declaration of Principles" that helped to guide Phase II of the process and constitute the basis for a sustainable peace.

During the consultations and Phase II, attention was given to the need for an SPLM intra-party dialogue, and the Special Envoys noted the positive contribution this could make to the broader political dialogue and to national reconciliation. On this, the Special Envoys met and discussed with President Salva Kiir who is also the Chairman of the SPLM and other Politburo members as well as with the SPLM/A(In Opposition) and SPLM Leaders (Former Detainees) in Addis Ababa. The IGAD Envoys were now able to announce that a team of SPLM leadership will convene shortly, in Addis Ababa, to develop an agenda, modalities, and a timeframe for Review and Self-Assessment of the SPLM.

With reference to the operationalization of the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (MVM), agreed under the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement of January 23, the IGAD Envoys said that the Parties had made important progress toward this Mechanism. They announced that funding has been secured for MVM operations, an advance team had travelled to all planned team sites, the parties had designated representatives to the MVM's technical committee, and that IGAD and its Partners were sending representatives to participate in monitoring operations. The Special Envoys urged the Parties to fully cooperate with the MVM and to abide by the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement. This would demonstrate their political will and commitment to ending the war. The Special Envoys called upon the international community to put necessary pressure on the Parties to this effect, and also appealed to the Parties to facilitate and support all efforts to allow for the smooth operation of humanitarian assistance, calling on the donor community to urgently provide all the necessary humanitarian assistance to avert "an appalling humanitarian catastrophe."

As part of the process for organizing the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism, the Chairperson of IGAD Heads of State and Government, Ethiopia's Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, and the Special Envoys, would be consulting with leaders of the region, the African Union, the United Nations and IGAD Partners in order to arrange for the deployment of a protection and stabilization force from the region in South Sudan. Ambassador Seyoum said that in order to create a conducive environment to put the Monitoring and Verification Mechanism in place, the support of a protection and stabilization force was necessary and this should be deployed together with the civilian component of the mechanism. He noted that Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya, Rwanda and Burundi have made a "positive response" to requests for participation in a "neutral stabilization and protection force," but, he added, the United Nations and the African Union would have to approve the force first. The Joint Technical Committee will be setting up all necessary arrangements for the expeditious deployment of Monitoring and Verification Teams (MVTs). Ambassador Seyoum said a summit of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development was now expected to be held before the South Sudanese parties resume the next round of peace talks on March 20.

Commenting on the way forward, Ambassador Seyoum noted that the situation in South Sudan was complex and it was not an easy exercise to get the Parties to agree on the agenda. He noted that the issues to be covered in the negotiations included social and humanitarian matters; secondly, national reconciliation and healing; thirdly, governance, democracy, and human rights; fourthly, justice and the institutions of the rule of law; fifthly, the economy and development; and finally that the sixth area was likely to be intra-party dialogue.

The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, in a statement, welcomed the conclusion of Phase II of the South Sudan Peace Process after two weeks of substantive consultations on a Declaration of Principles and a Framework for Political Dialogue towards National Reconciliation and Healing. She commended the IGAD Special Envoys, including its Chair, Ambassador Seyoum Mesfin, for their relentless efforts towards the resumption of the political negotiations and the progress they had achieved thus far. The Chairperson of the Commission welcomed, in particular, the progress made in finalizing the agreement on the Declaration of Principles. She expressed the hope that the Parties would be able to sign this document at the resumption of the next phase of the talks on 20 March 2014. She reiterated the AU's full support to the envisaged deployment of an African stabilization force led by IGAD. The Chairperson said she looked forward to the early deployment of the Monitoring and Verification Teams as well as to finalization of the work being done towards the deployment of the envisaged African force to protect the MVTs and the contribution this would make to stabilization of the situation.

UN Security Council renews weapons' ban for Somalia

The United Nations Security Council on Wednesday (March 5) unanimously agreed to extend a partial weapons ban on Somalia for another eight months. There had been speculation that the Security Council might decide to scrap the ban as the Somalia government had requested. Abdirahman Duale Beyle, Somalia Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation said "we are a country in a serious war", a war in which he pointed out terrorists did not observe any embargo. After the resolution, he said Somalia would have to redouble its efforts to closely and diligently work with the Monitoring Group and the Council to do better. The Government would do its utmost to see that the embargo was lifted, he added. At the same time there had also been reports that Al-Shabaab and other armed groups had been able to divert arms and ammunition intended for Government forces into their own hands. In the event, the Security Council renewed the embargo until October 25, the date on which the UN Somali and Eritrea Monitoring Group is due to report.

The Security Council resolution specifically noted that "All Member States are required to take the necessary measures to prevent the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer of weapons and military equipment to designated individuals and entities, which includes Al-Shabaab." The resolution cited reports by the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group that arms had been diverted and expressed serious concern that the requirements for suspending the embargo had not yet been fully met. It noted the concern of members of the Council that flows of weapons and ammunition supplies to and through Somalia in violation of the arms embargo on Somalia, as well as the destabilizing accumulation and misuse of such weapons, had continued. This was "a serious threat to peace and stability in the region." The resolution welcomed measures taken by the Somali government to better manage its weapons and ammunition but looked forward to further improvement in weapons management and underlines the "imperative need for the Government of Somalia to improve its compliance with requirements under the partial suspension of the arms embargo". The resolution stresses that any future decision to continue or end the partial suspension of the arms embargo would be taken in light of the thoroughness of the Government's implementation of the requirements set out in the relevant Security Council resolution. The UK Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Lyall Grant said: "The resolution makes very clear that the Somali authorities need to meet strict conditions on the monitoring and reporting of arms imports into Somalia to ensure in particular that they do not get into the hands of Al-Shabaab."

In March last year, the Security Council partially lifted the weapons ban on Somalia for a year to boost the Government's capacity to protect areas recovered from Al-Shabaab and allow it to defend itself against fresh attempts by such groups to destabilize the country. This new resolution reaffirmed the arms embargo, reiterated that the Federal Government of Somalia had the primary responsibility to notify the Committee and re-emphasized that the arms embargo, originally imposed in 1992, would not apply to arms

or equipment sold or supplied solely for the development of the Government's security forces, but kept in place the restrictions on heavy weapons, such as surface-to-air missiles. It repeated last year's decision that the Government was required to notify the Council's sanctions committee at least five days in advance of any such deliveries and provide details of the transactions, though Member States delivering assistance might also notify the committee after informing the Government of its intentions. The requirements in the latest resolution require all transactions to include details of the manufacturer and supplier of arms and ammunition, a detailed description of the arms and ammunition including type, caliber and quantity, proposed date and place of delivery, and all relevant information concerning storage.

The resolution also reiterated that weapons or military equipment sold or supplied solely for the development of the Security Forces of the Federal Government of Somalia may not be resold to, transferred to, or made available for use by, any individual or entity not in the service of the Security Forces of the Federal Government of Somalia. It was the responsibility of the Federal Government to ensure the safe and effective management, storage and security of their stockpile. It requested that the Federal government report to the Security Council by June 13, and again by September 13, all details of the structure and strength of its Security Forces composition, including the status of allied militia; the storage infrastructure, and the procedures for registration, distribution, use and storage of weapons. The resolution also requested that the Secretary-General provide options and recommendations, within 30 days, for possible UN assistance to the Federal Government to enable it to comply with these requirements and assist improving Government capacity for storage, distribution and management of weapons and military equipment.

Reviewing implementation of the 34th Ethio-Kenya Joint Ministerial Commission

Senior officials of Ethiopia and Kenya started the second session of the technical review of the implementation of the decisions of the 34th Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) on Thursday this week (March 6). The 34th Ethio-Kenya Joint Ministerial Commission was held in Nairobi from November 19-21, 2012 and ended with the landmark signing of the Special Status Agreement and the elevation of the Joint Ministerial Commission to the status of a High-Level Commission, signifying a milestone in the bilateral relations of the two countries. Among its numerous decisions, the 34th Joint Ministerial Commission also decided that technical experts should meet on an annual basis to review implementation of the decisions of the Commission. The first session of the technical review was held in May, 2012 in Nairobi, to review the 33rd JMC meeting. This second session to start the annual review process took place on Thursday [6th].

Ethiopia's State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Yinager Dessie, opened the second session. He described the bilateral relations of Ethiopia and Kenya as exemplary and noted they were growing in every aspect. He said the two nations shared common views on various regional, continental and international forums, adding that the "joint efforts in developing infrastructure which is the foundation for regional economic integration clearly indicates our common vision in strengthening IGAD." He stressed that the 34th Joint Ministerial Commission meeting should be considered historic, taking place during Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn's state visit to Kenya, and including the signing of the Special Status Agreement and the elevation of the Joint Ministerial Commission to a High-Level Commission. As the first meeting of the High-Level Commission is to be held in 2015, Dr Yinager emphasized the importance of this consultative session in reviewing the decision to realize the vision of the leadership of the two countries. He said "to this end, the two sides should establish in advance joint frameworks and structures involving various government agencies of the two nations" as well as working closely with the private sector for the success of the Special Status Agreement (SSA). Dr Yinager pointed out that the 28th Joint Border Commissioners and Administrators' Meeting, held in Adama four months ago, had been very successful in addressing common border security challenges including ethnic conflict, cattle rustling, contraband trade and other border related matters.

Ambassador Muhindi Purity, Director General of Africa in Kenya's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Head of the Kenyan delegation, noted that the growing partnership of the two countries was evident in the strong bilateral cooperation the two countries continue to enjoy in different areas. The fact that the leaders of Kenya and Ethiopia had met six times since the 34th JMC meeting demonstrated the strength of the bilateral relationship. She said the decision of the 34th JMC to elevate the Joint Commission to a High-Level Commission, together with the SSA, were important steps in deepening the strong bilateral relations. She also noted that "the defense pact we signed has further elevated our relationship." She emphasized that Kenya enjoyed critical support from Ethiopia in various areas including the case with the International

Criminal Court. She underlined the importance of the follow-up mechanisms to facilitate increased trade and investment between the two countries.

The second session of the technical review was co-chaired by Ambassador Muhindi Purity and Ethiopia's Ambassador to Kenya, Shemsudin Ahmed. It reviewed the specific discussions of the 34th JMC carefully and meticulously. Ambassador Shemsudin noted the strong relationship visible in border dispute management and defense cooperation among other things, pointing out the need to further work on development work in border areas to benefit the people living there and address the sporadic cross-border conflicts in a sustainable manner.

Among the major issues discussed, ratification of the Special Status Agreement was given priority. The two sides agreed that the SSA should be ratified within a few weeks by the respective parliaments. They also agreed to form a joint implementation committee as soon as the ratification was complete. In addition, they agreed to exchange ideas on formulating other agreements such as avoidance of double taxation that would help implementation of the SSA. In regard to the nomination of members of the Project Coordinated Commission for the Joint Railway Commission, the two sides agreed to exchange names before or at the next Joint Ministerial Commission meeting. The review noted with satisfaction the successful meeting of the 28th Joint Border Administrators and Commissioners, as well as the successful re-establishment of the missing border pillars in Sector 1 of the Ethio-Kenya border.

The discussion covered the status of Memoranda of Understanding on public health, sport, extradition, livestock development, **fisheries** and agreed that these should be signed by the next JMC, the 35th meeting, to be hosted in Ethiopia. The meeting discussed the status of implementation of decisions while it also worked on specific tasks to provide for a time-frame for moving forward in cases where decisions had yet to be implemented. The meeting noted that President Uhuru Kenyatta's forthcoming state visit to Ethiopia, to be held next week – March 10-12 - was a reflection of the spirit demonstrated by the elevation of the Joint Ministerial Commission to a High-Level Commission.

European Union-World Bank partnership for Road Sector Development

The Government of Ethiopia has regularly demonstrated its firm commitment and efforts to improve the development of the country's infrastructure, not least through the mutually beneficial cooperative and sustainable engagement with various development partners, notably the European Union and the World Bank. As one of the fastest growing economies in Africa, Ethiopia fully recognizes the contribution **of infrastructure as a catalyst for the sustainable future social, economic, political, human, environmental and cultural development of its citizens**. It is fully aware that the development of infrastructure projects have contributed greatly to the country's development and played a quintessential role in the country's continuous double digit economic growth over the last decade. Indeed, the country's five-year Growth and Transformation Plan has given due emphasis to the development of infrastructure in order to attain the vision of becoming a middle income and green economy by 2025.

As part of its support for infrastructure development, the World Bank, through its Road Sector Support Project for Ethiopia, is helping the country in three major priority areas: upgrading critical link roads; enhancing road asset management practices; and providing support for road safety and institutional development aiming to improve the quality and sustainability of the road networks. The Government of Ethiopia is committed to harmonizing and coordinating its programs with the World Bank to work on the maintenance and improvement of road networks in order to increase agricultural production, attract new development and investment opportunities, improve the delivery of infrastructure, provide access to social services, and **boost regional integration**. Overall, this entails ensuring safety, sustainability and efficiency as well as lower transport costs, underlining that this is an imperative for Ethiopia in order to bring about structural economic transformation and to extricate its citizens from poverty.

Recognizing the Government's efforts and dedication to improving the lives and livelihoods of rural populations through road construction, the World Bank awarded Ethiopia last month support for a US\$320 million project to support the national efforts in the areas of upgrading, expanding and maintaining the country's road sector. The project was in line with the country's five-year Growth and Transformation Plan and will provide for the improvement of the 258km of the Nekempte–Bure Road Project. When this is complete it will provide a critical stimulant to help the Oromia and Amhara Regional States promote trade

ties and boost local markets. The improved road will also allow people to significantly reduce journey times and allow for improved vehicle and other mobility to expand trade, agri-business and investment.

On the occasion, Guang Zhe Chen, World Bank Country Director for Ethiopia, noted that the country had witnessed robust economic growth and meaningful progress in social and human development over the last decade. He underlined the World Bank's commitment to continuing to provide increased and consistent support to Ethiopia's efforts and projects in upgrading and expanding the road sector. He emphasized that this Nekempte-Bure project would assist the country to increase trade, create markets and new jobs, and provide quality education and healthcare services, as well as promote improved food security in drought-prone areas.

Tesfamichael Nahusenay Mitiku, the World Bank Task Team Leader, noted that the upgraded road project would also improve and empower the lives of girls and women by improving their access to education and better healthcare services. Opening up new areas, it would pave the way for them to play a tremendous role in the marketing of agricultural products, in politics and governance, and in trade and business as well as other national development activities; and it would create new opportunities for additional employment, investment and other commercial activities. In other words, improvements in the condition of road networks boost local economies, link remote communities into the overall development of the nation and also provide opportunities to increase production, expand potentials and export capacities. In fact, investment in infrastructure has a significant multiplier effect in a number of social, environmental and political sectors as well as assisting the transformation of the economy.

Another crucial partner to Ethiopia, the European Union, through its Infrastructure Section also promotes cooperation and partnership. This involves itself proactively in the country's major priority areas including transport, energy, water and cultural preservation. The EU Infrastructure Section provides financial assistance to Ethiopia's road infrastructure through its commitment to coordinate all providers of aid and in integrating and harmonizing programs with the Government of Ethiopia to deal with possible impediments in the road networks. The Government has welcomed the EU and its Member States' budget and technical support in the development of the country's road infrastructure. As noted, it attached great importance to the expansion and improvement of the road network in the Growth and Transformation Plan in order to fill the infrastructural gap. It has, therefore, continued its efforts to improve and upgrade the road network alongside the emphasis on substantial economic growth and development. Aligning its programs with people's needs and development partners, the Government has made substantial progress in improving and maintaining the country's road transport since the **Road Sector Development Program** was formulated in 1997 alongside the efforts to reduce extreme poverty, provide healthcare, education and other social security services, create youth employment, empower both women and small-scale farmers, tackle food insecurity and address emerging challenges.

The EU and the Government have now been looking towards improvement and enhancement of rural development, trade, food security, infrastructure and expansion of the coffee industry through upgraded road infrastructure. Last year, the EU gave Ethiopia a grant of 212.4 million Euros to support national road construction projects within the framework of the Growth and Transformation Plan. The Government is now pushing ahead to improve and upgrade the road infrastructure to easily and efficiently connect the country's rich agricultural zones to markets both inside and outside the country. This will have the effect of allowing rural farmers many more opportunities to gain profits, participate in growth and, indeed, to own their own future. This will also have a major impact on Ethiopia's ability to promote regional integration and enhance collective endeavors to boost regional welfare.

Since the formulation of the first phase the Road Sector Development Program in 1997, the Government has attached great importance to the program. There has been real progress in road network development activities, contributing to transformation of the economy and to reinforcing and accelerating competitiveness and regional integration throughout the East African region. During this period, the Government has undertaken a number of major projects to enhance the coverage and quality of the road infrastructure, by maintenance of roads, sustained asphalt and gravel upgrading, and rural road construction. As a result, the size of the road network has steadily increased from **26,550 kilometers in 1996/97 to 85,966 km in 2012/2013**. The proportion of gravel and asphalt roads, in good condition, has risen from 17% and 25% in 1996/97 to 71% and 55% in 2012/2013 respectively. The plan is now to accelerate these efforts and provide for increased road coverage over the next two years and raise the existing **85,966 kilometers to 136,044 kilometers in 2015**.

The Battle of Adwa rewrote attitudes and the future history of Africa

Last week, Ethiopia celebrated the 118th anniversary of its extraordinary victory against the Italian invading army at the Battle of Adwa, and the event was, as usual, celebrated colorfully in Addis Ababa at Minelik II Square in Addis Ababa in the presence of Dr Tabor Gebremedhin, the Speaker of the Addis Ababa Administration Council, and at the site of the battle in the Adwa Mountains in Tigray Regional State. The Battle of Adwa was fought on March 1, 1896, between Ethiopian forces and an invading Italian army. It was the deciding battle in the First Italo-Ethiopian war and a turning point in modern African history.

It was a major anti-colonialist battle, in which an army drawn from all over Ethiopia, under the skilful leadership of the Emperor Minelik and Empress Taitu, routed an invading force and brought Italy's attempted war of further conquest in Africa to an end. A well-disciplined and massive Ethiopian army did the unthinkable. In the age of relentless European expansion and domination, Ethiopia successfully defended its independence and cast doubt upon the unshakable certainties of the age of late 19th century colonialism. On the local and regional level it forced European powers to recognize Ethiopia as a sovereign nation state and put an end to their expansion in the Horn of Africa, but the victory also resonated well beyond the Ethiopian-Italian war and the region.

The victory of Adwa reverberated across and outside Africa, representing the clash between colonialism and liberation on a world-scale. It made Ethiopia a symbol of independence for Africa and of the resistance to colonialism and imperialism. The battle of Adwa became increasingly associated with Black Nationalism across the world and with resistance movements in Africa. It challenged the fundamental economic, political and social attitudes of the time and threatened the colonizers. It emboldened all Black people to rise up and challenge social injustice, racial discrimination, and colonial domination, both in Africa and elsewhere including the United States. Indeed, the Black Movement of the 1890s was specifically associated with Ethiopia because of Ethiopia's civilization, its long political independence, its rich historical and cultural legacy and its successful defence of these at the battle of Adwa.

The success of Ethiopia against Italy had major implications. It disproved the widespread European misconceptions of the inferiority of Africans and the falsification of their history and achievements as portrayed by some writers of social Darwinism. The victory at Adwa also disproved the idea of the inevitability of the superiority of European armies. It was clear that given the right leadership, unity of purpose, and the necessary mobilization of resources, Africans were quite capable of protecting and promoting their own national interests. The victory played a major and positive role in uplifting the morale of the colonized and racially oppressed Africans across the continent and in the Diaspora. In sum, it challenged the *status quo* and inspired freedom fighters across the world to increase their efforts in opposing colonialism and imperialism in all its forms.

Indeed, the victory at Adwa, which was not, it must be admitted, expected, played a major role in the birth of Pan-African solidarity, planting the seeds of unity and cooperation of black people throughout the world and helping to launch efforts to break the yoke of colonialism in a united fashion. It not only thwarted any future movement by Europeans to colonize Ethiopia but, in its shattering of the centuries-old negative myths about Africa and Africans, affected the further implementation of colonialism.

The battle of Adwa projected Pan-Africanism, a movement forged by Africans and people of African descent, into a unified force against oppression, colonialism, imperialism and racial domination. It launched the concept into the realm of the possible by reigniting the imagination of Africans in their quest for freedom throughout the world, signaling the real possibility of a victorious outcome to the anti-colonial struggle. The victory of Adwa laid the foundation for Pan-Africanism, the basis for the unity of all Africans in the fight against colonialism and apartheid. It played a fundamental role in helping to inspire and realize today's African Renaissance, enabling Africa to emerge as strong, independent, and proud, not as a mere follower, by the end of the last century. It was no surprise when the 50th anniversary celebration of the formation of the Organization of African Unity/African Union declared Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance as the basic elements in the search to promote "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in global arena".

The Battle of Adwa witnessed an unequalled display of Ethiopian heroism and patriotism which provided the basis for the country's continued independence as well as the basis for Africa's Pan-Africanism. The

victory should still be remembered as something to be imitated in the battles against enemies today. The Battle of Adwa still has lessons for this century. A hundred and eighteen years ago, the enemy was an invading force. Today, our main effort is directed to the struggle to eradicate poverty from Ethiopia. It is no longer a military struggle but a socio-economic one. Victory still requires the same determination, effort, political will and unity of purpose.

Eritrea's Foreign Minister addresses the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva

On Monday this week (March 3) Eritrea's Foreign Minister addressed the High-Level Segment of the 25th Session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on, as he put it, a subject to which the Eritrean delegation attached great importance. Mr Osman Saleh noted the central and compelling issue of human rights to the dignity and well-being of human beings. He suggested there was a huge mismatch of what had been promised and what had been achieved, and the principle that fundamental human rights were universal, indivisible and mutually reinforcing seemed to have been eroded through time.

Turning to Eritrea's presentation of its Universal Periodic Review PR Second Cycle National Report a few weeks earlier, Mr Osman said this had highlighted some of the "achievements, challenges, constraints and best practices" that reflected prevailing circumstances. This was in addition to what had been reported in the first cycle in 2009. He noted that the UPR gave every state the opportunity to use the forum to see how it is performing in discharging its obligations towards its people, and it was one of the most effective mechanisms in raising human rights standards. Mr Saleh said the Human Rights Council in its 20th, 21st and 23rd sessions, regrettably, had adopted resolutions condemning Eritrea for human rights violations before any verification of these violations had taken place. Even worse, the Council had then appointed a Special Rapporteur with a mandate to verify the allegations. This, he argued was paradoxical, procedurally unacceptable and, indeed, the whole situation expressed in the resolutions critical of Eritrea was unfounded and misleading.

Mr Saleh went on to say the way the Council allowed sponsors and co-sponsors to propose a resolution and the way some NGOs without accountability were allowed to "act in a controlling way", raised concerns. He claimed the co-sponsors of the resolutions about Eritrea were representatives who did not know the reality, with two of them having no representation in Eritrea and the third being openly hostile. He therefore suggested the Council had failed to consider whether the situation justified such measures and indeed what possible remedy could these resolutions provide for the well-being of the people of Eritrea. He said the co-sponsors of the resolutions used insulting and abusive words against the laws of Eritrea, terms that were only appropriate for grave crimes. The Council, he insisted, "ought to be more vigilant against politically motivated resolutions." Mr Saleh said Eritrea unequivocally called on the Human Rights Council to end and rescind the country-specific resolutions on Eritrea and the country Special Rapporteur mandate holder. The Council, he said, should focus rather on strengthening engagement, dialogue and institutional linkage for Eritrea within the UPR framework. That, he said, would be both timely and legitimate. He reaffirmed Eritrea's commitment to the full enjoyment of all genuine human rights.

The submissions of the stakeholders to the Universal Periodic Review covered a wide variety of questions concerning the Government of Eritrea's failure to implement commitments made earlier in 2009, as well as detailing the conditions under which people were living today and making a number of recommendations for change. There were questions over Eritrea's failure to ratify the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances, or the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The fact that the Constitution of Eritrea, which was ratified in 1997, remained unimplemented apparently due to a continuing state of emergency, was noted. There were recommendations to end the state of emergency and promulgation of the Constitution. The failure to work on developing press laws and regulations consistent with the values, traditions, cultural practices and national interest, agreed at the UPR in 2009, was underlined. Press Proclamation No. 90/1996 continued to regulate professional journalism and the operation of the mass media and numerous provisions of the Proclamation contravened internationally accepted standards on freedom of expression. There were recommendations to repeal this proclamation as well as provisions in the Criminal Code that related to criminal defamation, calumny and insulting behavior or outrage. There were recommendations that all those who had served excessive tours of duty in the military should be demobilized and that the government should end policies that target or punish family members of those who evade national service or seek to flee Eritrea.

It was submitted that there has been no improvement in the human rights situation in Eritrea in nearly all the issues highlighted during the UPR in 2009. The Government had failed to implement any of the major recommendations made then including holding free and fair elections, implementing the 1997 Constitution, lifting restrictions on freedom of expression and association, freedom of religion and belief, or to release all prisoners of conscience and charge or release other political prisoners. In 2009, the Government had accepted recommendations on media freedom and on enforcement of constitutional guarantees and arbitrary detention. None of these recommendations had been implemented. No progress had been made in Eritrea's acceptance of recommendations on cooperation with the UN Special Procedures and treaty bodies as promised in 2009. Eritrea had not accepted any requests for country visits by the United Nations Special Rapporteurs and had rejected the report presented at the 23rd session of the Human Rights Council by the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in Eritrea, citing amongst its objections, the methodology and sources of information used by the mandate-holder. It had refused to invite the Special Rapporteur or to cooperate with her.

It was agreed that Eritrea had signed various international conventions relating to rights of girls and women and a lot of progress has been made on realizing the rights of women including the banning of FGM, but existing structures for the advancement of women needed to be strengthened. The Government of Eritrea was ineffective in addressing discriminatory beliefs and attitudes. There were recommendations that Eritrea revoke the shoot to kill policy and institute humane policies for the control of its borders and for the treatment of detainees, civilians and those seeking refuge; issue clear orders to the security forces to cease all forms of torture and inhuman treatment; establish adequate mechanisms to ensure prompt and effective investigation of all allegations of torture and ill-treatment; and bring perpetrators to justice.

There were recommendations for an immediate end to the practice of arbitrary detention and for the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience none of whom had ever been charged with a crime, tried or brought before a judge or judicial officer with the authority to review the legality of their detention. These included the arbitrary arrest and detention of thousands of people without charge or trial for criticizing or questioning Government policy or practice, for working as journalists, for actual or suspected opposition to the Government of Eritrea, for practicing a religion not recognized by the Government of Eritrea, for evading or deserting national service conscription, and for trying to flee the country. It was also noted that cells and other confinement spaces were generally severely overcrowded, damp and unhygienic. Provisions of food, water and sanitation were inadequate. Numerous detention centers used underground cells or metal shipping containers as cells. Many of these detention centers were in desert locations, meaning that those detainees held in cells underground or constructed of metal experienced extreme heat during the day and extreme cold during the nights. Underground cells and shipping containers were usually unventilated and the prisoners had severely restricted access to daylight. The cells had no sanitation facilities. The International Community for the Red Cross did not have access to detention facilities in Eritrea and there were no civil society organizations to monitor or document conditions. There were calls for Eritrea to immediately respect international standards of law over treatment of prisoners by provision of adequate food, water, and medical assistance to prisoners, end overcrowding; allow independent monitors access to all known and secret detention facilities; notify family members of the whereabouts of detainees; and restore visiting rights and access to legal representation.

Other points raised were that the age limits for military service were wilfully ignored and that children were recruited for military service, that all schoolchildren were required to complete their final year of schooling (grade 12) at Sawa military training camp, where military training was conducted alongside schoolwork. This system effectively meant the conscription of children into the military. There were calls for the establishment of independent courts, for detainees to be promptly charged and tried, given prompt access to lawyers of their choice, and being able to challenge the lawfulness of their detention before a court. Questions were raised over the government's refusal to allow freedom of movement, freedom of religion or belief, expression, association and peaceful assembly, right to participate in public and political life and the fact that there had been no improvements, and indeed in some areas, the reverse since 2009. Eritrea accepted a number of recommendations relevant to the right to freedom of expression and to the situation of detained writers in 2009 but had failed to implement any. There were calls for the government to refrain from harassing, threatening, criminalizing or arresting writers, journalists, bloggers, political activists and other human rights defenders. Overall there had been no discernible improvement in the treatment of civil society and that state agents were the most frequent perpetrators of political violence and intimidation affecting civil society activists.

Comments noted that the official length of military service was 18 months, but most conscripts had served 17 years or more, and the service requirement for all between 18 and 50 had now been effectively extended to those between 50 and 70 required to be members of militias in the cities. Despite labor laws, youth in the national service were forced to do what was effectively unpaid, labor intensive work especially in the mining industry and government projects under harsh conditions, usually enduring abuse and maltreatment. The government respected neither the right to freedom of association nor the right to collective bargaining. A food distribution coupon-system controlled food consumption of every household. In the towns, a registered member in a household was allowed one piece of bread of a weight of 100 grams per day. Every registered Eritrean was allowed to buy 750 grams of sugar and 5 kilos of grain a month. People in villages were left to fend for themselves. It was recommended that private businesses should be allowed to operate freely and that people should buy from free markets without fear, and that the use of the coupon-system for controlling movement and for punishing citizens should be stopped.