

A Week in the Horn of Africa

17th May 2013

- **Dr Tedros speaks at Chatham House on the Future of the AU...**
- **...Addresses Africa Jubilee Business Forum in London...**
- **...Meets with UK Minister for Africa...**
- **A Saudi Shura Council delegation visits Ethiopia**
- **UN Special Rapporteur in Eritrea Calls for Close Scrutiny of Eritrea**
- **The United States and Djibouti to establish a Strategic and Defence Forum**
- **A Swedish business delegation visits Ethiopia**
- **The OAU/AU at 50: The Question of African Unity**

Dr Tedros speaks at Chatham House on the Future of the AU...

Ethiopian Foreign Minister and Chairman of the African Union Executive Council, H.E. Dr Tedros Adhanom, told a Chatham House platform that Africa, which was once the marginalised continent, has now emerged, as some put it, "the new Eldorado", at a time when much of the developed world is suffering from the economic slump, thus rekindling a great sense of hope and optimism. Africa's profile on the world stage has been raised and it is no exaggeration to state that Africa has now become a force to be reckoned with.

Speaking at a discussion titled "The Future of the AU: Fifty Years of the Organization of African Unity–African Union", the Minister thanked the think tank for organising the debate as it was relevant in light of the celebrations of the Golden Jubilee of the OAU/AU, which gave the opportunity to take stock of the achievements and shortcomings, as well as the prospects and challenges of the continental organization.

Dr Tedros noted that Africa is attracting growing interest both from developed and emerging economies, as a new frontier for untapped business and investment opportunities. "Over the last decade, improved macro-economic governance, coupled with better prices for African commodities on the international market have enabled African countries to register robust growth, in spite of the global economic crisis...some of the countries like Ethiopia are now among the fastest growing economies in the world," he said.

Quoting Pan-Africanist Ghanaian leader, Kwame Nkrumah, "United we stand, divided we fall", Dr Tedros urged African states and its peoples to stand together in unity and solidarity. "Africa has started to speak with one voice on issues of common interest to our continent and as such, the African Union has become an important vehicle for developing the African common position on a range of international issues such as climate change."

The Organisation of African Unity was established on 25th May 1963 by 32 independent countries signing a charter. Ethiopia, the Minister said, played a critical role in the establishment of the OAU and has been very proud to play host to this premier

continental organisation for the past 50 years, and it has never shirked from discharging its heavy responsibilities.

Africa has made remarkable progress over the last decade in terms of promoting peace and stability despite the existence of a few hotspots, he said. The African Union plays a proactive role in the search for peaceful resolution of conflicts in Africa by promoting peace, security and stability and creating a favourable environment for sustainable development in line with its mandate. Moreover, African leaders have also committed themselves to promoting democratic governance, respect for human and people's rights and ensuring the rule of law.

The Minister also noted that even though Africa has recorded remarkable progress over the last fifty years, the last decade has been slow because reorienting the direction of the organisation took more time than expected, but it was worth engaging in such an exercise as it helped reach a solid consensus on implementing agreed programs.

The minister said he is confident the commission will make further progress towards the realisation of the objectives of the Union and outlined the strategic plan the AU has developed for the years 2014-2017, which aims to accelerate progress towards creating the foundations of an integrated, prosperous, people-centred and peaceful continent in the short and medium term.

The African Union, in connection with the Golden Jubilee Celebrations, is in the process of elaborating the **Strategic Framework for Vision 2063**, outlining Africa's agenda for the next 50 years in the realisation of the vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa.

Responding to a question about ending colonialism and neo-colonialism, Dr Tedros said Africa has untapped potential. For the African renaissance to succeed, ownership by African states is crucial. "We have to own our businesses and with that ownership comes commitment. Empowered Africa is better for the world." Africa has to encourage investment flow from the UK and Europe. It needs support and should be taken as an equal partner.

As development is key to Africa, attention should be given to investment, trade and infrastructure development. Promoting and developing micro and small enterprises is essential to creating more jobs for African youth and addressing unemployment.

With regards to colonial borders, the Minister said, any border dispute should be resolved peacefully. Linking African countries through a developed infrastructure and economic integration focusing on trade and investment would help strengthen bonds that will foster stability and development.

On the situation in Mali, the Minister said, elections will go ahead as planned in July and France's support is welcome. The AU and regional body, ECOWAS, are also helping in the mapping of a comprehensive program to restore peace and stability in Mali.

On Somalia, he noted that the government role should be strengthened and the international community should be more robust in its support for the implementation of the six pillar strategy.

... Addresses Africa Jubilee Business Forum in London...

Ethiopian Foreign Minister and Chairperson of the Executive Council of the African Union, Dr Tedros Adhanom told participants at the Africa Jubilee Business Forum that Africa of today is not the Africa of yester year.

The continent is “slowly but surely, shedding the stereotype images of being a continent of famine, drought, conflict, utter poverty and dictatorships, that portray Africa as a lost cause in many peoples’ imagination,” he said.

The Africa Jubilee Business Forum, held under the theme, **African-British Business Partnerships at 50 and Beyond**, opened in the presence of UK Deputy Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Nick Clegg MP, with a particular focus on new ways of intensifying and capitalizing on opportunities and openings for business in emerging African economies.

The Minister cited progress in areas like education, health, manufacturing and agricultural productivity, IT and infrastructure development, and cautioned that more has to be done “as we are not out of the woods yet”.

Bottlenecks including lack of social infrastructure, inviting business environment, integrated regional markets, stable governments, political stability and social cohesion were challenges on the continent, he said, but African nations have mapped out a coherent programme of activities in energy, transport and communication, as well as water and sanitation, in line with the priorities of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) and mandates of the African Union and the regional economic communities.

The Minister, showcasing Ethiopia’s effort in this regard, detailed the five-year Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), which envisages the construction of 11,212km of new roads, the national rail network stretching for 2,395km and linking the country to all its neighbours, the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) with a projected capacity of generating over 6,000MW of energy and the expansion of landline and mobile telephone subscription expected to rise to 3.5 and 40 million respectively in the plan period.

Africa offers ample investment opportunities in sectors like textiles and garments, agro-industry, food processing, large commercial farming, extractive industries and many more as a continent endowed with rich resources.

Considering indications that most of Africa’s trade and investment links are shifting to Asia, he said, “Europe, frankly speaking, is losing out” and thus, the private sector in Europe and the UK should understand that Africa today offers many more investment returns and profits than any other region of the world.

Dr Tedros urged the private sector to be “game changers” in efforts at economic integration, which would lead to political stability and peace on the continent, “the Africa we all should work for.”

In his keynote speech at the Forum, UK Deputy Prime Minister, The Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP, lauded African successes referring to recent research showing that almost a quarter of African countries' GDP grew at 7% or higher in 2012, which, he said, is "a story worth telling, but one often lost in the customary narrative of conflict and instability." "And as Africa's presence on the global stage increases, we need to secure economic success for every country in the region. For the good of Africa, for the good of the UK and for the good of the world," the Deputy Premier noted.

The UK, he said, will seek to be an effective partner as nations across Africa continue to grow and prosper, and is determined in its G8 presidency, to address the fundamental barriers to further growth and investment in Africa and the rest of the world. He promised that the UK will honour its commitment to spend 0.7% of the nation's wealth helping the world's poorest countries.

The Deputy Prime Minister referred to the Gleneagles G8 summit where an agreement was reached to cancel the debt for the world's poorest countries and called on partners to work together to achieve even more, focusing on the 3Ts of Trade, Transparency and Tax next June.

The Deputy Prime Minister and the Ethiopian Foreign Minister called on Africans to remain engaged in consolidating gains made in order to transform the livelihoods of the African people. They also conferred on issues of bilateral and regional importance on the side-lines of the Forum.

Introductory remarks were also made at the Business Forum, by the High Commissioner of the Republic of Botswana and Dean of the African Diplomatic Corps in London. Mr Roy Blackbeard, and Dr Mohan Kaul, Chairman of the Commonwealth Business Council.

Presentations and deliberations were held at the day-long event on an assortment of topics including Capitalizing on the African Opportunity, What Makes a Project Bankable, Utilizing Natural Resources for Economic Development, as well as Enabling Economic Growth through Infrastructure Development.

... Meets with UK Minister for Africa...

Ethiopian Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Dr Tedros Adhanom, met and held talks with the UK Minister for Africa, Mr Mark Simmonds MP. Dr Tedros briefed the Minister on the situation in Somalia, Sudan and the sub-region as well as the outcomes of the recent IGAD summit and Ministerial meeting. Dr Tedros underlined the need to support the political process in Somalia focusing on the priorities set by the government to consolidate peace and stability. Ethiopia and the regional grouping IGAD are working in tandem with the Government of Somalia which has now made significant headway in many areas.

The Foreign Minister emphasized on the urgent need for mobilizing resources and support to help the Somali government in the fight against Al-Shabaab and to provide social services and build confidence among the general public. The recent Somalia Conference held in London on 7th May committed around £130 million to help Somalia

create a more peaceful and secure future. Dr Tedros congratulated the Minister on the success of the conference which brought together over 55 delegations from across the world. The conference endorsed the Somali government plan for developing the country's armed forces, police, justice and public financial management system, pivotal for tackling poverty and the root causes of humanitarian disasters, migration, terrorism and piracy as well as improving security and stability.

Africa Minister, Mr Simmonds, on his part appreciated Ethiopia's participation and contribution to the Somalia Conference and commended Ethiopia's efforts for peace and stability in the region. He reiterated gratitude for its contribution and support for the government of Somalia alongside other IGAD member countries. Mr Simmonds expressed appreciation for Ethiopia's development efforts and the excellent partnership and bilateral relations between the two countries.

Dr Tedros highlighted how multi-faceted UK development aid to Ethiopia is put to good use in health and other sectors and expressed gratefulness to the people and government of Great Britain for their support to Ethiopia's commitment to sustainable development. Dr Tedros also met with members of the Ethiopian Diaspora in the UK, during his visit, where he discussed timely and relevant issues focusing on the GTP and highlighting gains made in investment, trade and infrastructure development that are paying dividends to Ethiopians at all levels.

During discussions, the Minister urged Ethiopians to stand united to protect and ensure Ethiopia's national interests and denounced those bent on obstructing the construction of the GERD which, he said, is an illness and treason against the security and interests of the Ethiopian people. "People might differ in their political persuasions but undermining national interests and thereby national security is completely unacceptable."

A Saudi Shura Council delegation visits Ethiopia

A ten-man delegation from the Saudi Shura Council (Parliament) paid a three day official visit to Ethiopia this week, (May 12-14) with the aim of jointly identifying potential projects for cooperation including investment, trade and development. Led by the Council's President, Dr Abdullah Bin Mohammed Bin Ibrahim Al-Alsheikh, the delegation held discussions with Ethiopia's Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, and with the Speaker of the Ethiopian House of People's Representatives, Ato Abadula Gameda and the Speaker of the House of Federation, Ato Kassa Teklebirhan. The delegation also met with State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Berhane Gebrechristos. Discussions covered bilateral and regional issues of mutual interest.

During the discussion at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr Al-Alsheikh briefed State Minister, Ambassador Berhane, on the fruitful discussions the delegation had held with the Prime Minister and with the Speakers and members of the two houses of Parliament. Discussions, he said, had focused mainly on ways of further strengthening the two countries' excellent relations through existing inter-parliamentary cooperation. Dr Al-Alsheikh noted the mutually expressed commitment, underlined during the discussion with the Prime Minister, that the two countries exemplary relations would remain unaffected by any unrepresentative statement made by any individual and

which was against the spirit of the historic and excellent relations between Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia, based on cooperation and mutual understanding. Discussions held at the parliament had emphasized possible details of potential areas for more cooperation. The emphasis had been on investment and trade. Other areas of discussion had covered the strengthening of development cooperation. Dr Al-Alsheikh had announced the Shura Council's decision to fully finance the construction of the new Ethiopian parliamentary complex.

Ambassador Berhane underlined the two countries' historic relations characterized by ties of geography, culture and history. He said these were currently picking up further momentum and transforming into the level of a strategic partnership. He said the repeated exchanges of visits and the Shura Council's present visit was a reflection of the excellent overall relations and an expression of commitment to sustain and further strengthen them. He particularly appreciated the aim of the visit in identifying details of potential areas and projects for further cooperation. He particularly appreciated the decision to finance the construction of Ethiopia's new parliamentary building which, he said, would serve as "a living monument" for the two countries' parliament-to-parliament relations. Ambassador Berhane underlined the continuing overall improvements in Ethiopia and the attractive investment opportunities available in large-scale agriculture development, agro-processing industries, renewable energy, international hotels, tertiary hospitals, textile and garment production, as well as leather products. These were all areas, he suggested, in which the Shura Council could encourage more Saudi investment.

Ambassador Berhane also briefed the delegation on regional issues including Ethiopia's constructive role in the situation in Somalia and between Sudan and South Sudan. He noted Ethiopia's deployment of peacekeeping forces wearing UN hats in Abyei, the UN Interim Security Forces for Abyei (UNISFA), to oversee the implementation of the common demilitarized border zone agreement, following requests from both Sudan and South Sudan as well as endorsement of the request by IGAD, the AU and the UN. This, he said, underlined the trust Ethiopia enjoyed from both Sudan and South Sudan, as a good neighbour and a valued mediator under the auspices of the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP). Similarly, he explained Ethiopia's genuine intentions and its support, both bilaterally and through IGAD, to the Somali Federal Government and to the Somali people to assist them to address their own challenges, based on their own constitution.

On Eritrea, the State Minister explained the series of disruptive activities committed by the regime in Asmara in Somalia, Djibouti, Sudan, Kenya and Ethiopia, which had resulted in the imposition of two rounds of UN sanctions following unanimously agreed requests from both the regional body of IGAD and from the African Union. He detailed the Eritrean regime's repeated and proven track record of engagement in illegal and mafia-style trade into neighbouring countries and its repeated attempts to manage any misunderstandings arising from such illegal acts with a military response. This, he said, had been among the main problems when the Eritrean regime had invaded Ethiopia in 1998, contrary to what Eritrea claimed was a border dispute. The State Minister reiterated Ethiopia's determination to respond positively to improving people-to-people relations while regretting the Eritrean regime's continued refusal to respond to Ethiopia's call for comprehensive negotiations and normalization of relations. He

pointed to the growing numbers of Eritrean youths and soldiers, who managed to evade being killed or captured by Eritrean border guards, and successfully crossed to Ethiopia every month. Thousands had now become beneficiaries of higher education and vocational training opportunities freely provided to them by the Ethiopian Government.

Ambassador Berhane, who pointed out that hundreds of thousands of Eritreans had been forcibly conscripted into the army, also expressed concern that the situation in Eritrea might further deteriorate, threatening to turn the country into a failed state. He called on Saudi Arabia to join efforts to encourage the Eritrean regime to stop its continued destabilization activities and bring an end to the serious human rights violations identified in the recent statement of the UN Human Rights Special Rapporteur on Eritrea. These aims, he said, could best be brought about by strict implementation of the UN sanctions resolutions and putting in place "due diligence guidelines" as decided by the UN Security Council.

On the issue of the Nile waters and the construction of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), the State Minister assured the delegation that Ethiopia had no intention of affecting the flow of water to downstream countries. The dam was being built for power generation and would benefit the lower riparian states. A good example of the possible advantages could be seen in the precedent provided to the Atbara River in Sudan which had benefited from a smaller dam built on Tekeze River in Ethiopia. Among the benefits of the GERD would be an increased amount of water, regular year-long flow and reduced siltation. The State Minister expressed his hope that the psychological worries of downstream countries would steadily peter out as the benefits became more obvious.

The President of the Shura Council, himself, who expressed his own belief that the dam would not harm downstream countries, described Ethiopia as "a land of people whom we have historically known to be without desire to cause any harm to others". He emphasized the Shura's readiness to further strengthen Saudi investments in Ethiopia in the areas suggested by the State Foreign Minister and in other areas jointly identified during the delegation's discussions in the Prime Minister's Office and in the Parliament.

UN Special Rapporteur in Eritrea Calls for Close Scrutiny of Eritrea

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in Eritrea, Ms Sheila Keetharuth, was appointed last September to investigate the human rights situation in Eritrea. Following the repeated refusals of the government of Eritrea to allow her into the country, the Special Rapporteur was forced to do her investigations among refugees from Eritrea in neighbouring countries. Now, after a ten-day mission to Ethiopia and Djibouti to collect first-hand information directly from Eritrean refugees, Ms Keetharuth has called on the international community to keep Eritrea under "close scrutiny until meaningful change is evident in the country". She said the "blatant disrespect for human rights in Eritrea is unacceptable," adding that "real change would require a fundamental reform process transforming the current culture of rights denial with one anchored in the rule of law, respect for and realization of all human rights and human dignity."

The Special Rapporteur voiced particular concern about the indefinite national service, the on-going practice of arbitrary arrest and incommunicado detention in inhumane conditions and widespread torture, both physical and psychological, during

interrogation by the police, military and security forces. Mere suspicion, she said, appears to be enough for somebody to be subjected to interrogation and detention without charge or without being brought before a court of law. She said “Persecution on religious grounds continued in Eritrea; followers of unrecognised religions face draconian restrictions and are often arrested while worshipping,” adding that “an all-encompassing feeling of fear and distrust, even within families, reflects the pervasive intelligence network the Eritrean Government has established throughout the country.”

In a statement issued after visits to the refugee centres in Endabaguna, as well as the Adi-Harush and Mai-Aini refugee camps in the Tigray Regional State, the Special Rapporteur warned that the high numbers of Eritrean refugees in both Djibouti and Ethiopia was indicative of the serious human rights violations taking place in Eritrea, and pushing people to take the difficult decision to leave their families and homes behind for an unknown future. “An improvement in the human rights situation in Eritrea will be crucial to allow refugees to return to their home country,” Ms Keetharuth noted. She commended the efforts of Ethiopia and Djibouti to host the large Eritrean refugee communities. She pointed out that since the beginning of the year close to 4,000 Eritrean refugees have crossed the Ethiopian-Eritrean border, bringing the number of those living in the three camps in the Tigray region to over 50,000.

Ms Keetharuth expressed her worry over the continuing and increasing flow of refugees and said “I am particularly concerned about the increasing number of unaccompanied children crossing the border without the knowledge of their families”. She pointed out that children she spoke to had “regularly mentioned dysfunctional family circumstances due to the long absence of the father, most of the time because of conscription, lack of educational opportunities and the fear of forced conscription into indefinite national service as major reasons for their decisions to flee.”

The Special Rapporteur's remarks were underlined by the issue of updated US State Department warnings to US citizens of the risks of travelling to Eritrea. In conjunction with the celebrations centred around May 24 for the 20th anniversary of Eritrean independence, the State Department strongly recommended any U.S. citizens to defer all travel to Eritrea. It notes that the Eritrean government continues to restrict the travel of all foreign nationals inside the country, including a requirement that all visitors, and residents, including U.S. diplomats, must apply 10 days in advance for permission to travel outside Asmara; permission is rarely granted. It adds that travellers should be aware that travel permits are valid for the approved final destination only, and do not allow for stops along the way or even anywhere near the approved destination. Travel to religious institutions require separate travel permission. Foreign travellers who have failed to stick strictly to the terms of travel permits have reported being detained and their drivers jailed. The warning says a number of U.S.-Eritrean dual citizens have been arrested and some are currently being held without apparent cause.

“Once arrested, detainees may be held for extended periods without being told the reason for their incarceration. Conditions are harsh – those incarcerated may be held in very small quarters without access to restrooms, bedding, food, or clean water....Should the U.S. Embassy learn of the arrest of a U.S. citizen, the Eritrean government rarely allows consular access, regardless of the reason the U.S. citizen is being held.” The warning says that visitors will note an increase in the presence of military and police personnel throughout Asmara during the months of April and May, around the

Independence Day holiday of May 24. The State Department also “strongly advises” U.S. citizens on ships and sailing vessels not to sail off the Eritrean coast or to attempt to dock in Eritrean ports, refuel in Eritrea, or travel through Eritrean waters, adding that the Eritrean government does not issue visas to persons arriving by ship.

The externally based opposition umbrella organization, the Eritrean National Council for Democratic Change (ENCDC), which brings together 34 political organisations and more than 60 civil society groups, also issued its own statement last week on the country's independence, saying that on May 24 what should be highlighted is: the tens of thousands of prisoners being held in Eritrea's more than 300 prisons; the plight of young people forced into indefinite national service; the lack of any free media in Eritrea; the lack of a national constitution; the lack of higher education, with the only university closed down several years ago; and the tragedy of Sinai where those fleeing the country are caught between local officials in Eritrea, the Rashaida, the Bedouin, and the organ traffickers themselves.

In these circumstances it appears somewhat ironic that this year's celebrations of independence are being conducted under the theme “Eritrea - Shield of Resilience and Nobility of Work”. Even more ironically, Eritrea's Foreign Minister, Osman Saleh, recently speaking to the General Assembly session on human trafficking spoke of his sense of pride and honour when speaking on behalf of a people who were “in the front line of the struggle for dignity and human rights for themselves and other people”. This struggle for “dignity and human rights” does not appear to be shared by the government of which he is a member. The Minister claimed that the government was carrying out a campaign of enhancing awareness, prosecution of criminals, support for victims, was involved in regional cooperation against human trafficking and was also calling for an impartial investigation into the practice which Eritrea has contended is organized by its enemies to destabilize it. Among these enemies, as well as the usual diatribe against the US, against Ethiopia for Eritrea's own continuous refusal to respond to Ethiopia's repeated offers of a dialogue to resolve any and all issues, and against the UN and in particular the UN Monitoring Group for Eritrea and Somalia which has identified involvement by senior members of the Eritrean government and military in human trafficking across the borders. The flight of people across the border, the Minister claimed was no more than part of a plot by Eritrea's enemies to drain its resources, destroy its economy, impoverish its people, and cause violent regime change. An average of at least a thousand people a month are crossing the border into Ethiopia and a similar number into Sudan, the majority youngsters fleeing the unending national service conscription, which for tens of thousands has already lasted fifteen years with no end in sight.

The United States and Djibouti to establish a Strategic and Defence Forum

Over the weekend (May 12-13), at a meeting in Djibouti, US Deputy Defence Secretary Ashton Carter and Mahamoud Ali Youssouf, Djibouti's Minister of Foreign Affairs, agreed to establish a bilateral strategic and defence forum. During their meeting, the two officials reportedly underscored the strong bilateral relations between the US and Djibouti and affirmed their commitment to further co-operation in civil and military

sectors, and Mr Carter thanked Minister Youssouf for Djibouti's support to American troops stationed in the country.

According to a statement from the Pentagon, "the forum will provide a formal and enduring structure for discussing and coordinating issues of mutual concern between the two nations." Mr Carter and Minister Youssouf also discussed ways to strengthen and enhance the close military and civil partnership between the two countries. They affirmed their joint commitment to the success of the African Union mission in Somalia and to counter the threat of violent extremism. The statement said that the "The Department of Defence will continue to emphasize its strategic relationship with Djibouti."

Following the discussions, the Deputy Secretary for Defence briefly spoke with US servicemen and women representing the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force units assigned to the Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa which is based at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti. He told the service personnel that they had done great things over the last 10 years, but the department now recognized that it was turning a strategic corner. Instead of being defined by the response to the events of 9/11, it had now moved forward to face the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, and Africa holds great opportunity, Carter said. In addition to fighting extremism and protecting maritime security, CJTF-HOA personnel were planting seeds for the long-term future of Africa, he added.

Camp Lemonnier serves as a hub for US activities throughout the Horn of Africa. It is the only permanent American base in Africa, home to 3,200 people, and for the last three years, American drones have been flying from Camp Lemonnier. American units there also include a squadron of F-15E jets. The Pentagon has drawn up plans to spend \$1.4 billion to expand the base and triple the number of its special forces there to more than 1,000.

It is not only the US which has forces in Djibouti. France, of course, still guarantees Djibouti's security and keeps 2,000 troops in Djibouti. Djibouti also now includes the biggest military presence of Japan and China outside Asia, both cooperating in the protection of commercial vessels from piracy. Warships from Russia, Iran and India can also be found there as well as the UK and other European navies. "Even in the cold war, rarely was neutral territory so colourful or crowded," said a recent report.

A Swedish business delegation visits Ethiopia

A twenty-two person Swedish business delegation, headed by Sweden's State Secretary for Trade, Mr Gummar Oom, made a working visit to Ethiopia this week, May 14-16. The delegation involved organizations that focus on infrastructure, ICT, textile and leather manufacturing and energy, and included ABB, Atlas Copco Group, Ericsson, MIDROC, Minority IT, Power Circle, Sandryds Handels, Swed Fund International, West Work Group, White and Af Groups. The delegation visited the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and MIDROC offices as well as holding discussions with counterpart organizations.

The delegation also participated in a two-day workshop on trade and investment at the Sheraton Hotel with their Ethiopian counterparts, as well as representatives from

government agencies and international organizations. In opening remarks, the Minister of Industry, Ato Mekonnen Manyazewal, briefed the delegation on Ethiopia's Growth and Transformation Plan and the targets that Ethiopia has set itself in order to meet its development agenda. He noted that Ethiopia was among the fastest growing non-oil producing economies in the world with an average broad-based economic growth rate of over 10% for over the last nine years. The success had come mainly because of the commitment of leadership, the implementation of appropriate plans and of learning from other countries' best practices to help achieve the aim of sustainable economic growth. Agriculture remains the main pole of the economy in the Growth and Transformation Plan but this also envisages increasing industrial capacity. Ato Mekonnen pointed out that the Ethiopian Government had achieved universal primary education and opened **over twenty** universities with ten more under construction, in which priority was being given to science and technology. The Government was also encouraging the expansion of labour intensive industries to create more job opportunities as part of its commitment to human resources.

Ato Mekonnen, who appreciated the long history of engagement between Ethiopia and Sweden, in development, trade and other areas, also noted the need to create the right conditions and jointly work on ways to provide another round of momentum in relations in investment and trade. The current volume of trade and investment is growing as fast as it used to.

Sweden's State Secretary for Trade, Mr Gummar Oom, also underlined the historic relations that exist between Ethiopia and Sweden, going back to the 19th century, as well as the growing collaboration between the two countries in areas of development cooperation, academia and business. He said the visit of this delegation was part of his country's desire to continue to further strengthen the existing wide-ranging relationships. He said the visit created an opportunity to showcase the capacities of different Swedish business sectors which were interested in developing long-term business relationships with Ethiopian companies. He underlined the fact that Ethiopia, as one of the fastest growing economies in the world, would provide an attractive platform for broader business cooperation between the two countries. He also emphasized the significant availability of business opportunities in Ethiopia and the mutual readiness to demonstrate sustainable solutions for the growing market in the continent as a whole. Mr Gummar Oom expressed Sweden's belief in the importance of the role of international trade and commerce for peace and development. He also appreciated Ethiopia's efforts towards WTO accession as this, he said, would help pave the way for more trade liberalization covering both goods and services for the mutual benefit of both Sweden and Ethiopia.

The OAU/AU at 50: The Question of African Unity

The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) this week held a public seminar under the theme "The OAU/AU at 50: The question of African Unity", as part of the celebrations for the forthcoming golden jubilee celebration of the OAU/AU. The panelists were: Ambassador Konjit Sinegiorgis, the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the AU and UNECA; Professor Joram Mukuma Biswaro, the Ambassador of Tanzania; Ambassador Bulus Paul Zom Lolo of Nigeria; Ambassador Olesugun Akinsanya, the Regional Director of the ISS and Dr Solomon Ayele Dersso, Senior Researcher at the ISS.

In his opening remarks Ambassador Olesugun emphasized that the formation of the Organization of African Unity (the OAU) in May 1963 had been a watershed in the history of Africa. He said it had been a bold step taken by the founding fathers towards realizing the concept of African Unity. He further pointed out that the celebration of the golden jubilee of the OAU/AU was an historic moment to engage in a reflective discourse on ways to foster African Unity, looking back at the journey over the last fifty years.

Ambassador Konjit Sinegiorgis in her speech, and in the question and answer session that followed the presentations, shared her personal recollections of the formation of the OAU and the sense of jubilation that followed the signing of the OAU Charter on May 25, 1963, and later of the formation of the African Union, also discussing the fifty years journey of the OAU/AU and the way forward. She pointed out that in the earliest years of the OAU the struggle against colonialism and apartheid had been the immediate priorities of the continental body. She said "In this regard, I would be remiss if I fail to mention the diplomatic, military, financial and other support that my country provided to a number of freedom movements in various parts of the continent based on its strong conviction that its own freedom and independence will be meaningless without the liberation of other fellow Africans." She highlighted Ethiopia's immense role in the decolonization struggle of Africa, citing the military training offered to Nelson Mandela back in the 1960's and to many others in the southern African struggle.

Ambassador Konjit described the two decades that followed the creation of the OAU as some of the worst years for Africa. Indeed, she said "the 1980s and 1990s were considered to be the lost decades" due to the senseless conflicts, economic malaise and a deep sense of hopelessness that had gripped the continent. Reflecting on the positive changes of the 1990's that led to the formation of the African Union, Ambassador Konjit, highlighted the normative and institutional changes that came with the coming into operation of the Constitutive Act. She emphasized the AU's right of intervention in cases of grave human right abuses in any member state, and the establishment of the African Peace and Security Architecture, a major departure in prevention and resolution of conflicts. Concluding, Ambassador Konjit reiterated the need to redouble everyone's efforts to produce a continent free from conflict and poverty by the time Africa celebrated the centenary of the foundation of the OAU in 2063.

Ambassador Lolo speaking on the role of states and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in the progress towards African Unity, underlined the experiences of ECOWAS, the Economic Community of West African States. He noted that countries with the political commitment and will were vital elements in taking the RECs to an even higher form of integration. He also emphasized the role of RECs as building blocks of the AU and the important role they must play in addressing poor communications, infrastructure and trade relations. Improvements in these areas were fundamental to provide for the reality of African Unity.

Dr Solomon Ayele's presentation covered the fifty-year journey of the OAU/AU and raised pertinent questions over whether the dream of a united Africa had been deferred. He noted that although the OAU had been able to fulfil its decolonization mission, its other aim of uniting Africa was a matter that had yet to be realized. The main factor for this failure, he suggested was the absence of any institutional set-up to realize unification however much this had been sought. The sacrosanct status given to the

principles of state sovereignty and non-interference, and the absence of enabling social and political infrastructure were also causes for the OAU's failure to achieve that goal. Equally, the years that followed the creation of the OAU had also seen a series of unfolding cold war dramas in the theatre of Africa, in which client states of the super-powers were favoured while popular leaders like Patrice Lumumba or Thomas Sankara were killed.

Dr Solomon stressed that it was the formation of the African Union which brought an end to the history of the politics of indifference in Africa. The institutional and normative changes involved in the creation of the AU were a real break with the past. At the same time he warned against the dangers of limiting any discourse about the AU to the political class; this he suggested would play out as a serious factor hampering the journey to unity. In conclusion, he recommended a re-articulation of the needs of African unity, and stressed the importance of political leadership and of achieving a firm consensus as the most important steps towards the realization of the unity of Africa.