

News in Brief

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy addresses the House of Peoples' Representatives

President Isaias responds to Prime Minister Abiy's "olive branch"

South Sudan: IGAD Council of Ministers and Summit meetings

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy's State Visit to Somalia

Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed of the UAE visits Ethiopia

AU officials, diplomats see how Chinese-built railway drives development and integration

ADC, UNDP and FAO Support for drought-affected areas in Somali Regional State

News in Brief

Africa and the African Union

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, welcomed the recent positive developments in the relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia. He stressed that sustainable peace between the two countries would have a tremendously positive impact on peace and security, as well as development and integration, in the Horn of Africa region and the continent as a whole. The UN, the EU and the US all the progress that Ethiopia and Eritrea have made to resolve longstanding disputes and normalize relations. **(See article)**

Speaking before the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations last week, Ambassador Tibor Nagy, nominated as Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, vowed to work for the end of conflict in Africa and the promotion of stability and good governance. He said, "Africa is at a historic crossroads, and the direction it takes will impact its future and the security and well-being of the rest of the world". Ambassador Nagy, former US Ambassador to Ethiopia (1999-2002) and Guinea (1996-1999), served his whole career in Africa.

The Chinese Mission to the African Union on Friday last week (June 15) organized a journey on the Ethiopia-Djibouti standard gauge railway for AU officials and African and other diplomats. Ambassador Kuang Weilin, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the African Union said the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Summit in Beijing would be held soon, on the theme of the Belt and Road Initiative and Africa's Development." The Mission had organized the trip to take a look at the railway "to see the early harvest of the Belt and Road Initiative." **(See article)**

Ethiopia

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed presented a report on the second half of this year's state of affair, touching on a range of issues that needed attention and amelioration to an extraordinary session of the House of Peoples' Representatives on Monday (June 18). He also answered questions of MPs. He also responded to questions from MPs. **(See article)**

The Prime Minister welcomed the statement of President Isaias on Wednesday (June 20) that he planned to send a delegation to Addis Ababa "to gauge current developments directly and in depth as well as to chart out a plan for continuous future action." This was in response to Ethiopia's announcement on June 5 that it would implement the Algiers Agreement and the decisions of the Ethio-Eritrea Border Commission unconditionally in order to resolve problems with Eritrea in a peaceful manner. **(See article)**

Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces of Abu Dhabi, arrived in Addis Ababa for an official visit on Friday (June 15) at the invitation of Prime Minister Dr. Abiy. During the visit Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) signed a 3 billion U.S. dollars loan and investment agreement to ease Ethiopia's ongoing foreign currency shortage. **(See article)**

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed made a state visit to the Federal Republic of Somalia on Saturday (June 16) at the invitation of the President Mohamed Abdullahi. During his visit, Dr. Abiy unveiled his vision of a single market to bring the two countries with a shared purpose and a shared respect for each other. He said his vision included "a future where we abolish trade barriers. It is a future where we will create a single market in our region" **(See article)**

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy chaired the 32nd extra-ordinary Summit of the IGAD Heads of State and Government on Thursday (June 21) which endorsed adoption of the Final Bridging Proposal as the basis of the continuation of the High-Level Revitalization Forum's peace revitalization process for South Sudan. Earlier in the day, Foreign Minister, Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, opened the 63rd Extra-Ordinary Session of the IGAD Council of Ministers' meeting to discuss the Final Bridging Proposal. **(See article)**.

Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh held talks with the leader of South Sudan's Liberation Movement-In Opposition Dr. Riek Machar on Wednesday (June 20) after the later has arrived in Ethiopia for a face-to-face meeting with President Salva Kiir, for the first time in two years.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene received copies of the credentials of the Ambassador of the Democratic Republic of Congo to Ethiopia, Ambassador Jean Laon Ngandu on Wednesday (June 20). Mrs. Hirut spoke of the current and prospective cooperation between Ethiopia and the DR Congo, noting that Ethiopian Airlines is playing a key role in strengthening people-to-people relations between Ethiopia and DRC and the continent at large. She also emphasized the importance of further strengthening bilateral cooperation. Ambassador Jean Laon Ngandu underlined existing strong bilateral ties between the two countries and emphasized the need to elevate the relationship to new levels.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene received copies of the credentials of the Ambassador of the Republic of Chad to Ethiopia, Ambassador Fadlassid Ali Nafa and of the Ghanaian Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ambassador Amma Twum, on Friday (June 22). The State Minister congratulated the newly appointed ambassadors and noted the importance of further strengthening bilateral relations.

State Minister Hirut bade farewell and awarded a Certificate of Recognition to the Honorary Consul of Ethiopia in the Sultanate of Oman, Sheikh Fahmi Said on Friday (June 22). Mrs. Hirut commended Sheikh Fahmi for his efforts in strengthening people-to-people relations between the two countries.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), announced on Tuesday this week (June 19) that the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC), UNDP and the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) were partnering with the Government to launch a two-year

project in the Somali Regional State to provide livelihood support for households affected by drought. (See **article**)

Eritrea

President Isaias, speaking on the occasion of the celebration of Martyrs Day in Asmara on Wednesday (June 20) and referring to the “positive signals issued in these past days”, announced he would send a delegation to Addis Ababa. He said events and developments that had unfolded in the region in general and in Ethiopia in particular warranted “appropriate attention”. (See **article**)

Kenya

President Uhuru Kenyatta has intensified his war on corruption and graft, announcing that all public servants will undergo a compulsory lifestyle audit to account for their sources of wealth. The President has offered to be the first leader to undergo the audit that aims to identify corrupt public officials. He said this would control the misuse of public funds, weeding out those found to have plundered government funds. This week the President issued an executive order requiring all government bodies and publicly owned institutions to publish full details of tenders and awards beginning July 1, 2018.

The number of Al-Shabaab terrorist attacks on security personnel and passenger vehicles on the Lamu-Garsen road has fallen, according to Lamu County police, following the establishment of security force camps at the most dangerous places. The ongoing Operation Linda Boni, launched by the government in September 2015 to flush out Al-Shabaab hiding in the dense Boni forces had contributed to the reduction of terror attacks, as had increased patrols in all areas across the county.

Somalia

A delegation led by Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre travelled to Norway on Sunday (June 17) to take part in a high-level peace forum. Other taking part included UN Secretary-General António Guterres, and leaders from Algeria, Jordan, Oman, Tanzania and Syria. The theme for the two-day Peace Forum (June 19-20) is ‘The End of the Big Peace’. Norway Minister of Foreign Affairs Ine Eriksen Søreide said: “Peace and reconciliation efforts are a key element of Norwegian foreign policy and our work in this area is increasingly linked to security policy considerations. We are living at a time of great uncertainty. We are facing new threats and seeing the rise of new geopolitical power constellations. Global security, economy and welfare could be undermined. Working together with the UN for peaceful resolution of conflicts is a way of safeguarding our common interests.”

A delegation from the African Union Peace Support Operations Division (AUPSOD) in Addis Ababa is visiting Somalia this week to assess the nature of logistical support given to the AU Mission by its partners. Colonel (Rtd) Mor Mbow, head of the delegation said it could look at “key challenges and key issues and clearly indicate what stakeholders need to do to help enhance the support package to AMISOM.” The two-day s of high-level consultative talks are expected to come up with detailed recommendations to address critical logistical support issues in the short, medium and long term. “The primary objective is to identify AMISOM mission support challenges across the strategic, operational and tactical

levels,” explained Ambassador Madeira, AU Special Representative for Somalia and Head of AMISOM.

Somali government submitted its response in its maritime dispute with Kenya case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) at The Hague on Monday (June 18) within the Court’s deadline for a response. The contested area in their maritime border covers an area of about 100,000 square kilometers, apparently rich in natural resources. Somali officials want the onshore border to continue diagonally southeast into the ocean; Kenya wants it to go horizontally east.

At least 254,811 Somali refugees from Dadaab camp have been voluntarily repatriated since 2013, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) says. The repatriation process started in November 2013 after a tripartite agreement between Kenya, the Somalia government and the UNHCR. The Head of UNHCR operations at Dadaab said the UNHCR office in Somalia takes charge of the refugees as soon as they cross over the Kenyan border, and their safety was its top priority. “We have to ensure the returnees are in safe hands at all times.” The UNHCR said on Wednesday, World Refugee Day, that the number of Somali refugees at Dadaab had fallen to 231,000.

South Sudan

President Salva Kiir was in Addis Ababa this week to attend the IGAD Summit on South Sudan. He also had a face-to-face meeting with the leader of the SPLM-IO, Dr. Riek Machar, their first for two years. **(See article)**

Information Minister, Michael Makuei Lueth announced on Monday (June 18) that the proposed budget for the 2018-19 fiscal year would be presented to MPs for approval next week. The budget of US\$584 million represents a 75% increase on the previous year.

UNMISS has praised Indian peacekeepers for helping restore peace and security in Akobo, ravaged by fighting that forced civilians to flee and devastated its economy. A previous base there had been closed down after being targeted in December 2013. UNMISS opened a temporary base in February this year to help protect civilians and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance. It was the first UN peacekeeping presence in rebel-held territory. The Indian commander says the results are very visible, there has been a construction boom and people are feeling safer since UNMISS arrived.

The European Commission announced on Tuesday (June 19) €68 million in humanitarian assistance for vulnerable communities in both Sudan and South Sudan. The Commission said it was stepping up its support as many people in Sudan and South Sudan faced massive humanitarian needs. Its aid would provide essential supplies such as food and healthcare as the conflict in South Sudan triggered an influx of refugees into neighbouring Sudan. It emphasized the importance of humanitarian workers being able to deliver aid safely, so they can help those most in need. In South Sudan, €45 million would target internally displaced persons and host communities; another €23 million would ensure protection of displaced communities, providing food assistance and improved access to basic services in Sudan. The EU has mobilised over €412 million in humanitarian aid for South Sudan since December 2013; and almost €450 million in humanitarian aid in Sudan since 2011.

Sudan

The Ministry of Oil and Gas said on Wednesday (June 20) that a delegation from South Sudan would arrive in Khartoum at the end of this month to discuss ways to scale up oil production. This would be in implementation of bilateral agreements to increase production in South Sudan's oil fields. Earlier this month, a Sudanese delegation visited Juba to discuss economic issues and Sudan and South Sudan ministers of petroleum discussed oil cooperation and resumption of production in South Sudan.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy addresses the House of Peoples' Representatives

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed presented a holistic report to an extraordinary session of the House of Peoples' Representatives on Monday (June 18), and also answered a series of questions from MPs. He outlined the successful steps being taken and the challenges that needed to be addressed in regards to the reform agenda he has been carrying out since his election. He touched upon a wide range of issues covering both the achievements that have been made and areas that needed attention and timely amelioration through a collective national effort.

In his report on the performance of the agricultural sector, the Prime Minister recapitulated the fact that the sector has so often been at the mercy of nature and climate change-induced calamities such as the recent El Niño oscillation cycle. He laid due emphasis on the need to urgently modernize and transform the sector to reduce its dependency on seasonal rainfall and increase productivity through irrigation and augment farming with animal husbandry.

On the industrial sector, Dr. Abiy emphasized the perennial challenges that have hampered the manufacturing sector playing a major role in the overall economy, failing to produce the required levels of export-oriented produce, or provide for steady generation of foreign currency. He noted the weak inter-sectoral linkage between higher education institutions and the manufacturing sector. To improve the overall performance of industry, Dr. Abiy said a number of reform measures were being undertaken, including enhancement of the symbiotic linkage between higher education research and development expertise and the manufacturing sector, as well as the improvement of the quality of education. Part of the education reform agenda was a roadmap under discussion to gradually bring about radical changes in the sector. Encouraging producers of export goods was also part of the industrial sector reform agenda, aimed to generate more foreign currency and improve the export trade balance. He said mobilization had diverted national resources from investment in growth. Parallel currency market and contraband trade coupled with supply side constraints attributed to crisis in the balance of payments, with external debt reaching to 27 billion dollars. He added that political volatility over the past three years had caused challenges to macroeconomic stability.

The Prime Minister gave some details of the plans to split EthioTelecom, the state-owned telecommunications company, and sell stakes in the two new entities to international operators and individuals. He said: "Certain amounts of shares will be sold gradually over 10, 20, 30 years, we are not giving it up in one go, it is not possible." He said, "Close to 5% of shares of state enterprises will go to Ethiopians here and abroad while significant shares will be sold to buyers with a track-record in the specific industries." Between 30% and 40% will

be sold to global telecommunications operators. He stressed there would be at least a year or two of “intensive study,” before this happen. He said lack of competition within the telecom industry was the reason for resource wastage and poor services to the public, adding: “Keeping it the way it is now is dangerous; transferring it like some other African countries can be disastrous too”.

Touching on the ongoing political reforms in the country, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy underlined the fact that the Government, in its efforts to ensure a wide diversity of opinions and proliferation of a multiparty system as well as widening the political space, had undertaken a series of concrete measures. Among these was the decision to minimize the vicissitudes of the political landscape. He noted the recent dialogues with opposition groups and the release of prisoners and the closing of many cases. Responding to questions about the danger of releasing from prison people charged as terrorists or for corruption, and on the constitutionalism of the releases, the Prime Minister said forgiveness covered not only those jailed but also police and officials engaged in torturing prisoners. . “Terrorism includes trying to stay in power through violation of the constitution,” he said. “Terrorism also includes trying to take power through illegally. ... Everyone has to respect the constitution...The constitution doesn’t say we should keep prisoners in darkrooms, torture and disable them... Our involvement in such acts is by itself committing terrorism.” He called on the leaders and members of the Ginbot 7, Oromo Liberation Front and Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), previously labelled as terrorist groups, to return. He said: “For those of you, who are based in Eritrea, What you are engaged in [trying to overthrow the regime through armed struggle] is an old fashion, it is not useful for our Ethiopia. I urge you to come and engage in peaceful dialogue.” He stressed that reconciliation and forgiveness were key to take the country out of the current crisis.

All this was being augmented by efforts to improve the freedom of expression and the operation of the media. He stressed that the Government had passed a series of measures to guarantee press freedom, of print, broadcast and cyber media. Dr. Abiy commended the “encouraging strides” being made. He also called for media practitioners to behave responsibly.

With regard to the legal and justice system, he said: "The judicial and law enforcement bodies have significant flaws," and there was simply not enough evidence on some of the persons detained on corruption charges. He said it was better to release a hundred guilty people than hold one person wrongfully accused. He said: "It is not possible to hold public office and advance a private business at the same time," and warned that attributing the practice of corruption only to certain groups or regions was dangerous. Dr. Abiy emphasized that, a number of practical efforts were being undertaken to improve the standard of justice through continuous and study-based reforms. He stressed the readiness of the Government to address public grievances over delivery as well as quality and accessibility of basic services such as electricity, water and telecommunications and the aim to revolutionize of quality service delivery through investigation and the eradication of the systemic challenges that have led to so many public complaints over corruption and sabotage.

The Prime Minister warned individuals and groups who were trying to sabotage his reforms by causing conflicts in different parts of the country: “Stealing and keeping quiet is one thing”, adding an additional headache was seeing people engaged in sabotage. He indicated the government was collecting evidence from various countries to recover stolen wealth and charge those involved. He also said he wanted a commission to study state boundaries within

the federation. The federal system had achieved monumental gains, but it was not perfect. Federalism, he said, was “created to address major contradiction, not localized conflicts.”

Speaking of Ethiopia’s diplomatic clout Ethiopia, the Prime Minister noted that diplomacy was one of the key priorities of the Government. It was doing its level best to further strengthen longstanding and historic bilateral and multilateral relationships as well as bridging any gaps in its diplomatic activities. He described his series of tours to neighboring and Middle Eastern countries as "an overwhelming success." One effect was the recent release of Ethiopians jailed in countries within the Middle East and North Africa, the leveraging of partnerships to solve the foreign currency deficit, the ongoing pivotal role Ethiopia plays in the peace and security of the region and beyond as well as its regional integration efforts with neighboring states. This included the government’s determination to bring the Ethio-Eritrean stalemate to an end. The Executive Committee of the EPRDF announced on June 5 that it was committed to an unconditional implementation of Algiers peace agreement with Eritrea. Defending the decision to end the border dispute with Eritrea, Dr. Abiy said firmly it was in the interest of both countries to end the standoff and focus on developing the affected areas. All this, he said, demonstrated the strides Ethiopia was making on the diplomatic front.

President Isaias responds to Prime Minister Abiy’s “olive branch”

President Isaias, speaking this week on the occasion of the celebration of Martyrs Day in Asmara on Wednesday (June 20) and referring to the “positive signals issued in these past days”, announced he would send a delegation to Addis Ababa. He said events and developments that had unfolded in the region in general and in Ethiopia in particular warranted appropriate attention. “For this reason, and outside any myopic considerations of public relations stunts and advantages,” he said, “we will send a delegation to Addis Ababa to gauge current developments directly and in depth as well as to chart out a plan for continuous future action.”

It was just over two weeks ago, on June 5, that Ethiopia announced its commitment to implement the Algiers Agreement and the decisions of the Ethio-Eritrea Border Commission unconditionally in order to resolve problems with Eritrea in a peaceful manner. Prime Minister Abiy underlined this on Monday (June 18) when he stressed that it was time to put an end to the situation between the two countries and bring jobs and prosperity to the people living along the border.

The Government quickly welcomed President Isaias’ response and promptly reaffirmed its readiness for talks with Eritrea. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed responded by expressing his readiness to welcome warmly and with goodwill the Eritrean delegation. He noted the "constructive response" of President Isaias saying it "is essential for the mutual benefit of both countries". In a specially recorded message, he thanked President Isaias for accepting his olive branch. Speaking in Tigrinya he said: “So that he can hear me, I want to say few words in his language,” `adding, “To our brother President Isaias Afwerki, I would like to convey my gratitude for the new view you expressed today. We will welcome the delegation you send not as guests but as Ethiopians, and I would like to inform you that I will receive them in my office and speak with them. Peace to the people of Eritrea and peace to the people of Ethiopia. I believe that peace is necessary now more than any time before and I assure you

we will work together [to achieve it]. This is great news for the Eritrean and Ethiopian people.”

In his speech, President Isaias said that as with the case of Eritrea, the people of Ethiopia also relished peace and harmony with their neighbour. There was nothing surprising or novel about this. He stressed that the positive signals issued recently could be seen as an expression of popular choice. The complementarity of both peoples and countries, their common bilateral interests and prosperity, were, he said, “sacrosanct objectives to which we have toiled and paid sacrifices for two generations. As such, it remains a priority for which we will be actively engaged.”

President Isaias’ decision to send a delegation to Addis Ababa has been widely applauded. Moussa Faki Mahamat, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, welcomed “the recent positive developments in the relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia”. These included Ethiopia’s announcement on June 5 of commitment to the full implementation of the Algiers Peace Agreement of December 12, 2000, as well President Isaias’s decision on June 20 2018, to dispatch a delegation to Addis Ababa for constructive engagement with Ethiopia. The Chairperson commended Ethiopia and Eritrea and their leaders, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and President Isaias Afwerki, respectively, “for these bold and courageous steps.” His statement encouraged them “to persevere on this path, in order to open a new chapter of cooperation and good neighbourliness between Eritrea and Ethiopia.” He stressed that sustainable peace between the two countries would have “a tremendously positive impact on peace and security, as well as development and integration, in the Horn of Africa region and the continent as a whole.” He said it would also provide a significant contribution to the goal of ending all conflicts and wars on the continent by 2020, as pledged by the African Heads of State and Government in May 2013. In line with pronouncements made by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, and within the framework of relevant continental instruments, the Chairperson of the Commission also reiterated “the African Union’s readiness to assist the two Member States, in whichever way deemed appropriate, to address the challenges at hand and in taking all steps required towards the full normalization of their relations.”

UN Secretary-General, António Guterres also welcomed “the positive steps taken by Ethiopia and now Eritrea to resolve outstanding issues in the normalization of their relations.” The Secretary-General commended the efforts of their leaders to achieve sustainable peace and good neighbourly relations and expressed the UN’s readiness to provide all support.

The EU High Representative/Vice president Ms. Frederica Mogherini said the recent announcement by Ethiopia and the decision by the President of Eritrea to send a delegation to Addis Ababa were “decisive steps towards the resolution of longstanding differences between the two countries”. She said the settlement of the border issue would benefit Ethiopia and Eritrea as well as stability in the Horn of Africa. Her statement added that in line with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission’s statement, the EU also stands ready – as a witness to the Algiers Peace Agreement – to assist Ethiopia and Eritrea on their path towards reconciliation.

A statement from the White House said the United States was encouraged by the progress that Ethiopia and Eritrea had made to resolve longstanding disputes and normalize relations. A durable peace will yield greater prosperity and security not only for the citizens of Ethiopia and Eritrea, but also for their neighbors, the United States, and the world. It commended

Ethiopia's statement on June 5, 2018 announcing that Ethiopia fully accepts the 2000 Algiers Agreement, issued in the context of positive political and economic reforms. The United States also welcomed Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki's June 20, 2018 commitment to send a delegation to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to advance the peace process. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and President Isaias Afwerki have demonstrated courageous leadership by taking these steps toward peace. It added that Ethiopia and Eritrea had a critical role to promote stability and prosperity in the Horn of Africa. The United States looked forward to a full normalization of relations and the realization of shared aspirations for both countries to enjoy enduring peace and development. As a witness to the Algiers Agreement, the United States stands ready to facilitate progress toward this goal.

South Sudan: IGAD Council of Ministers and Summit meetings

This week, the IGAD mediation concluded its final Intensive Interlinked Consultations (IIC) and provides a Final Bridging Proposal, for consideration by the IGAD Council of Ministers' meeting on Thursday (June 21). The Council, after deliberation and endorsement then recommended the Final Proposal to the IGAD Heads of State and Government later the same day. Hopes of progress had been raised by the first face-to-face meeting for two years taking place between President Salva Kiir and Dr. Riek Machar on Wednesday. (June 20).

At the opening of the Council of Ministers' meeting, the Chairman, Ethiopia's Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu told the 63rd Extra-Ordinary Session that the one-year-long Revitalization Process was at a very critical juncture. It had reached the stage of producing a document that would address the outstanding issues among the parties, particularly on responsibility-sharing and security arrangement mechanisms. The Final Bridging Proposal had been prepared after the Council had authorized the convening of one more round of Intensive Interlinked Consultation (IIC) with the parties to identify possible compromises and build consensus on the proposal. Dr. Workneh noted since the commencement of the High Level Revitalization Process the Council had held six extraordinary sessions and IGAD and other stakeholders had worked exceptionally hard to ensure the Process produced a meaningful outcome. He urged the parties to use this bridging proposal to put an end once and for all to the lingering misery of the people of South Sudan. He hoped the Assembly would endorse the proposal, the final version of which was presented to the Council by the IGAD Special Envoy Ambassador Ismael Wais.

Ambassador Wais said the recent three day Intensive Interlinked Consultation (IIC) aimed to get the parties to reach a consensus on the outstanding governance and security issues. As a result of their deliberations and discussions, IGAD had revised the bridging proposal for the Council's consideration and endorsement. During the Council subsequent deliberations, Mohamoud Ali Youssouf, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Djibouti praised the work of Ambassador Wais and his team, and expressed his strong hope that the Proposal would finally bring about the peace the South Sudanese aspire if the Parties could effectively use it. The Foreign Minister of Uganda Sam Kutesa underlined the urgent need to take punitive measures on individuals who obstruct the peace process. Ethiopia's State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene welcomed that the final proposal allowed all Parties to the Process to forge reasonable representation. She also commended both Government and SPLM-IO for agreeing that a two army military approach would no longer be viable to ensure

lasting and reliable security in South Sudan. The Foreign Ministers of Kenya, Somalia and Sudan were also present.

The Final Bridging Proposal, described by IGAD, as the “middle ground on the various negotiating positions” covering power-sharing, governance and security arrangements, was drawn up by the mediation to reach a consensus on the outstanding governance and security arrangements issues. The original bridging proposal offered details of outstanding governance issues – the composition of the transitional government, structure of government, responsibility sharing, number of states, size and composition of the parliament as well as embracing security issues, the permanent ceasefire and transitional security arrangement, the time-frame for reintegration of forces and approach to the formation of one national army, security for Juba during the transition, demilitarization of civilian centers, cantonment of forces and security sector reform. Following disagreements over the specifics, and further consultations, the Final Bridging Proposal clarified the specifics for numbers of ministers and deputy ministers, and for the responsibility-sharing formula for the cabinet at national and state levels and added guarantees for women’s participation in the different institutions of the transitional government, including a female vice-president and deputy-speaker.

The Council’s meeting was preceded by the face-to-face meeting of President Salva Kiir and Dr. Riek Machar on Wednesday evening. They had been invited by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy, who met with President Kiir after his arrival in Addis Ababa. President Kiir was accompanied by Minister of Cabinet Affairs, and the Ministers of Petroleum, Information and Gender and Social Welfare. They discussed the outcome of the Intensive Interlink Consultations and ways to move forward.

Ethiopia’s Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh also met Dr. Machar after his arrival in Addis Ababa. Dr. Workneh stressed that the face-to-face talks for the first time in two years was an important milestone in the ongoing peace process. He said although progress of the High Level Revitalization Process had been slow: “We are, to a great extent, encouraged by the progress we have witnessed over the past one year.” He underlined that Ethiopia, as Chair of IGAD, would continue to commit itself to play an unwavering role to ensure meaningful peace in South Sudan. Dr. Machar, noting his own and his Party’s keenness to bring about peace in South Sudan, said: “I am ready to do what is expected from me.” A Ministry statement said IGAD was keen to narrow the gaps between the two main parties to the revitalization process. It hoped the outcome of the face-to-face meeting would be to reach a compromise on three disputed issues: the composition of the government, the parliament, and the state governments, and provide a driving force towards the end of the war and the peace implementation process.

In a statement released Thursday, the head of SPLM-IO National Committee for Information and Public Relations Mabior Garang said the meeting between President Kiir and Dr. Machar was cordial and the two leaders discussed the prospects for peace in broad terms rather than the expected specifics. The next day the Sudanese Foreign ministry announced that President Kiir and Dr. Machar would meet again in Khartoum next week to continue their discussions. A statement said the IGAD Heads of State and Government “decided to start direct talks between the leaders of South Sudan in Khartoum on June 25, under the auspices of President Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir.” IGAD has made it clear it is determined to keep up pressure on the parties to end their conflict. This continuation of the meeting next week will allow for further preparations. “The issue will be more about reconciliation between the two leaders than bringing new amendments to the Bridging Proposal,” an IGAD official said.

The meeting of the IGAD Heads of State and Government's 32nd extra-ordinary Summit took place on Thursday evening after the Council of Ministers' meeting which recommended the adoption of the Final Bridging Proposal as the basis of the continuation of the High-Level Revitalization Forum's peace revitalization process. Opening the session, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy, the Chairman of IGAD, said: "The crisis in South Sudan has grown to become a crisis in each of our respective countries in the region. Our vital national security interests are at stake. Business, as usual, is over. We need to act and act now." Dr. Abiy told the Assembly: "There is no shortage of ideas on how to resolve the crisis. What we lack is the courage to translate those commitments to peace a reality. What we lack is leadership. "The Prime Minister, who supported endorsement of the Final Bridging Proposal, stressed that the suffering of South Sudanese should come to an end quickly. He said: "To achieve this goal, we cannot work like business as usual. Each second and each minute that passes with business, as usual, is a missed opportunity to save the lives," adding, "Now is the time, time for promises is over and time is not in our side," He urged the South Sudanese Parties to effectively use this opportunity to bring about lasting peace to South Sudan as well as to countries of the region whose national security interests are at stake. The summit was also attended by Dr. Machar and other South Sudanese opposition leaders, and President Kiir and Dr. Machar were applauded when they shook hands.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy's State Visit to Somalia

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed made a state visit to the Federal Republic of Somalia on Saturday (June 16) at the invitation of the President Mohamed Abdullahi of Somalia. During his visit, Dr. Abiy unveiled his vision of a single market where the two nations were tied together with a shared purpose and a shared respect for each other. The two leaders held talks on ways to elevate their brotherly ties to new heights. They agreed to renew commitments to further rejuvenate their relationship and urged the need for renewed engagement to intensify cooperation on commonly agreed comprehensive frameworks for forging robust diplomatic relations between the two countries. They, therefore, welcomed the formation of the Joint Cooperation Commission (JCC) at the Ministerial Level. They also emphasized that peace and stability were a prerequisite to mutual prosperity.

At their joint press conference after bilateral talks, Ethiopia's Prime Minister Dr. Abiy said "I'm here to open a new chapter, a new relationship and a new vision." He said his vision included: "a common trade area where people, ideas, goods and products move freely across borders, a future where we work to enlarge opportunities for our people and work for economic security that gives our children and grandchildren great hope." He said: "It is a future where we abolish trade barriers. It is a future where we will create a single market in our region. It is a future where we stimulate more products, more production, innovation and more private enterprise, both here in Mogadishu and in Addis Ababa." The Prime Minister said: "The resources of our region and the talent and capacity of our people can provide abundance for all, as long as we are prepared to recognize what we have and renounce fully violence and lawlessness." He went on: "This vision of the region offers a diversity of states, each developing all its culture, each solving its challenges according to its own way, but all tied together with a shared purpose and a respect for one another." He stressed: "I am here to tell you such a common project is quite possible. I am here to tell you we can weaken extremism and consolidate our partnership." In conclusion he emphasized that "we need to

adopt and implement a border and joint strategy to promote regional stability in the Horn of Africa. While we need to remain vigilant in our cultural and tourism effort, we will give equal attention to address the underlying diverse problems of violence, extremism in the region; regional conflict, lack of trade and investment and poverty.”

President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed said: “The visit today deepens our strong political and social relations,” adding “I’m committed to take our relationship to the next level.” He expressed his appreciation of the tremendous contribution made by Ethiopian troops in AMISOM and Ethiopia’s assistance in the fight against terrorism that could pose a threat to Somalia and the region at large. The President urged the implementation of full economic integration between the two countries to bring economic growth and promote investment through development of infrastructure, mentioning transportation, roads, railways and energy among other areas.

In a communiqué issued after their bilateral talks, the two leaders noted their discussions to renew their commitment to strengthen their brotherly bilateral relations spanning generations based on shared blood relations, values, history, culture and traditions and espoused by the principles of good neighbourliness, mutual respect and promotion of mutual interest. They reaffirmed their interest in renewed engagement to intensify relations based on an agreed comprehensive framework covering, robust diplomatic relations between Somalia and Ethiopia, with the Federal Republic of Somalia and Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia as the primary interlocutors with sovereign authority. To this end, the two leaders welcomed the formation of the previously agreed Joint Cooperation Commission (JCC) at Ministerial level and underlined its function to promote enhanced diplomatic and trade activities on a reciprocal basis that would involve regular bilateral engagement, exchange of attaches, and sponsorship of cultural, sport and educational exchanges.

To aid these strengthened relations and expand the diplomatic and consular presence in each other’s’ countries, the leaders agreed to open reciprocal diplomatic and consular offices in major cities in Somalia and Ethiopia. They also agreed to introduce measures to allow for the free movement of goods and services by introducing permits and expanding specific visas for travel for educational, sporting and cultural purposes to facilitate social integration between Somalia and Ethiopia.

In recognition of the potential for harmonious economic development for both nations, they stressed on economic growth, wealth creation and the promotion of investment in order to secure a prosperous future for their peoples, the countries of the Horn of Africa, and ultimately the African Continent. They, therefore, agreed to enhance the economic integration of their two nations while reaffirming the importance of economic security and development through utilization of their human and natural resources. This was the most effective means of tackling current security challenges.

They agreed to remove all trade and economic barriers and deepen and widen economic linkage through the development of critical infrastructure including ports and key highways linking the two nations. They further agreed to invest in logistics and service provision for ports that could serve both the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. To encourage and retain foreign investment to both countries and to the Horn of Africa, the leaders agreed on joint investment in four key seaports, and the construction of major road networks and arteries that could link Somalia to mainland Ethiopia. They agreed to set up a designated joint technical team to consider the details and timelines for the project. To take full advantage of a larger

market with more opportunities and greater economies of scale for business, the leaders agreed to encourage incentivized investments through the respective private sectors, in order to create jobs and facilitate full economic integration between the two countries.

President Mohamed and Prime Minister Dr. Abiy recognized that peace and stability were a prerequisite for the development and prosperity of both countries. They emphasized the importance of continued active cooperation between Somalia and Ethiopia to effectively counter terrorism and deal with cross-border security challenges. They condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and underscored the need to actively collaborate. The Federal Government of Somalia paid tribute to the bravery and sacrifices of AMISOM and recognized the prominent role of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces in this regard. While recognizing the continued commitment by the Troop-contributing countries to Somalia, both leaders reaffirmed AMISOM's critical role in Somalia's progress as the country moved into the next stage of taking security ownership across the country. While appreciating AMISOM's role in the peace and state-building efforts of Somalia, they expressly stated the need to guard closely against any risks, internal or external, of reversal of the gains achieved in Somalia. They called upon friendly countries to contribute positively to Somalia's peace and state-building efforts and unequivocally stated their support and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and the unity of both nations. They called upon all Somali stakeholders to work relentlessly towards the unity and cohesiveness of Somalia.

On international matters, the two leaders called for an effective multilateral system with a reformed and stronger United Nations. They also agreed on the importance of African solutions for African problems alongside the African Union and underlined the importance of fostering joint positions on international matters of mutual concern.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy paid tribute to Somalia's leadership for its commitment, determination and courage in overcoming challenges and making progress in implementing a robust reform agenda and moving Somalia firmly towards the path of sustainable, peace and development. President Mohamed, welcoming Dr. Abiy on his election as Prime Minister, commended him for his reform agenda and for his vision that was, he said, set to impact positively on his nation and on the Horn of Africa region. The President, also expressed his unreserved appreciation for Dr. Abiy, who, in turn, thanked the President of Somalia and the people of Somalia for the warm and gracious hospitality accorded to him and the members of his delegation during their visit to Somalia.

Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed of the UAE visits Ethiopia

Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces of Abu Dhabi, arrived in Addis Ababa for an official visit on Friday (June 15), the day of the celebration of Eid Al Fitr. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed headed a delegation that included Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs; Sheikh Hamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Chief of the Abu Dhabi Crown Prince's Court; Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation; Sheikh Theyab bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Chairman of Abu Dhabi Department of Transport; Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansouri, Minister of Economy; Reem bint Ibrahim Al Hashemy, Minister of State for

International Cooperation; Noura bint Mohammed Al Kaabi, Minister of Culture and Knowledge Development; Dr. Sultan bin Ahmad Sultan Al Jaber, Minister of State; Ali bin Hammad Al Shamsi and other senior officials.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, Al Nahyan, was received at Bole International Airport by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed, along with Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, Minister of Government Communications Ahmed Shide as well as other high-level Government officials. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed tweeted on arrival, “I was pleased today to arrive in Addis Ababa, a city of history, civilization and cultural diversity.” Dr Abiy then drove Sheikh Mohammed from the airport to Jubilee Palace, where the two sides discussed issues ranging from enhanced friendship and cooperation, business, economic and people-to-people ties to matters of regional and international peace and security. The Crown Prince was reciprocating the visit to the UAE by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy on May 19. Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh also visited the UAE in January when the two sides expressed their deep-seated commitment to give due emphasis to work together in the finance, investment and employment sectors.

A number of Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) to strengthening bilateral partnerships and open new avenues for cooperation between the two countries were signed. These included a MoU for reciprocal exemption from pre-entry visa requirements for holders of diplomatic passport in both countries. This was signed by Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, UAE Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh. Sheikh Abdullah and Dr. Workneh also signed an MOU for the formation of a joint consular committee with the aim of creating a mechanism for exchange of information and coordination on consular affairs, as well as to address issues relating to their respective citizens. Another MoU on tourism cooperation was signed by Ms. Fozia Amin, Ethiopian Minister of Culture and Tourism and UAE’s Minister of Economy, Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansouri. Ms. Fozia also signed another MoU with Noura bint Mohammed Al Kaabi, UAE Minister of Culture and Knowledge Development on cultural cooperation, aiming at establishing a solid foundation for cooperation on the field of culture and knowledge development, especially in the area of antiquities, arts and libraries.

A MoU on economic cooperation was signed by Sultan bin Saeed Al Mansouri, UAE’s Minister of Economy, and Dr. Abraham Tekeste, Ethiopian Minister of Finance and Economic Cooperation. This allowed for the facilitation of all forms of economic and technical cooperation between the two countries. This also covered an agreement for the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD), the leading UAE entity for development aid, to allocate an AED11 billion (US\$3 billion) economic aid package to the Ethiopian government to support sustainable socio-economic development. The ADFD deposited AED3.7 billion (US\$1 billion) in the National Bank of Ethiopia to bolster the country's fiscal and monetary policy, as well as to enhance the liquidity and foreign exchange reserves of the Central Bank. The remaining AED7.3 billion (US\$2 billion) is to stimulate the Ethiopian economy and encourage joint productive investments, in such areas as industrial parks, manufacturing, hospitals, hotels and malls. Mohammed Saif Al Suwaidi, Director General of ADFD, and Teklewold Atnafu, Governor of the National Bank of Ethiopia, also signed a MoU outlining the terms of the funding at a ceremony attended by government officials and senior representatives of the two countries.

Speaking on the occasion, Mohammed Saif Al Suwaidi said: “Under the wise leadership of the UAE President His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and the directives of

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, ADFD contributes to the UAE's efforts to assist developing countries in achieving sustainable development and improving socio-economic conditions." He added: "In addition to helping Ethiopia overcome the challenges it faces; the funding will encourage the UAE private sector to enter the Ethiopian market and benefit from the investment opportunities it offers." He also noted the funding would boost Ethiopia's gross national income and revitalize key strategic sectors.

Ato Teklewold praised the ADFD's role in the UAE's ongoing efforts to support Ethiopia's national priorities. He said the Ethiopian government welcomed joint investments with UAE's investors across diverse fields. He noted that ADFD's contribution to the development of Ethiopia dated back to 2012, and since then the Fund had disbursed AED36.7 million (US\$10 million) towards financing the Gedo Fincha-Limlem Beria Road project. This 80 km. road serves the Oromia Region, facilitating the movement of vehicles and reducing transportation costs.

AU officials, diplomats see how Chinese-built railway drives development and integration

The Chinese Mission to the African Union on Friday last week (June 15) organized a train trip on the Ethiopia-Djibouti standard gauge railway for AU officials well as African and other international diplomats. The occasion also included a visit to a Chinese-built industrial park in Adama town, south of Addis Ababa, allowing officials and diplomats to see projects being carried out with Sino-Africa cooperation as well as the cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative. Ambassador Kuang Weilin, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the African Union noted that "The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) Summit in Beijing will be held very soon, and the theme of the summit will be the Belt and Road Initiative and Africa's Development." That, he said, was why the Mission had organized the trip "so that we can have the opportunity to take a look at the railway, to see the early harvest of the Belt and Road Initiative."

Ambassador Rossette Nyirinkindi Kataungye, Technical Advisor on Regional Integration of the Bureau of the AU Commission Chairperson said the railway was "an excellent project". She said "It is a really wonderful project that shows that Africa is integrating, when you have country like Djibouti, which has the coastline and a port that we can use; this is a way of having shared resources, shared vision." It was a demonstration carried out with China's commitment to supporting Africa in realizing the continent's aspirations for development and integration.

Ambassador Katungye said China has proved that it is a "very good" partner for Africa's development as well as cultural ties. The Chinese, she said, "have demonstrated that they can stand by us to achieve our aspirations; and especially on infrastructure, this is a very good example of that very good cooperation." She added that many African countries have also embarked on similar programs for instance in East Africa building a Standard gauge railway, again with cooperating with Exim Bank (China).

Dr. Levi Uche Madueke, Head of the African Union Strategic Partnerships office under the Bureau of the AU Commission Chairperson, said the Ethio-Djibouti railway project was the product of Sino-Africa cooperation, aiming at mutual benefits. He said: "What we are witnessing today is a very good thing; it makes us happy, because we are beginning to realize

our vision which is about African development and integration.” He described the railway project as “a part of the cooperation program that we have, coming into reality; because linking Ethiopian people to Djibouti, is going to facilitate a lot of things; it is going to boost the development process; it is going to boost issues related to trade; even people to people exchange. It is very good thing that we are experiencing today.”

ADC, UNDP and FAO Support for drought-affected areas in Somali Regional State

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), announced on Tuesday this week (June 19) that the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC), UNDP and the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) were partnering with the Government to launch a two-year project in the Somali Regional State to provide livelihood support for households affected by drought. The project will target over 20,000 households, 125,400 people, in ten woredas in the Dollo and Korahe zones of the Somalia Regional State. These are arid and semi-arid areas, characterized by high temperatures and low and erratic rainfall, and have faced recurrent and protracted droughts, spanning from 2015 to 2017, causing scarcity of feed and water for livestock. Most of the targeted households have been forced IDP camps with substantial loss of sheep and goats as well as cattle. Agro-pastoral households have also been negatively affected by the extended drought and unable to harvest any crops. Depletion of livelihood assets and extreme food insecurity resulting in internal displacement have resulted in a sharp increase in the population requiring humanitarian assistance.

Funding for the project includes US\$3.48 million dollars from the Government of Austria, channeled through the Multi-Partner Trust Fund, and another 400,000 dollars from UNDP and FAO. The project activities will be implemented in partnership with the relevant regional bureaus. These include the Regional Water Resource Development Bureau, Regional Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Bureau, the Regional Pastoral and Livestock Bureau and the Regional Agricultural Development Bureau and Jigjiga and Kebredhar Universities as well other stakeholders at woreda level.

The project will focus on stabilizing livelihoods most threatened by the current drought, and enhancing the resilience of pastoral and agro-pastoralists against disasters and climate variability. Activities will include enhanced feed security, improved animal health services, improved agricultural productivity and natural resources management through using piloted climate smart technologies, increased food security and income through diversifying livelihoods and enhancing the capacity of both regional and woreda institutions to handle climate and disaster risk reduction, adaptation, preparedness and response. It will also provide for supplementary livestock feed for core breeding stock, train community members and extension agents on feed resources management and utilization, provide animal health services for 60, 000 animals, build up the capacity of community health workers and Government animal health offices, establish sustainable water sources and facilities, including the development and rehabilitation of shallow, hand-dug and deep wells, as well as support the restoration of 30 000 hectares of degraded rangelands.