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*News in brief*

**Africa and the African Union**

UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, in an article last week described Africa as a Continent of Hope. He said: "Far too often, the world views Africa through the prism of problems. When I look to Africa, I see a continent of hope, promise and vast potential." (**See article**)

The African Union (AU) and IGAD congratulated President Mohammed Abdullahi Mohamed on his election as President of Somalia. The AU also commended Hassan Sheikh Mohamud for gracefully accepting the election outcome. It applauded the work of the Independent Electoral Teams and paid tribute to AMISOM and Somali security forces. The AU reaffirmed its commitment to work with the leaders and people of Somalia. IGAD Executive Secretary, Mahboub Maalim, said IGAD believed the President's commitment and dedication would help Somalia achieve peace, stability and prosperity.

IGAD's Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) on Monday (February 16) opened the Greater Horn of Africa Climate Forum (GHACOF 45). Ethiopia's Deputy Minister of Water, Irrigation, and Electricity, Engineer Wondimu Tekale presided over the opening with the Director of Agriculture and Environment Division-IGAD, Mohamed Moussa, and representatives from UK's Department for International Development and USAID. (**See article**)

The European Union announced the launch of a \$47.46 billion Africa Economic Development Fund this week aimed at helping Nigeria and other African countries drive economic growth and development. It is developing a strategic framework for the implementation and disbursement of the fund and designing security measures to ensure it is effectively and efficiently disbursed. The aim is to help reduce the number of refugees arriving in Europe and disbursements from the fund would be available in the first quarter 2018.

**Ethiopia**

President Dr. Mulatu Teshome left for Ankara on Monday (February 6) for a state visit to Turkey at the invitation of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The delegation included Foreign Minister,

Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu and other officials. President Dr. Mulatu met with President Erdogan to discuss ways of boosting Turkish Investment in Ethiopia and infrastructure development as well as the fight against terrorism. The two sides agreed on the need to further up-grade their existing strategic partnership. **(See article)**

Ethiopia completed its first month as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council in January 1, emphasizing its vision of peace and security in Africa. It contributed positively to the discussions on Africa, supporting the African Union's Peace and Security Council and regional efforts to resolve conflicts on the continent, consulting regularly with the other two African members of the Council to coordinate their efforts on issues of common interest and concern to Africa. **(See article)**

Prime Minister Hailemariam sent a message of warmest congratulations to the newly elected President of Somalia, Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed 'Farmajo'. He said the election was a major achievement for the people of Somalia and a landmark in the process of building peace and stability in the country. He said it would further strengthen the longstanding friendly relations and the strategic partnership existing between the two countries. He assured President Mohamed that he could always count on Ethiopia for all necessary support and added his best wishes for the future progress, peace, and prosperity for the people of Somalia.

The Minister of Mines, Petroleum and Natural Gas, Motuma Mekassa, attended the four-day "Investing in African Mining Indaba" in South Africa this week. This is an annual conference dedicated to the development of mining interests in Africa. **(See article)**

Co-organized by the Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI) and Morocco's OCP Policy Center, the 1st Ethio-Moroccan Strategic Economic Policy Dialogue opened on Wednesday (February 8) under the theme: "Growth Strategies and Industrial Policies towards Structural Transformation in Africa". Policy makers, economists, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders attended the two-day forum.

The National Disaster Risk Management Commission said on Wednesday that the government had allocated US\$47 million to mitigate drought in pastoral areas. It is distributing cereals, edible oil and other support as well as providing livestock with fodder. The Commission said the total number of people needing relief support had fallen to 5.6 million. **(See article)**

Co-organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, an Ethio-Indian Business Forum was held on Friday last week (February 3) **(See article)**

Mr. Amadou Allahoury, FAO Representative in Ethiopia, said on Monday (February 6) that during 2017 FAO aims to support one million households in southern and southeastern pastoral areas with livestock feed supplementation, animal health provision, animal destocking and cash-for-work schemes to rehabilitate water points. Mr. Allahoury said the impact of the drought was "massive," and providing fodder and supplementary feeding for core-breeding animals was critical.

French Grain Co-operative Group, Axereal, announced on Tuesday (February 7) that it is to build a malt processing factory in Ethiopia. This will have an annual capacity of 60,000 tonnes, and is expected to start production by the end of 2018. It said the market for beer is growing in emerging countries, and in Africa in particular, and the Axereal Group “will leverage its expertise by working alongside its brewing customers to develop local barley and malt production in these countries.”

## **Eritrea**

President Isaias Afeworki gave his annual interview in the state of the world at the end of last month, offering long and discursive analysis of the threats to Eritrea, and this year providing some indication of his planned ‘constitutional’ ideas for Eritrea’s future. **(See article).**

## **Kenya**

The High Court in Kenya has blocked the Government's bid to close the Dadaab camp describing it as illegal, discriminatory and unconstitutional. The Government announced the closure last year but the deadline for closure was extended until May. The Kenya National Commission on Human Rights and lobby group Kituo Cha Sheria challenged the decision in court. The Government is likely to appeal the court's decision, but the ruling means it has to replace mechanisms to restore regular operations at the camp as the refugee department responsible for the camp had already been closed down.

## **Somalia**

Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed ‘Farmajo’ was elected President of the Federal Republic of Somalia on Tuesday (February 8) in Mogadishu defeating outgoing president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. The newly inaugurated Parliament of 275 lower house MPs and 54-member senate voted for the president in a secret ballot. After taking the oath of office, President Mohamed Abdullahi, said “This victory represents the interest of the Somali people. This victory belongs to Somali people, and this is the beginning of the era of the unity, the democracy of Somalia and the beginning of the fight against corruption.” **(See article)**

President Mohamed Abdullahi ‘Farmajo’, held meetings on Thursday (February 9) with the Special representatives of the United Nations, Michael Keating, and the African Union, Ambassador Madeira. They congratulated the President and said they looked forward to a “strong partnership in addressing the hopes and needs of the people of Somalia.” The International community has called on the upcoming new Federal government to respond to the country’s worsening drought crisis and avert possible famine.

Arab League Secretary General Ahmed Aboul Gheit in a statement on Thursday (February 9) said the election of President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo, completed the formation of all organs of the state, and was a step forward in building a democratic, secure and stable Somalia. The Arab League sent an observer team for both presidential and parliamentary elections.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey congratulated President Mohamed Abdullahi in a telephone call after his election and said Turkey attached great importance to stability and prosperity in Somalia.

The Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, Ambassador Madeira congratulated both President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohammed 'Farmajo' on his election and the government and people of Somalia for the successful completion of the electoral process.

The US State Department congratulated the people of Somalia on the successful conclusion of their national electoral process and said it looked forward to working closely with President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed. It said the transition represented an important step forward for the country and looked forward to the timely formation of a new government.

UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson also congratulated Mohamed Abdullahi 'Farmajo' on his election and said the UK remained committed to supporting the Somali people and he looked forward to agreeing a new partnership between Somalia and the international community.

## **South Sudan**

President Kiir has threatened major offensives should the armed opposition continue to reject his calls for national dialogue. Addressing a public rally on Tuesday (February 7) he said "If they don't listen to the voices which call for peace, I will declare war against them." He said the only viable alternative to end the ongoing war was to resolve existing differences through a national dialogue initiative. He said sessions of the national dialogue would start after members of the national legislature returned from recess at the end of the month.

President Salva Kiir will seek re-election next year, an official spokesperson said on Wednesday (February 8) when elections are expected to be held. He said the President was "a uniting factor. If he leaves power now, the whole country will collapse." President Kiir was elected in 2010 and the elections set for 2015 were delayed because of the outbreak of civil war in December 2013.

President Salva Kiir speaking at a religious function held in Yei town on Monday (February 6) has ordered the Minister of Defence to take extreme measures against soldiers who commit human right abuses and atrocities.

The United Nations Special Adviser on Genocide Prevention, Adama Dieng, said on Tuesday this week (February 7) that at least 52,000 South Sudanese had fled into Uganda last month as continued fighting risked creating a situation of mass atrocities. He said he was particularly alarmed by the situation in Kajo-Keji in Central Equatoria with refugees giving accounts of the killing of civilians, destruction of homes and cases of sexual violence.

The chairman of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, Festus Mogae, opened the February JMEC Plenary, in Juba, on Wednesday (February 8) expressing concern and dismay at the outbreak of fighting in South Sudan since the New Year. He said it is not credible for the Parties to the Agreement to preach peace with one hand and simultaneously wage war around the

country with the other. He also stressed the necessity for a fully inclusive and representative political process, “involving all the estranged Parties to the Agreement, so that all Parties and communities see that their interests are being accommodated”.

A delegation of Sudanese lawmakers visited Juba this week for talks with South Sudanese MPs on ways for the two countries to cooperate. The Sudan delegation was led by Suleiman Adam, the Speaker of the Council of States. The speaker of South Sudan’s Council of States, Joseph Bol Chan, said the Sudanese delegation would meet President Kiir and other government officials during their three day visit.

## **Sudan**

In a broadcast interview in Dubai at the weekend, President al-Bashir said that “Egyptian intelligence is offering support to Sudanese opponents” and that his government had repeatedly demanded that Cairo should stop supporting Sudanese opposition groups. He denied that Sudan was hosting any leaders from Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood, adding “our policy is against harboring any hostile activities against any country.”

The Security Council unanimously adopting resolution 2340 (2017) on Wednesday (February 8) extended the mandate of the Panel of Experts charged with monitoring sanctions in Darfur until 12 March 2018. It underlined the need for the Panel to have full access to the region and insisted the Government of Sudan remove all restrictions imposed on it. The resolution emphasized the need for all the armed groups join the African Union-led negotiations for peace and expressed readiness to impose targeted sanctions on the rebels obstructing the peace process. In a report last month, the Panel acknowledged the "overall reduction" of violence in Darfur.

The Co-chair of the Sudan and South Sudan Joint Border Commission, Abdallah al-Sadiq, said on Wednesday this week (February 8) that 80% of the 2,400 kilometers border between the two countries had been marked on paper, and the Commission would meet in Addis Ababa in April to resolve issues hindering the demarcation process and identification of the baseline for the demilitarized security zone (zero line). The claimed disputed areas include Abyei, the 14-Mile area, Joudat Al-Fakhar, Jebel al-Migainais, Kaka, and KafiaKingi enclave.

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## ***Ethiopia and Turkey reaffirm cooperation in investment, peace and security***

On a five-day official visit to Turkey this week, Ethiopia’s President Dr. Mulatu Teshome met with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to discuss a wide variety of issues. These included further expanding Turkish Investment in Ethiopia and infrastructure development as well as the fight against terrorism.

At a joint press conference held in Ankara at the Presidential complex after their meeting, both President Mulatu and President Erdogan noted that Ethiopia and Turkey agreed on the need to further up-grade their already existing excellent strategic partnership. President Erdogan said Turkey and Ethiopia were determined to wipe out the “tumor” of the Fetullah Terrorist

Organization (FETO). Referring to the defeated coup attempt of July 15 last year which Turkey says was staged by the Fetullah Gulen Terrorist Organization's (FETO), headed by the U.S. based leader Fetullah Gulen, President Erdogan said, "Ethiopia is our friend who sees the criminal face of FETO, which poses a great threat to humanity." He noted, "I would like to express this point in particular. After the July 15 coup attempt, Ethiopia was one of the first countries to explain its support and solidarity to us." Turkey has requested a number of countries to shut down institutions linked to the FETO network since the July 15 coup attempt and Turkish diplomats have held hundreds of meetings around the world to explain the structure of FETO and its vast network, including the schools it runs around the world. President Dr. Mulatu Teshome praised Turkey for the courage and determination shown defending democracy on July 15. He said Ethiopia would transfer schools linked to FETO to Turkey's Maarif Foundation to support Turkey's terror fight.

At the press conference, President Erdogan also reaffirmed that Turkey is a strategic partner to East Africa particularly in the economic sector. Accordingly, the President further noted "hopefully, we will begin negotiations on preferential trade agreements very soon in line with this objective." President Dr. Mulatu commended the meetings held with President Erdogan as "fruitful and productive". Noting that both countries were leaders in the fight against terrorism, President Mulatu emphasized "we are partners in the struggle to fight terrorism, albeit in different regions." He further underlined: "We have recognized that additional efforts are needed to further strengthen and deepen cooperation through economic interdependence by expanding trade and investments." President Dr. Mulatu added: "We discussed how to take new actions to further enhance Turkish investment in Ethiopia in much needed areas of infrastructure, manufacturing and energy." President Dr. Mulatu appealed to Turkish investors to come and invest in Ethiopia as there are vast opportunities available in the country.

Concerning trade, President Dr. Mulatu noted that the two countries were committed to increase the value of their volume of trade from US\$500 million to \$1 billion. Speaking about Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's earlier visit to Ethiopia while Prime Minister in 2005, he said that had been a "turning point" for not only Ethiopia but for the whole of Africa. Ankara declared 2005 as the Year of Africa, and Turkey was accorded observer status by the African Union. , Turkey's official policy of "opening to Africa" gained new momentum. President Mulatu noted that relations between Ethiopia and Turkey had also become significantly stronger after that visit.

President Dr. Mulatu also held successful and fruitful meetings with other senior Turkish officials including the Speaker of the Grand National Assembly of Republic of Turkey, the Prime Minister and with other high-level government dignitaries. On the second day of his visit, President Dr. Mulatu and his delegation, which includes Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, visited the Ataturk Museum in Ankara. The President has also laid the cornerstone for the construction of the Embassy of the Ethiopia's chancery and residence in Ankara at a ceremony attended by Foreign Minister, Dr. Workneh and other high level Ethiopian and Turkish Government officials.

During his visit, President Dr. Mulatu was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Economics by Istanbul Kemerburgaz University. He also received a Certificate of Friendship from Ankara University for his contributions to developing relations between Turkey and African states

during his seven-year ambassadorship in Turkey. Visiting Ankara University, President Mulatu expressed his pleasure to see Ethiopian students enrolled at Turkey's first public university and the way they were building bridges between Ethiopia and Turkey. Noting that Ethio-Turkish ties were growing significantly, he said that the time during which he worked as an ambassador, between 2006 and 2013, had given him the chance to see how the relations between Turkey and Ethiopia grew steadily stronger day by day. He said further cooperation in education would be a significant contribution to existing excellent bilateral relations. The President also praised Ankara for standing firm against the failed July 15 coup attempt last year and for protecting democracy.

Professor Erkan Ibis, President of Ankara University, said that Ankara and Ethiopia's Addis Ababa University had signed on Wednesday (February 8) a Memorandum of Understanding to devise joint academic, educational, scientific and cultural programs. He said that in addition to building bridges between the two nations, these programs would also show the world that Islam cannot be linked to terrorism, but instead peace and science.

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### ***Somalia Parliament elects Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed 'Farmajo' as President***

Somalia's long-drawn out eighteen month electoral process came to an end on Wednesday (February 9) with the election of Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed 'Farmajo' as President to succeed Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. The electoral process, which involved the choosing of 275 members of the House of the People and 54 Senators, was affected by a number of postponements. There were 21 candidates standing for president including the previous president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, and his predecessor, Sheikh Sharif Ahmed. In the first round of voting Hassan Sheikh Mohamud received the largest number of votes (88) with Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed getting 72, but in the second round of voting by the 329 members of the joint session of parliament, Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed took an impressive lead, with 184 votes leaving his two remaining opponents, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and Sheikh Sharif Ahmed to get only 97 and 22 respectively. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud then conceded, saying "History was made, we have taken this path to democracy", removing the need for a third round of voting, and Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed was declared President. In his speech after he took the oath of office, President Mohamed Abdullahi said: "This is the beginning of unity for the Somali nation, the beginning of the fight against Shabaab and corruption; ... This victory represents the interest of the Somali people. This victory belongs to Somali people, and this is the beginning of the era of the unity, the democracy of Somalia and the beginning of the fight against corruption". He stressed that he hoped that next time around, Somalis would elect their president directly through one-person-one vote instead of indirectly through the parliament.

The result was greeted with acclamation in the streets of Mogadishu. Mohamed Abdullahi was a popular former Prime Minister for eight months in 2010-2011 during the presidency of Sheikh Sharif Ahmed. During his premiership he implemented the first monthly stipends for members of the Somali National Armed Forces and members of the armed forces celebrated his success on Wednesday with celebratory gunfire in the streets of Mogadishu. As prime minister he halved the number of ministers in the cabinet, worked on the country's new constitution and was closely

involved in defusing clan-related tension in several regions as well as establishing an anti-corruption commission, prohibiting unnecessary trips abroad by members of government and putting in place an audit of government property and vehicles. He lost his position in 2011, after months of disputes between the President and the Speaker of Parliament over the date for elections. They struck a deal to postpone the date; the price was Farmajo's resignation, and he agreed to step down in "the interest of the Somali people and the current situation in Somalia". A few months later, he and former members of his cabinet set up the Tayo ("Quality") political party, and on his Facebook page, he said that the party's priority was "encouraging the repatriation of Somali diasporans so as to assist in the post-conflict reconstruction process."

Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed 'Farmajo' in his campaign speeches indicated his intention to restructure the country's security and financial institutions and deal with corruption. This struck a popular note among the youth and women in particular and when he returned to Mogadishu last year he was greeted with an impressively large crowd at the airport on arrival. President Mohamed Abdullahi, who is 55, was born in Mogadishu though his family came from the southern Gedo region. He has lived for years in the United States where he studied history and political science and where he worked after he resigned from the premiership. He worked in the foreign ministry before the overthrow of Siad Barre's regime in 1991 and at the Somali Embassy in Washington. He is from the Marehan/Darod clan.

Prime Minister Hailemariam sent a message of warmest congratulations to the new President, welcoming the fact that the Presidential election had been conducted peacefully and successfully. He described this as a major achievement for the people of Somalia and a landmark in the process of building peace and stability in the country. Prime Minister Hailemariam said he was convinced that Mr. Mohamed's election would further strengthen the longstanding friendly relations and the strategic partnership existing between the two countries. He also assures President Mohamed that he could always count on Ethiopia for all necessary support as he leads Somalia into what "would be a bright future for its people". He added his best wishes for the future progress, peace, and prosperity for the people of Somalia.

Ethiopia has made significant contributions to the progress of Somalia in its efforts to achieve peace and security and develop new governmental institutions over the last decade or so. It has assisted in Somalia's state formation and in capacity building at both state and federal level, as well as assisting in improving security and to the formation and training of the Somali national army. Ethiopia, as chair of IGAD, called the historic IGAD Summit in Mogadishu in September last year, underlining the progress being made both in improved security and in the electoral process. It emphasized, as Prime Minister Hailemariam noted at the time, that Somalia had entered a new phase of stability. This was emphatically underlined by the successful completion of this Somali-owned and operated electoral process, which has now culminated in the election of a new Parliament and a new President. Ethiopia and IGAD will now work closely to support the new government, helping stabilize the country and assisting, as required, in dealing with any continuing issues of peace and security, terrorism and governance.

The United Nations Assistance Mission UNSOM also underlined that the UN and the wider international community were ready to assist the new President in addressing the myriad challenges that await his Government. UNSOM Spokesperson Joseph Contreras said the election

was “an historic milestone in the country’s emergence from years of chaos and civil war. We feel the process, though flawed in some respects by allegations of corruption and manipulation of some of the parliamentary voting, overall, produced some very positive results,” claiming the new Federal Parliament was the most representative and legitimate national legislature in the history of the country. He welcomed that the voting was conducted in a peaceful, orderly and transparent manner and according to the rules stipulated by Somalia’s provisional Federal Constitution.

Other messages of congratulation came from the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia, Ambassador Francisco Madeira; He said: “The electoral process journey was intricate, requiring negotiations and compromises to overcome the challenges that once appeared insurmountable. On behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, I congratulate you all for making this historical moment a reality.” He appealed to the new president and all leaders to work together in uniting the country by pursuing reconciliation to enable Somalia tackle the political and socio-economic challenges affecting the country, and he called on the “new government that will be formed, to use the next four years in office, to enhance reconciliation and unity. The African Union remains committed to supporting you in your efforts to stabilise the country.”

There are certainly some substantial challenges facing the new President, revolving around a number of critical issues including security, corruption, good governance and drought as some of the most immediate concerns. After the President is officially inaugurated in the coming days, he is expected to name a prime minister who in turn will form a cabinet that must seek the endorsement of the parliament before its members can start work. During his campaign trail, President Mohamed Abdullahi said one of his urgent priorities would be to help the drought-affected. The UN currently estimates the number of people at crisis and emergency food insecurity at 2.9 million.

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#### *A Continent of Hope; the UN Secretary-General on Africa*

UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, in an article for Africa Renewal Online on February 3, gives his view of Africa, describing it as a Continent of Hope. He says: “Far too often, the world views Africa through the prism of problems. When I look to Africa, I see a continent of hope, promise and vast potential. I am committed to building on those strengths and establishing a higher platform of cooperation between the United Nations and the leaders and people of Africa. This is essential to advancing inclusive and sustainable development and deepening cooperation for peace and security.” He said this was the message he carried to the recent African Union Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, his first major mission as United Nations Secretary-General. He also said he had come in “a spirit of profound solidarity and respect”, adding “I am convinced that the world has much to gain from African wisdom, ideas and solutions”

The Secretary-General said: “I also brought with me a deep sense of gratitude. Africa provides the majority of United Nations peacekeepers around the world. African nations are among the

world's largest and most generous hosts of refugees. Africa includes some of the world's fastest growing economies. The recent resolution of the political crisis in the Gambia once again demonstrated the power of African leadership and unity to overcome governance challenges and uphold democracy, human rights and the rule of law. I left the Summit more convinced than ever that all of humanity will benefit by listening, learning and working with the people of Africa.

“We have the plans in place to build a better future. The international community has entered the second year of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, an all-out effort to tackle global poverty, inequality, instability and injustice. Africa has adopted its own complementary and ambitious plan: Agenda 2063. For the people of Africa to fully benefit from these important efforts, these two agendas need to be strategically aligned.

“It starts with prevention. Our world needs to move from managing crises to preventing them in the first place. We need to break the cycle of responding too late and too little. Most of today's conflicts are internal, triggered by competition for power and resources, inequality, marginalization and sectarian divides. Often, they are inflamed by violent extremism or provide the fuel for it. The United Nations is committed to working hand-in-hand with partners wherever conflict or the threat of conflict endangers stability and well-being. But prevention goes far beyond focusing solely on conflict. The best means of prevention and the surest path to durable peace is inclusive and sustainable development.

“We can speed progress by doing more to provide opportunities and hope to young people. More than three out of five Africans are under 35 years of age. Making the most of this tremendous asset means more investment in education, training, decent work and engaging young people in shaping their future. We must also do our utmost to empower women so they can play a full role in sustainable development and sustainable peace. I am pleased that the African Union has consistently placed a special focus on gender equality and women's empowerment. I have seen it again and again: When we empower women, we empower the world.”

The Secretary-General said: I travelled to Africa as a partner, friend and committed advocate for changing the narrative about this diverse and vital continent. Crises represent at best a partial view. But from a higher platform of cooperation, we can see the whole picture, one that spotlights the enormous potential and remarkable success stories in every corner of the African continent. With that perspective, I have no doubt we can win the battle for sustainable and inclusive development which are also the best weapons to prevent conflict and suffering, allowing Africa to shine even more vibrantly and inspire the world.”

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### ***Ethiopia in the Security Council: “strategic partnerships to uphold global peace”***

Ethiopia began its two-year term as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council on January 1, emphasizing its vision of peace and security in Africa and beyond. Enhancing strategic partnerships, giving a chance to political solutions, upholding the spirit of compromise, capitalizing on efforts at dialogue and coordination, supporting constructive engagement, and a comprehensive approach to security challenges, were key points underlined by Ethiopia to deal with the challenges facing the agenda for peace. During the month, the Council considered a number of African issues and also interacted with the new Secretary-General on his vision and

his priorities on conflict prevention and sustaining peace. It also held its quarterly open debate on Middle East and the Palestinian Question as well as discussed other issues including West Africa and the Sahel, Mali, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, Colombia, Cyprus, Yemen, and the Iranian Ballistic Missile Test, and Non-Proliferation. This allowed Ethiopia to contribute positively to the discussions particularly on the range of issues related to Africa. It supported the African Union's Peace and Security Council and regional efforts to resolve conflicts on the continent and consulted regularly with the other two African members of the Council to coordinate efforts on issues of common interest and concern to Africa. As much as possible, it also worked to consult with the countries involved, to listen and understand their concerns.

Conscious of the evolving political and economic dynamics and the linked nature of common and emerging security threats and risks, Ethiopia has mainstreamed networked strategic partnerships with regional and sub-regional organizations. Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu emphasized this during the open debate on the maintenance of international peace and security held on January 10. He stressed that maintaining the strategic partnerships between the AU and the UN across the whole spectrum of conflict cycles, ranging from prevention, peacekeeping and special political missions to conflict resolution and peace-building, was the key to advance UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' agenda for peace, focused on conflict prevention and sustaining peace. Ethiopia along with the two other African members of the Council, in the spirit of Pan-Africanism, advocated the need to employ a comprehensive, coordinated and holistic approach to address security and humanitarian challenges and ensure sustainable peace. It also emphasized the principles of ownership and partnership as key elements to ensure sustainable peace in the region. It underlined the need for coordination of efforts between the UN, the AU and the respective regional mechanisms. To stave off the security challenges under new conditions, Ethiopia encouraged the need to support countries of the region and existing security mechanisms in sharing intelligence and in building up capacity to identify the network of terrorist elements and combat terrorism.

Following a briefing on UNAMID on January 12, Ethiopia appreciative of the progress made in Darfur recently, stressed the long-term stability of Darfur could only be secured by addressing the root causes of the conflict and achieving a durable political solution. It appreciated the Sudanese government and the other parties that had signed the AUHIP-sponsored Roadmap Agreement and urged the SLM/AW to join the political process without further delay and any preconditions. Ethiopia expressed hope that common understanding would be reached on UNAMID's exit strategy and noted that Sudan's position should be seen in the context of the progress made. The Security Council welcomed the recent reduction of violence in Darfur, but remained concerned that the underlying causes to the conflict have not been addressed. It also underlined the need for an inclusive political settlement to re-establish peace in Sudan. Following a briefing on the Lake Chad region, Ethiopia stressed that it was critical to support countries of the region and the various existing security mechanisms by sharing intelligence and building their capacity to handle old and new security challenges. It welcomed the work being done by the Counter Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF) in cooperation with other UN bodies and encouraged CTITF to help the region develop a comprehensive and integrated anti-terrorism and violent extremism strategy

On 23 January, the Security Council held an interactive dialogue with Former President Festus Mogae, Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission for South Sudan who explained the challenges in the implementation of the August 2015 Agreement and underscored the need to ensure inclusivity and bring the followers of Riek Machar and others in the opposition into a genuine national dialogue. Ethiopia pointed out that the implementation of the agreement faced enormous obstacles and progress for peace in the country needed a credible and genuinely inclusive political process. The national dialogue announced by President Kiir was welcome but it remained to be seen if it could achieve greater inclusivity, forgiveness and reconciliation. Ethiopia expressed its concern over the situation on the ground and commended the Secretary-General's decision to make South Sudan one of his priorities. It also underlined the need for the region to get its act together and for the Council to speak with one voice for peace in South Sudan. The Security Council also underlined the need for the speedy deployment of the Regional Protection Force and expressed its support for the efforts of IGAD and the AU.

The Security Council received a briefing on the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia towards the end of January from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNSOM, Mr. Michael Keating and Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission and Head of AMISOM, Ambassador Madeira. They echoed the request made by the African Union for a troop surge for AMISOM of 4500 forces and underlined the need to find ways and means of dealing with the financial and logistical constraints facing AMISOM. Ethiopia, which commended the Somali leadership and its fledgling institutions for the progress made, noted the coordinated efforts of IGAD, the African Union, the United Nations and other international partners to support Somalia, on the basis of the principle of ownership and partnership, had also been instrumental in these achievements. It underscored the need to enhance the capacity of Somali state institutions and build the Somali National Security apparatus as matters of priority. It underlined the critical role played by AMISOM over the past decade in significantly weakening Al-Shabaab and pacifying Somalia, and it hoped the Council would respond positively to the request by the African Union for the authorization of 4,500 troops for a non-renewable period of six months, as requested by the 649th meeting of the AU's Peace and Security Council.

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### ***IGAD statement on the drought in the Greater Horn of Africa...***

The Horn of Africa is in the midst of a major drought resulting from La Niña and the Indian Ocean Dipole, reducing "moisture influx due to the cooling of the ocean water along the east African coast". What makes the current drought alarming in the Greater Horn of Africa region is that it follows two consecutive poor rainfall seasons in 2016 and the likelihood of depressed rainfall persisting into the March - May rainfall season this year. The seriously affected areas include most of Somalia, South-eastern Ethiopia, Northern Eastern and coastal Kenya, and Northern Uganda. The current depressed rainfall and resultant poor vegetation conditions since March 2016 have eroded the coping and adaptive capacities of affected people. It has also depleted water points, reduced crops, forage and livestock production, increased food insecurity, and adversely affected the livelihoods of vulnerable communities in the region.

The number of food insecure human population in the region is currently estimated at 17 million. Certain areas in South Sudan and Djibouti are already under an emergency food insecurity phase, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change classification scale. In Somalia, the number of food insecure people doubled in the last year alone. In the drought affected cropping lands in Somalia and coastal Kenya, 70 to 100% crop failure has been registered. Livestock mortality has been particularly devastating amongst small ruminants with mortality rate ranging from 25 to 75% percent in the cross border areas of Somalia-Kenya-Ethiopia. In addition, livestock prices have dropped by as much as 700%. Terms of trade have declined in the region, with Ethiopia registering a figure of almost 10%. Despite a downtrend in global agriculture commodity prices, the drought has resulted in an increase in domestic food prices in the region. Cereal prices, e.g. maize, have gone up by about 130%, while those of critical food items such as oils, beans and wheat flour increased by at least 50% in some pastoralist areas. “The limited financial and institutional capacity for effective adaptation to reduce exposure and vulnerability will result in limited safety net support to the most vulnerable households.

Climate predictions and early warnings produced by the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) through advanced scientific modeling and prediction tools, have elicited early actions, preparedness and mitigation measures. Member States have initiated early action to mitigate the impact. Somalia and South Sudan have declared drought emergencies. Kenya announced a doubling of expenditure on food relief to ease the pressure in the drought-affected counties, while Uganda shifted some of its development resources to finance emergency response in order to address food insecurity and livelihood protection. In Somalia, the President, as well as state and regional administrations, led the appeals for support and coordinated efforts that scaled-up food security activities in response. The US\$730 million allocated by Ethiopia boosted the response effort which, coupled with an above-average *meher* harvest, resulted to an almost 50% reduction in the number of food insecure people, dropping from 10.2 million to 5.6 million.

IGAD continues to reinforce the actions of its Member States using them as guide for complementary action on drought responses. It continues to monitor and provide analysis of the situation and advise Member States on measures to mitigate the impact. The 45th Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forum (GHACOF 45), which ended on Wednesday (February 8) in Addis Ababa, presented a consensus climate outlook for the period March to May, and its likely impact on disaster risk management, livestock production, water, energy and health. A multi-humanitarian coordination mechanism led by IGAD is effectively working to coordinate response efforts. IGAD is also working with relevant national authorities, UN agencies and CSOs in each member state on the development of an Integrated Regional Appeal. It is supporting institutional arrangements and capacity building to allow humanitarian response plans to be implemented in a timely, effective manner. IGAD is also convening a regional Ministerial Meeting at the end of the month to launch the Integrated Regional Appeal and secure financial resources to complement the response undertaken by national authorities and humanitarian and development partners.

The aim of the IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative (IDDRSI) Platform is to mitigate the adverse effects of disasters through building resilience of relevant national institutions, communities and people, end drought emergencies and contribute to the

achievement of sustainable development in the region. IGAD will, therefore, remain vigilant in monitoring and advising the region on the drought situation through its specialized institution, the IGAD Climate Prediction and Application Centre in Nairobi and continue to support and complement regional and national actions on drought response and recovery.

*...Ethiopia is taking all necessary actions to address the drought*

The Government Communication Affairs Office (GCAO) Minister, Dr. Negeri Lencho, gave a press briefing over the weekend on current socio-economic and political issues in the country, including the efforts being made by the government in addressing the drought, which is now affecting lowland areas of the Afar Regional State, the Somali Regional State, parts of Oromia Regional State and Southern Ethiopia. This drought, caused by the negative Indian Ocean Dipole, came on the heels of the worst El- Niño induced drought in 50 years. The Government, he said, was able to address much of the challenge of the El- Niño drought through its Disaster Risk Management Policy and the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) which have provided for improved watershed management and agriculture programs that support farmers and pastoralists, together with efforts to mitigate climate change impacts before drought can cause humanitarian catastrophe. But while the Government continues to respond to residual needs from El- Niño drought, below average rains in the southern and eastern parts of the country, caused by the Indian Ocean Dipole, have left millions in need of humanitarian assistance in 2017.

With the example of the humanitarian response for the 2016 El- Niño induced drought so clear, the Government has been well aware of the need for more robust and systematic mechanisms that should be put in place in addressing the latest drought. As soon as it became clear that the negative Indian Ocean Dipole was going to cause another drought, the Government began its assessment of possible dangers. The Government, together with development partners almost immediately launched the Humanitarian Requirements Document (HRD) for 2017. This outlined Ethiopia's current needs and detailed the planned intervention to address the current drought conditions. Overall, it calls for \$948 million to support 5.6 million people with food and non-food assistance in pastoral lowland areas in the south and eastern parts of Ethiopia. On January 30, the US Department of Agriculture through its Global Agricultural Information Network report was able to note that the Government and international development partners were taking steps to address the problems in the affected areas.

This was underlined at the High-Level Event on the Humanitarian Situation in Ethiopia held on the margins of the 28<sup>th</sup> Summit of the African Union on January 29. On that occasion, Deputy Prime Minister, Demeke Mekonnen, reiterated the Government's commitment to address the new drought effectively and immediately. Mr. Demeke said Ethiopia was also committed to work with its neighbors in Kenya, Somalia and Somaliland, facing the same drought, to look for longer-term responses to the recurrent challenges of drought in the region.

It was in this light that the Government was an active participant at the four-day IGAD 45th Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forum (GHACOF), opened by IGAD's Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) on February 7. The theme of this meeting was Mitigation and Response to 2016/17 Extreme Climate Events. It brought together officials in charge of climate and weather, as well as line ministries dealing with food security, livestock

development, and public health, from Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda, along with climate and weather experts from other parts of the world, development partners, and media practitioners.

Ethiopia's Deputy Minister of Water, Irrigation, and Electricity, Engineer Wondimu Tekle underlined the importance of ICPAC efforts in "developing reliable, proactive, and timely climate information" "in order to facilitate scientific guidance for decision-makers. Mr. Mohamed Moussa, speaking for the Executive Secretary of IGAD, estimated that over 17 million people were severely affected by the drought and would need humanitarian support. He said IGAD, in collaboration with the UN, would be issuing an appeal in the next few days to mobilize funds for those affected by the current drought. Development partners present, including USAID, DFID, and representatives of the UN system, pledged support to GHACOF as a key tool for the region in collection, analysis, and dissemination of climate information

Meanwhile, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in its Weekly Humanitarian Bulletin on Monday (February 6), assessed the outlook in Ethiopia. It says the spring rains are expected to be weak in current drought-affected areas. It quotes the National Meteorological Agency's climate outlook for the *belg* 2017 season (mid-February to May) that below normal rainfall is expected in the southern and south-eastern parts of Ethiopia. The *belg* is the main rainy season for the pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities in the lowlands of south and south-eastern Ethiopia, including the southern Somali Regional State, the lowlands of Borena, Guji and Bale zones (of Oromia Regional State) and the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Regional State. It is also the second major rainy season for the Afar Regional State. The expected below normal rainfall will affect *belg* land preparation and planting negatively, as well as the availability of water and pasture. This in turn will affect the food and nutritional security of communities in these areas. The Agency is urging farmers and all concerned bodies to take pre-emptive measures to minimize the humanitarian impact. These include planting short cycle, moisture-tolerant crops; rainwater harvesting; moisture conservation; and pasture management practices. *Belg* crops account for 30 to 60% of the crop production in *belg*-dependent areas.

Members of Parliament who recently visited drought-affected pastoralists in Borena zone, Oromia Regional State, have called on the Government response efforts to be scaled-up to deal with gaps in response efforts. The Government is currently providing relief food and implementing Productive Safety Net Program intervention, together with water, nutrition and livestock feed support. Borena zone officials are now closely working with the regional and federal governments to strengthen current aid operations as well as prepare for increased response should the spring *belg* rains fail as the National Meteorological Agency forecasts. More than 145,000 people in Borena zone are in need of food assistance and there have been 23,000 livestock deaths reported so far.

The OCHA Bulletin also notes that at the beginning of the month, the Logistics Cluster, the World Food Program and the National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC) inaugurated the newly refurbished NDRMC logistics hub facility in Adama. The Logistics Cluster was activated last year in response to the El Niño drought to help enable a more efficient response. It supports the NDRMC in augmenting its logistics coordination and information

management capacity, and through WFP, the logistics capacity of the Government and international humanitarian responders.

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### ***An Ethio-India Business Forum held in Addis Ababa***

An Ethio-India Business Forum was held last week on February 3, 2017 at the Hilton Hotel in Addis Ababa. It was co-organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Many Indian investors find Ethiopia a suitable destination for Foreign Direct Investment and India is one of the largest sources of foreign investment in Ethiopia. Currently, India provides some US\$5 billion worth of investment in Ethiopia. This is responsible for over 600 investment projects currently operational in various sectors, including manufacturing, agriculture and mining. Altogether these employ around three hundred thousand Ethiopians. Equally, important, the volume of trade between the two countries has been growing steadily over the past decade.

India is the largest democracy in the world. It has built a strong multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious and secular nation state. Ethiopia, like others today, can benefit from learning how India has managed to transform possible fault lines of religion, ethnicity and language into factors that unite the country. Ethiopia has similar diversities, and can draw many lessons from the genuinely pluralistic culture of India to help build democratic systems that accommodate diversity. This adds to the value of strengthening the existing bilateral relations between the two countries.

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene, opening the Business Forum, underlined that Ethiopia and India had strategic economic cooperation. She noted that Ethiopia was keen to expand its trade and investment ties with India with the view to maximize the mutual benefit for both their peoples. She said both sides should work on a regular basis to cultivate their relationship, and stressed that both Ethiopia and India had enormous potential to move ahead on the basis of a strong partnership. Mrs. Hirut said Ethiopia has substantial unexploited resources and she detailed the major factors that should make it a number one destination for investment and business. These included: Ethiopia's fast economic growth, its credit rating, its massive engagement in the construction of industrial parks, the availability of enhanced market access to exports through such opportunities as AGOA and EBA and Indian duty free tariff preferences. Mrs. Hirut also noted that the investment promotion and protection framework, the avoidance of double taxation, the expansion of the road and railway network and the low price of electricity. All this, she said, provided an attractive environment for Indian and other foreign investors. Pointing out that Ethiopia was on the road to transformation, Mrs. Hirut said, "Come and join Ethiopia's march towards renaissance" adding that "when you do, come for a long-term partnership." She called on Indian investors to further expand their involvement in the development of industrial parks.

In addition to the existence of the strong economic ties between the two countries, Mrs. Hirut also drew attention to their strategic partnership. They shared common goals in promoting world peace and the State Minister said: "We co-operate closely on regional matters and work together

to contribute to peace and stability in other parts of the world including our sub region, the Horn of Africa. We, like many other states, are greatly indebted to India's major contributions to peace-making around the world and in our own region." The Indian Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ambassador Anurag Srivastava emphasized that India would continue to work hard to strengthen further its bilateral relations with Ethiopia. The Ambassador further expressed India's readiness to elevate bilateral trade and investment ties to a new high level. Over seventeen Indian companies as well as a number of Ethiopian companies and organizations attended the Forum.

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### ***Ethiopia at the "Investing in Africa Mining Indaba" 2017***

The "Investing in African Mining Indaba" is an annual conference dedicated to the capitalization and development of mining interests in Africa. It is currently Africa, and the world's, largest mining investment conference. The four day event, held this week from Monday (February 6), in Cape Town, South Africa, brings together leading representatives from the mining investment community, the world's largest mining houses and Government ministries to share insights into how the sector can drive investments and capitalize on the opportunities available to Africa's mining industry.

Ethiopia's Minister of Mines, Petroleum and Natural Gas, Motuma Mekassa told delegates to the conference on Monday that Ethiopia had identified the mining sector as a priority for development and, he said, the potential was great. Ethiopia, a highly diverse country geologically, was rich in minerals, including gold, gemstones, platinum and soda ash. It was virtually untapped, diverse and had vast mineral resources offering huge potential opportunities for exploration and development. The focus on developing mineral resources is part of the government's plan to shift from an agriculture-led economy to an industrial one. At the moment the agricultural sector accounts for 46% of gross domestic product, 80% of employment and 85% of export revenues. Recognizing the potential of the mineral sector to trigger further industrialization and increased economic development, the policy framework now envisages the minerals sector becoming the backbone of industry by 2023. The government's ambitious plans for mining includes a target to increase the sector's contribution to GDP from today's 1.5% to 10% by the year 2025.

The Minister noted that Ethiopia, which was among Africa's fastest growing economies, had recorded double digit growth for many years. There was, however, no room for complacency. "We are on a good track," he said, "but we are late." He noted that the targeted growth was from a low base; indeed considering its potential, today's contribution from the mining sector was "insignificant", he said. Equally, the ambitious targets were also being matched by an impressive program of action and interventions to make the sector and the country attractive to investors.

The Minister said Ethiopia didn't have much experience and this was one reason why the country's plans were largely focused on attracting foreign investment and international partners. He said: "As a government, we are trying to create a conducive environment for investment." In addition to the development of infrastructure and the provision of quality geo-scientific information, the policies and practices put in place to attract investment include a clear and

transparent legislative environment and an enabling fiscal and tax regime. He said the government was ready to welcome investors from anywhere in the world.” It was also working very hard to provide the infrastructure needed by mining companies and added that it was aware that transparency was very important for investors and financiers.

Minister Motuma noted that Ethiopia had made a strong commitment to work with companies, both big and small, to develop mineral resources, whether in providing infrastructure or in improving rules and regulations. It was prepared to seek help from outside parties where this was relevant. He said that transforming the sector was a priority but “we lack capacity” in a number of areas, from management of licensing to environmental issues and even community development. So, he said, we are trying to improve out capacity, but “we need partners.”

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### ***President Isaias again reflects on his own version of reality for Eritrea***

In his annual New Year ritual, Eritrea’s President Isaias Afeworki sat in front of a trio of journalists from Eritrea’s national television last week (January 27-28), responding , though seldom answering, the ‘questions’ put to him. As usual he offered exceptionally long and discursive ‘analyses’, on domestic affairs, and on past and emerging issues in the Horn of Africa region as well as offering his well-known views on global geo-politics. He also offered some indication of his planned ‘constitutional’ ideas for Eritrea’s future.

On domestic affairs, President Isaias referred to issues ranging from housing, water supplies, the energy sector, transport, health and education to the salary increments promised last year, and what amounted to a lecture on the shortcomings in these areas underlined how little has been achieved in these key areas. He was critical of serious failures in almost all these sectors. This led one commentator on the interview to describe him as “the fiercest critic of the Government of Eritrea”, that is of course his own personal government. The President said, for example, that the Hirghigo Energy Power Plant was not dysfunctional because it was old; it was dysfunctional because it was not properly managed and was in a state of disrepair. Critics have pointed out that many failures can be ascribed to the President’s own frequent intrusions into professional and technical operations and management. He disregarded the advice of experts in the construction of the Hirghigo Plant, and as long ago as 2007 there were reports that he was ignoring advice about the plant’s operations. It was only running at 25% capacity “due to misuse and lack of maintenance, resulting in frequent power outages in the capital.”

Referring to massive and acute problems of housing and other related shortages in the urban centers, including Asmara, he said “even in Asmara nearly all the pipelines, all the electric transmission lines and the whole sewerage system are old. We still depend on the same old ones the nation used for over many many years”. He noted, not for the first time, the paucity of air and sea transport and the failure of road maintenance, Factories were idle, he said because of shortages of water and power. There was enough water but no functioning water supply networks; there was no reliable power supply. He referred to civil service salary increments, though making no reference to the widespread reports that the announced increases last year for the national service conscripts have yet to reach the intended recipients. Asked why not all

members of the civil service had received the promised salary rise, the President launched into a long exposition on market speculation, consumer protection, fiscal policy, income distribution, market failures, human resources and speculation as well as measures to be taken to stabilize the market and ensure macro-economic stability, the need to take into account records of seniority, job complexity, productivity, the provision of social services, the need to resolve the acute housing shortage which also involves modern technology and machinery for manufacturing building materials and human resource development.

The President went on to caution the people of Eritrea: “I personally don’t want to evade the truth by way of giving empty hopes to the people. When we talk about the issue of providing basic infrastructures like changing the entirely old water pipelines, sewerage system, and electric transmission lines, even to Asmara, we are talking about our aspirations and/or plans to do so; not that is the measure of our capacity to embark on these projects.” He added that in 2016 “We have been finalizing our plans for these, and in 2017 the actual achievements will begin to be noticed.” He made the same promises last year and the year before and on a number of other occasions.

It is hardly surprising that Finance Minister, Berhane Gebremeskel, told the BBC in 2015 that the government had not been prepared to release figures about the economy, GDP or any other key indicators including the budget for the previous seven years. In fact, President Isaias’ admission that nearly all the country’s basic infrastructures was old and in bad shape would hardly be a surprise to his listeners. For the last twenty five years he has presided over a regime whose main purpose has been the militarization of the population rather than any real effort to embark on the much needed task of building up the country’s economy and improving people’s livelihoods.

One of the issues addressed during the interview was on the “ongoing constitution-drafting process” in the country. The President announced two years ago that he was appointing a committee to produce a new constitution for Eritrea, ignoring the fact that the National Assembly had approved a draft constitution nearly two decades ago, in 1997. Indeed, he pronounced that draft “dead. Since 2015, nothing has been heard of the new constitution or the committee that has supposedly been drafting it. This approach, of promising much but delivering little or nothing, is indeed the norm for President Isaias’ methodology of government. In fact, the President first of all referred to the subject as a “governmental system,” not a constitution, and then as a ‘roadmap’. Indeed, what he described seems to have little to do with any constitution in the normal sense, and certainly not something that will provide for the rule of law in Eritrea or for the establishment of political parties or democracy. In the past, of course, the President has dismissed the idea of multi-party democracy as something that would not be established in his lifetime, as he put it rather ominously, “not for thirty or forty years”.

What he actually appears to have in mind is provision for the perpetual hegemony of the ruling People’s Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ). He said that Eritrea will be organized vertically with four economic zones: the Red Sea Area, made up of the North and South Red Sea zones; the Central area including the highlands all the way up north to include most of the Anseba region; and the Western zone of Gash-Barka and part of Anseba as well as another for the Diaspora. Each of the three zones in Eritrea would have its own national security,

intelligence, police, border patrol, civilian administrators, and its own PFDJ office. Identical structures will be replicated in the Eritrean Diaspora, in the Americas, Europe, Middle East and Africa. Each area would have its own Coordinating Committee, which would report to the PFDJ, further tightening the party's instruments of control and intimidation over Eritreans abroad. This, of course, is something that has already led to a court in the Netherlands to describe the youth wing of the PFDJ as a central element in Eritrea's "sinister international network of spies and thugs" Germany, Canada and now the Netherlands are enforcing stricter regulations to try to put a stop to PFDJ pressure on members of the Eritrean community in the Diaspora. The 'roadmap', the President said, "is a time-based plan that defines where we are, where we want to go, and how to get there". In fact, a question about the constitution-drafting process ended up being answered by a detailed look at the intended expansion of the organization and control of the ruling single party, the People's Front for Democracy and Justice, chairman, President Isaias.

The President made clear his view of geo-politics, and of the sub-region and beyond has not changed. He said Eritrea's wars with its neighbors, including Yemen and Djibouti, as well as the attack on Ethiopia in 1998, were initiated as a result of Washington's "misguided foreign policy of hegemony and a uni-polar global order", which, he said, was now crumbling into pieces. He said, "We had no reason to go to war with our neighbors; there was no border dispute with between us, Eritrea and Djibouti, Eritrea and Ethiopia. Who brought the border agenda? It was these forces of dominance and hegemony," that it is, all this was organized by the US. This view of Eritrea's foreign policy is hardly one shared by any of Eritrea's neighbors which have been the subject of Eritrea's aggressive foreign policy ever since it became independent. It is this that has led to conflicts with the Sudan, Djibouti (twice) and Yemen as well as a major war with Ethiopia. In every case, Eritrea started the conflict. Eritrea has also consistently provided logistics, training and arms support for anti-government movements in Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti, Yemen, Somalia and Ethiopia. To make matters worse, the regime has still been bent on supporting terrorist groups in Somalia. As the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea made clear in its last report, it has "continued to find consistent evidence of Eritrean support for armed groups operating in both Ethiopia and Djibouti". It was after this that the UN Security Council, noting its "concern over reports by the Monitoring Group of ongoing Eritrean support for certain regional armed groups" renewed the arms embargo on Eritrea for another year.

President Isaias reiterated one of his favorite arguments: "The world has declared war on Eritrea, [and] the main aim of this conspiracy is to dampen our resolve by enticing our youth out of the country...The money is earmarked for the upkeep of and to create jobs for Eritrea refugees outside the county which I find totally bizarre...Why doesn't the EU give us the money to train our youth in our country instead?" He criticized the EU's funding in 2016 for two projects designed to aid Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia and Eastern Sudan worth €500 million and €170 million, labeling them "ill-conceived conspiracies to deplete the country of its youth". He said the aid package granted to Sudan was "designed to enhance the capacity of reception centers in Eastern Sudan that are supposedly overwhelmed by thousands upon thousands of Eritrean refugees." This, he said, was "an organized machination by the West to weaken Eritrea". In this context, describing French President Francois Hollande and German Chancellor, Angela Merkel as "mentally disturbed" as they were among those who encouraged the movement of Eritrean youth to Europe. He claimed Eritreans were "the greatest historical threat to our enemies, [so]

trafficking in human beings has been used to disperse and weaken the country's human capital. The highest priority has been given to this policy, of asylum to the Eritreans.”

Overall, in assessing the political, economic and social circumstances of the country, the President once again concluded that throughout his 25 years in power, the world had consistently conspired to treat Eritrea unjustly. All of the country's problems, whether economic stagnation, border disputes, recurrent conflicts in the region, internal difficulties, sanctions, were designed by the international community to isolate and weaken Eritrea. He said: “We survived the onslaught; on the contrary, we came out stronger than ever”. He has never explained why world has adopted an “anti-Eritrea position”, but he remains, of course, firmly of the view that any fault lies elsewhere and has nothing to do with Eritrea or its government. He explained the various conflagrations that have erupted in the past 25 years in the Middle-Eastern, North Africa, the Horn of Africa and other flashpoints: “Misguided policies anchored on domination and hegemony in a uni-polar global order were largely the causes of these costly upheavals”. Eritrea had also been caught up in this and compelled to face unwarranted border wars, sanctions and harassment under the spurious pretext of “human rights violations”. President Isaias, as usual, also managed to comment on Ethiopia, claiming what he called “spontaneous and extensive public protests”, were spurred on by the “dangerous policies of institutionalized ethnicity and fragmentation pursued by the regime and its backers so as to monopolize power by fomenting division.” Despite all the very clear evidence to the contrary, he claimed that attempts to blame Egypt and Eritrea were “disingenuous and largely meant to deflect attention from the quagmire of its own making”.