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Tomorrow is the International Day of Peace, 21 September, with the theme this year of "Climate Action for Peace", to draw attention to the importance of combating climate change as a way to protect and promote peace throughout the world. UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, said, "Today peace faces a new danger: the climate emergency, which threatens our security, our livelihoods and our lives." Peace can only be achieved if concrete action is taken to combat climate change. This is why the United Nations is convening the Climate Action Summit next week (September 23), with concrete and realistic plans to accelerate action to implement the Paris Agreement. The Summit will focus on the sectors that create the most emissions and the areas where building resilience could make the biggest difference, as well as provide leaders and partners with the opportunity to demonstrate real climate action and showcase their ambition. The Secretary-General said in May: "It is possible to achieve our goals, but we need decisions, political will and transformational policies to allow us to still live in peace with our own climate."

The 74th session of the General Assembly officially opened on Tuesday this week. The high-level General Debate will begin next week, Tuesday, (September 24). President Sahle-Work Zewde is leading the Ethiopian delegation to the General Assembly.

Ethiopia

President Sahle-Work Zewde attended a ceremony of farewell for the late President of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, at the National Sport Stadium in Harare on Saturday last week (September 14). The event was attended by Presidents and Prime Ministers of various countries, international dignitaries and thousands of people from across the country. President Mugabe had a special attachment to Ethiopia where he received military training and other assistance during the national struggle against colonialism.

President Sahle-Work Zewde received a delegation of Club Demeter from France on Tuesday (September 17). Club Demeter is an association of business leaders in the agricultural and agro-food sectors in France. The President encouraged members of the 42-strong delegation, and assured Ethiopia would render all the necessary support.

Foreign Minister Gedu Andargachew met members of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Standing Committee of the Norwegian Parliament, headed by Chairperson, Anniken Huitfeldt, on Monday (September 16). Foreign Minister Gedu Andargachew briefed the delegation on the ongoing political, economic, judicial and social reforms underway in Ethiopia and urged the Norwegian members of Parliament to support the process. He also discussed Ethiopia's regional peace initiatives and the positive outcomes as well as bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

French Culture Minister, M. Frank Riester, made a working visit to Ethiopia this week (September 18-19), officially launched the renovation project of the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela which France is supporting. During his visit, M. Riester also held talks with Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed on the National Palace restoration project.

Dr. Sileshi Bekele, Minister of Water, Irrigation, and Energy, briefed journalists in Addis Ababa on Wednesday (September 18) on the Tripartite meeting of the Ministers of Water Affairs of Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt which took place in Cairo at the beginning of the week. The meeting was a continuation of meetings held in September 2018 and February 2019 to discuss the filling and operation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). **(See article)**

Mrs. Hirut Zemene, State Minister Foreign Affairs, met a Tunisian delegation headed by Mr. Hatem Ferjani, State Minister of Tunisia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs this week. The delegation also attended the second Ethio-Tunisia Business Forum aiming at promoting trade and investment opportunities in Ethiopia held on Wednesday (September 18). **(See article)**

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Marcos Tekle, made a two-day working visit to Pakistan last week (September 11 and 12), heading a high-level delegation which included State Minister of Trade and Industry, Ambassador Misganu Arga. The delegation held talks with Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood and other officials including Prime Minister Khan's Advisor on Commerce and Textiles, Abdul Razak Dawood, **(See article)**

State Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Marcos Tekle signed the Book of Condolence open at the Embassy of Indonesia on the passing away of former President of Indonesia B.J Habibie. He expressed profound condolences to the family of the late president and the people of Indonesia on behalf of the people and Government of Ethiopia.

The UK Trade Commissioner for Africa, Ms. Emma Wade-Smith, arrived in Addis Ababa on Monday (September 16) for an official visit to Ethiopia. During her visit, she held talks with Ethiopian Airlines CEO Tewolde Gebremariam on Ethiopia's Aviation industry; and with the State Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy on energy development opportunities in Ethiopia and the possible role for UK companies to help develop the sector.

The Minister of Labor and Social Affairs, Dr. Ergoge Tesfaye met the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Ethiopia, Ambassador Sami Jamil Abdullah on Monday (September 16). The Ambassador pledged Saudi Arabia would give protection to African migrants particularly Ethiopians working in Saudi Arabia. They discussed ways to cement the overseas employment agreement that the two countries have signed and agreed to work closely and exchange information on overseas deployment, visas, employment agencies and other issues.

Chief of Staff of the National Defense Force, General Adem Mohammed met with Lt. General Hamad Mohammed Thani Al Rumaithi, Chief of Staff of the UAE Armed Forces on Thursday this week (September 19). They reviewed the opportunities to enhance cooperation between the two countries and exchanged views on developments in the regional and international arenas as well as a number of issues of common concern.

A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the Hungarian National Agricultural Research and Innovation Center, and the Ethiopian Southern Agricultural Research Institute in Hawassa on Monday (September 16) by Dr. Melinda Tar of NARIC, and Dr. Endrias of SARI.

The 25th anniversary of a partnership between Vaterstetten in Germany and Alem Ketema in Ethiopia was celebrated on September 14 last week in Vaterstetten. An Ethiopian delegation led by the Head of the North Shewa Zone, Ato Tefera, and the Mayor of Alem Ketema, Ato Getu Kitaw, and Bavarian MP, Ms. Doris Rauscher, and the Mayor of Vaterstetten, Georg Reitsberger, were Guests of Honor.

Eritrea

President Isaias Afwerki visited Khartoum at the weekend accompanied by Foreign Minister Osman Saleh and Presidential Adviser Yemane Gebreab, and other officials. He held meetings with General Abdul Fattah al-Burhan, head of Sudan's Sovereign Council and other officials. They agreed to establish a High-level Committee to follow-up and implement cooperation in economic, trade, political, and diplomatic matters as well as on security and military issues. **(See article)**

Osman Saleh, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Presidential Adviser Mr. Yemane Gebreab, delivered a letter from President Isaias to South Sudan President Kiir on Tuesday (September 17). The letter focused on consolidation of friendly relations and building ground work for effective cooperation.

Kenya

The International Justice Court (ICJ) has scheduled the hearings over the maritime dispute between Kenya and Somalia for November. The Court said the first round of oral argument will be held on November 4 (Somalia) and 6th (Kenya). The second round of oral argument will be held on November 7 (Somalia) and 8 (Kenya). The hearings were rescheduled following a request made by Kenya. Kenya's Foreign Affairs Cabinet Secretary, Monica Juma, said last week that Kenya was still seeking an out-of-court settlement and Kenya was in talks with Somali authorities to see if they can reach an agreement.

Kenya and South Sudan signed an agreement last week granting each other's citizens free visas. The agreement was signed by the Ministers of Interior and will take effect next month.

Somalia

Prime Minister, Hassan Ali Khayre has called upon Somalia's international partners to put more effort into investment and economic development projects in the country. Speaking at a meeting with representatives of the international community on Tuesday (September 17), he briefed partners on the recent progress in security and in the political and economic sectors, as

well as on the just-concluded Reconciliation Conference in Galmudug. He stressed the need for support for the provision of basic government services including clean water, health and education in rural areas.

Prime Minister, Hassan Ali Khayre met the Russian Ambassador to Somalia, Mikhail Golovanov, in Mogadishu on Tuesday (September 17). Their discussions focused on ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation between Mogadishu and Moscow. Ambassador Golovanov pledged that his government is ready to support efforts to boost security, economy and education.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Ambassador Ahmed Isse Awad, met the Ambassador of China to Somalia, Ambassador Qin Jian on Tuesday (September 17) to discuss enhancing bilateral relations and cooperation. The Minister, who praised the scholarships for Somali students and training programs for diplomats and federal government civil servants, called for broad cooperation and investment in development.

Finance Minister Abdirahman Beilehatt ended last week's IMF meeting in Addis Ababa for the first review of the 4th Staff Monitored Program, May 2019 to July 2020. The IMF said economic growth should remain broadly stable at 2.9 % this year, but warned that inflation could be expected to increase. **(See article)**

UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock, visiting Somalia last week called for sustained funding for humanitarian aid to avert a deterioration in the food security situation. He was accompanied by the World Bank Group's Senior Vice President for the 2030 Development Agenda, Mahmoud Mohieldin, and the UN Assistant Secretary-General for Peace-building Support, Oscar Fernandez-Taranco. This year's humanitarian response plan for Somalia has received US\$487 million, less than half of the required financing.

AMISOM Deputy Force Commander in charge of Operations and Plans Major General Nakibus Lakara, visited Belet Weyne, headquarters of AMISOM Sector 4, controlled by Djibouti troops, backed by Ethiopian forces, on Sunday (September 15). General Lakara reminded the Sector 4 Commander, Colonel Mohamed Ibrahim Moussa, his deputy, Colonel Teklebirhan Hailu (Ethiopia) and the Djibouti Contingent Commander, Colonel Abdirahman Rayale Hared of the need to adhere to the timelines in accomplishing their assigned tasks under the Concept of Operations (CONOPs). The CONOPs outline the activities AMISOM has to implement under the Somali Transition Plan up to 2021, when AMISOM hands over security responsibility to the Somali Security Forces.

The new Somalia Ambassador to the United States, Ambassador Ali Sharif Ahmed, presented his credentials to the US President Donald Trump on Monday (September 16). He underlined Somalia's continued commitment to further strengthening bilateral ties between the two countries and informed the president on the recent progress of the Federal Government.

South Sudan

The IGAD Special Envoy in South Sudan, Ambassador Ismail Wais, and the European Union have welcomed the outcome of last week's meeting between President Kiir and opposition leader Riek Machar last week, but the Chairman of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation

Commission, warned there was still much to do with cantonment, selection and training for the unified force by the end of this month. **(See article)**

Sudan

Prime Minister Abdullah Hamdok arrived in Cairo on Wednesday (September 18) for talks with President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and Prime Minister, Moustafa Madbouly, Discussions covered means to support and strengthen cooperation and promote strategic projects between the two countries. **(See article)**

France's Foreign Minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian, made a one-day visit to Khartoum on Monday (September 16). He met with Foreign Minister Ms. Asma Mohamed Abdalla, Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and the head of the Sovereign Council, General Abdel-Fattah al-Burhan, as well as former protest leaders. M. Le Drian promised France would support Sudan in its efforts to achieve peace with rebel groups, and would work with its European partners to remove Sudan from the U.S. list of countries sponsoring terrorism. **(See article)**

United Nation Secretary-General Guterres joined calls to remove Sudan from the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism on Wednesday (September 18). Speaking at a press conference, he said "Sudan is a matter of great hope for us. I believe that what was possible in the dialogue in Sudan demonstrates that all political conflicts can be solved by dialogue...and this should be a lesson for everywhere else in the world, " adding: "It is time now for the international community to support Sudan."UN officials say a high-level event on Sudan will be held on the sidelines of the 74th session of the General Assembly to mobilize international support for the country.

State Minister Dr. Marcos Tekle leads a delegation to Pakistan

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Marcos Tekle, made a two-day working visit to Pakistan last week (September 11 and 12), heading a high-level delegation which included State Minister of Trade and Industry, Ambassador Misganu Arga, and senior officials from the Ministry of Agriculture and the head of the Ethiopian Pulses, Oil Seeds and Spices Producers and Exporters Association. The delegation held talks with Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood; Ms. Andleeb Abbas, Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs; Mr. Ayub Chaudhry, Additional Secretary for National Food Security and Research, and other Pakistani officials including Prime Minister Khan's Advisor on Commerce and Textiles, Abdul Razak Dawood, to discuss ways to strengthen bilateral relations and economic cooperation as well as foreign trade exchange. They agreed to further strengthen trade and investment ties.

Mr. Razak detailed the "Look Africa Policy Initiative" of Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce which calls for enhancing engagement and trade/investment relations with Africa. He noted Ethiopia was a member of COMESA and of the African Continental Free Trade Area, as well as the headquarters of the African Union and could provide a hub for enhancing Pakistan exports to Africa under this policy. Mr. Razak expressed the wish that trade relations should be commensurate with political relations and emphasized boosting existing trade ties and the export potential of Pakistan in sectors like engineering goods, sugar, rice, agro-processed products, surgical, pharmaceutical and sports goods. Mr. Razak also announced that Pakistan's

Ministry of Commerce was opening a Commercial Section in Pakistan's Embassy in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia this year, to develop linkages between the businesses of the two countries.

Dr. Marcos, who welcomed the initiative and assured it of government support, underlined the importance of the meeting held between the prime ministers of Pakistan and Ethiopia on the margins of the 2nd Belt and Road Forum in April 2019 in Beijing. He reiterated Ethiopia's wish to upgrade political, trade, commercial and people-to-people contacts and expressed Ethiopia's intent to open an embassy in Islamabad soon. Dr. Marcos said Ethiopia was working for the commencement of Ethiopian air flights to and from Karachi and expressed interest in the hiring of technical experts from Pakistan in the fields of Engineering, Pharmaceuticals and the IT sector. State Minister Misganu expressed interest in exporting pulses, black tea, high-quality sesame seed and oilseeds to Pakistan.

The Ethiopian delegation reiterated the desire to upgrade political, trade, commercial and people-to-people contacts; and both sides emphasized that to translate excellent brotherly relations into meaningful economic and trade cooperation, frequent engagements at government-to-government and business-to-business level, coupled with trade promotional activities should be encouraged. They agreed on the importance of removing impediments in the area of technical regulations and visa facilitation as well as in the finalization of a Memorandum of Understanding on Trade Relations and a Treaty for Avoidance of Double Taxation.

The Ethiopian delegation visited the Institute of Strategic Studies of Islamabad (ISSI) and held talks on bilateral relations and matters of mutual interest. The delegation, which also included scientists and agriculturists as well as members of the business community, paid a visit to the headquarters of the Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS) to explore the possibility of Ethiopia joining the organization. COMSATS' Executive Director, Dr. S.M. Junaid Zaidi, gave a comprehensive briefing about the main functions of COMSATS and emphasized the benefits of joining COMSATS as Member State as well as declaring any appropriate Science and Technology or Research and Development Institutions in Ethiopia as Centre of Excellence of COMSATS. COMSATS has 27 members across Asia, Latin America and Africa, and has credited 22 International Centers of Excellence from both member and non-member states. Dr. Zaidi indicated that Ethiopian membership of COMSATS would enhance the standing of Commission and lead Kenya and Rwanda to join it. COMSATS is working for sustainable socio-economic uplift of the developing countries through judicious application of science and technology.

A meeting of Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt Water Ministers in Cairo

A Tripartite meeting of the Ministers of Water Affairs of Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt took place in Cairo at the beginning of the week (September 15-16). It was a continuation of the meeting held in September 2018 and February 2019 in Addis Ababa to discuss the filling and operation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), now 67% complete.

The Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation of Egypt, Dr. Mohammed Abdel Aty, welcoming the delegations of Sudan and Ethiopia, expressed his hopes that the engagement over the GERD would set an example for similar cooperative developments. Dr. Aty, who felt the eight-year engagement over the GERD had yet to produce expected outcomes, said the

discussions on filling and operation of the GERD should be based on a win-win approach that benefited the three countries equally.

Dr. Sileshi Bekele, Minister of Water, Irrigation, and Energy of Ethiopia, underlined the efforts of Ethiopia for an engagement based on good faith and a sincere interest in cooperation. He emphasized the need to reinforce the existing platforms of cooperation to reach an understanding that served the equal rights of the three countries. The aim of the meeting was to consider the report of the National Independent Scientific Research Group-NISRG of the three countries to set directions for the way forward. The Minister reiterated the need to follow the existing mechanisms of trilateral cooperation, pointing out that all suggestions and propositions on outstanding matters should be presented within the framework of the agreed mechanisms.

Dr. Sileshi, underlining the Nile was the main water resource of Ethiopia, said it was a matter of survival for the country. Ethiopia, he said, would continue to follow a cooperative approach that ensured its rights and protected the interests of neighboring populations. He stressed the trilateral dialogue between Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt on the GERD enhanced the right of all Nile Riparian States to utilize the shared water resource of the Nile River. In conclusion, he said the trilateral engagement since the commencement of the construction of the GERD had been broadly successful and created the opportunity to bridge differences between the three countries. He also underlined Ethiopia's efforts to accommodate the interest and concerns of downstream countries such as initiating the establishment of the IPoE, the signing of the Agreement on the Declaration of Principles on GERD, initiating the establishment of NISRG and its filling plans and incorporate the views of downstream countries. The Minister stressed the need to focus on technical solutions for technical problems without undue politicization of technical matters.

The Water and Irrigation Minister of the Sudan, Professor Yasser Mohammed Abbas said he hoped his previous involvement on matters related to the Nile and other trans-boundary water resources would allow him contribute constructively to the trilateral discussions. He said trilateral cooperation between Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt had produced a remarkable achievement in a short period of time, and expressed Sudan's commitment to do its part for the continuation of an effective trilateral dialogue, based on scientific considerations, and serving the interest of the three countries.

The meeting, before which Egypt had presented a "new proposal on technical aspects of the filling and operations of GERD," agreed on the need to preserve existing mechanisms that had been set up to consider the various issues. The ministers, therefore, agreed to base the discussion of the NISRG on its previous outcomes and discuss the proposals of the three countries. The NISRG was effectively established on May 15 last year at the tripartite meeting of the ministers of water affairs, foreign affairs and heads of the security, of Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The NISRG will now meet on 31st September to 3rd October 2019 in Khartoum and this will be followed by a meeting of the three ministers on October 4-5.

Following the Cairo meeting, and a number of inaccurate media reports, Dr. Sileshi briefed journalists in Addis Ababa on Wednesday (September 18). He noted that the Egyptian proposal had included taking seven years for filling the dam's reservoir and the release of 40 billion cubic meter of water annually. It also called for water to be released from the GERD to keep the water levels at the Aswan Dam at 165 meters above ground level. Dr. Sileshi said this

proposal breached the 2015 Agreement on the Declaration of Principles on GERD signed between the leaders of the three countries, and Ethiopia rejected it because it threatened to push the country into “unnecessary and harmful obligations.” It has always been Ethiopia’s firm belief that the filling and operation of the GERD are technical matters that should be dealt by technical experts as they require technical solutions.

Ethiopia will continue to negotiate in good faith and Prime Minister Dr. Abiy has repeatedly insisted the GERD construction will not harm the equitable and reasonable interest of downstream countries. Dr. Abiy said recently that finalizing the dam was a key priority according to the timeline established, to finalize the GERD project in 2023. The construction of the dam has now reached over 67, and when finished it will have a total installed power of 6,450 MW.

France’s Minister of Culture launches the Lalibela renovation project

French Minister of Culture, Franck Riester arrived in Ethiopia on Wednesday (September 18) for a two-day working visit, and on arrival officially launched the renovation project of the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, one of the UNESCO World Heritage sites in Ethiopia. The project is being carried out funding and technical support from the French Government, and a team of experts from France will be heading to Lalibela shortly to start a detailed assessment of what is necessary.

M. Riester’s visit is part of the cultural and heritage partnership initiated by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy and French President Emmanuel Macron following their meeting in Paris earlier this year; and he met with senior Ethiopian Government officials and stakeholders of the Lalibela and National Palace restoration projects. During his visit, M. Riester bestowed the award of the National Order of Arts and Letters on the famous jazz musician Mulatu Astatke, and inaugurated an exhibition of “20 years of Ethiopian contemporary painting” at the Alliance Ethio-Française in Addis-Ababa.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed received the French Minister of Culture at his office on Thursday. They discussed the progress of the restoration work of the Lalibela churches and of the Jubilee Palace, both supported by France. The Prime Minister, noting the strengthened relations between the two countries, welcomed the strong support of President Macron, encouraged expediting the restoration works. M. Riester said his visit underlined the commitment of President Macron to the preservation of heritage important to both countries, as well as the sharing technical expertise and skills.

The Prime Minister’s Office said that the studies to determine restoration needs were nearing completion for the Jubilee Palace, and the technical work is expected to begin in a few months to ready the Palace for tourism. It emphasized that developing the tourism sector was one of the government’s pillars for job creation and attracting investments, adding that preservation of heritage sites was a key priority area for the sector.

The second Ethio-Tunisia Business Forum held in Addis Ababa

A Tunisian delegation headed by Mr. Hatem Ferjani, State Minister of Tunisia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs visited Ethiopia this week (September 17-18). The delegation met Mrs. Hirut Zemene, State Minister Foreign Affairs on Tuesday to discuss bilateral and regional issues. Mrs. Hirut emphasized the efforts being made to enhance the historical relations between Ethiopia and Tunisia. She appreciated Tunisia's recent peaceful and successful election. She also noted that Tunisia attracted nine million tourists a year, and said that Ethiopia could benefit from looking at Tunisia's tourist sector experiences. Mr. Ferjani underlined possible ways to strengthen the ties between Tunisia and Ethiopia, emphasizing trade and investment possibilities.

The second Ethio-Tunisia Business Forum aiming at promoting trade and investment opportunities in Ethiopia was held at the Capital Hotel on Wednesday (September 18).

Dr. Marcos Tekle, State Minister of Foreign Affairs, delivered opening remarks, noting the success of the 6th Session of the Ethio-Tunisia Joint Ministerial Commission, which met in Tunis in March this year. This had concluded by signing cooperation agreements on a range of areas including tourism, culture, industrial technology, women's affairs, and capacity building. The State Minister said: "Ethiopia attaches great importance to its diplomatic relations with Tunisia and is keen to further enhance the relationship, partnership and cooperation at all levels." He expressed the readiness of the Ethiopian Government to welcome Tunisian investors and called on them to take advantage of the new trade and investment opportunities in Ethiopia.

Tunisia's State Minister. Hatem Ferjani, emphasized the value of economic cooperation between the two countries and assured participants that Tunisian companies were willing to invest in Ethiopia and to establish partnerships with Ethiopian counterparts. He said: "I am convinced that our joint commitment to strengthen the Tunisian-Ethiopian relations and partnership will render these a model of cooperation to be emulated by other countries in Africa and elsewhere." The COMESA representative, Salvator Matata, said that the two nations' commitment to cooperation was important and promising for liberalizing trade as both were members of COMESA.

The Forum discussed ways to strengthen relations between the two nations in trade, investment, ICT, tourism, education, agriculture, women and children affairs. Among those attending were 40 Tunisian investors, as well as representatives from the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce, the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce, the business community, officials from the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Investment Commission, and the ministries of Finance, Water, Irrigation and Energy, and Foreign Affairs.

President Isaias makes a two-day official visit to Khartoum

President Isaias Afwerki arrived in Khartoum on Saturday (September 14) for a two-day official visit to the Sudan at the invitation of General Abdul Fattah al-Burhan, President of Sudan's Sovereign Council. He was accompanied by Foreign Minister Osman Saleh and Presidential Adviser Yemane Gebreab, as well as other officials. In a six-point communiqué issued after the visit on Monday (September 16), Eritrea and Sudan expressed their determination to retrieve the lost opportunities of recent years. They agreed to work together for effective regional integration and decided to establish a High-level Committee to follow-up and implement cooperation in economic, trade, political, and diplomatic matters as well as on security and military issues. Cooperation in the defence and military fields would include

the ground forces, the air force, the marine forces, the defence industries, training and medical services; and in security, exchange of information, capacity building and efforts to stop organized cross-border crimes.

President Isaias was welcomed at the airport by General al-Burhan and senior Sudanese officials. The President expressed his delight in visiting a country with which, he said, he had such longstanding and intimate relations. He congratulated the leadership and people of Sudan for their historic achievement in bringing to an end a painful chapter that had lasted for three decades. He said the people of Eritrea would never forget the support of the Sudanese people in Eritrea's struggle for freedom.

General al-Burhan thanked President Isaias for his visit and expressed readiness to enhance all-round cooperation and relations between the two countries. A statement from the Sovereign Council said al-Burhan's meeting with President Isaias covered bilateral relations and ways to enhance joint cooperation between Sudan and Eritrea and issues of mutual interest, especially those related to the security of the Horn of Africa.

President Isaias held talks with Prime Minister Dr. Abdalla Hamdok with whom he discussed the best ways to develop existing bilateral relations in a way that "achieved common interests". Their talks covered issues of common concern, especially the security of the Red Sea region and the Horn of Africa.

President Isaias also met with Lt. General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, a member of the Sovereignty Council and commander of the Rapid Support Forces. Although President Isaias did not attend the signing ceremony of the Political Agreement and the Constitutional Declaration in Khartoum last month, he had earlier invited General al-Burhan, then head of the Transitional Military Council, to Asmara on June 14. During the visit, two leaders agreed to open the joint border and facilitate the movement of citizens, though this has yet to be implemented. The then deputy chair of the TMC, General Dagalo also visited Asmara two weeks later.

During his visit President Isaias addressed members of the Eritrean community in Khartoum at a meeting attended by religious leaders and members of the Eritrea-Sudan Friendship Association as well as Eritrean nationals living in and around Khartoum. President Isaias, who described the meeting as historic, said the promising peace prospect between the two countries was the result of the struggle and perseverance of the peoples of Eritrea and Sudan.

Sudan's Prime Minister Dr. Hamdok meets Egypt's President el-Sisi

Sudanese Prime Minister Abdullah Hamdok arrived in Cairo on Wednesday (September 18). Sudan's Minister of Cabinet Affairs, Omer Moni, described the Prime Minister's visit to Egypt as part of the framework of strengthening bilateral relations and enhancing cooperation with neighbors.

After being received at Cairo international airport by Egyptian Prime Minister, Moustafa Madbouly, he held talks with President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. They discussed means to support and strengthen cooperation and promote strategic projects between the two countries, and President el-Sisi reiterated his support to Sudan's stability and vowed to strengthen bilateral

cooperation. They also discussed Sudan's removal from the US list of state sponsors of terrorism, writing off the country's foreign debts, and the issue of comprehensive peace across the country.

Egypt's Presidency Spokesperson, Bassam Rady said that the President had underlined Egypt's support for Sudan's security, stability and its people's choices, and pledged to ensure the quick implementation of joint development projects including linking the electricity grid and railway connections. The President praised Sudan's success in overcoming this critical phase in its history and he voiced the hope that the country would "begin to take serious steps toward reaching the aspirations and hopes of the people for development." The Spokesperson said the President reaffirmed Egypt's full support for the will and choices of the Sudanese people in shaping the future of their country.

Sudan's Finance Minister Ibrahim al-Badawi said that Egypt had expressed readiness to use its regional and international relations to support Sudanese efforts for its removal from the terror list and to write off its foreign debt. He said that at a separate meeting the two prime ministers had discussed various issues including the electricity connection projects, and they had agreed to hold further meetings to discuss agriculture, the reactivation of previous agreements signed between the two countries, and establishment of strategic economic relations.

French Foreign Minister meets Sudanese leaders in Khartoum

France's Foreign Minister, Jean-Yves Le Drian, made a one-day visit to Khartoum on Monday (September 16) and promised France would support Sudan's leaders in their efforts to achieve peace with rebel groups, and would work with its European partners to remove Sudan from the U.S. list of countries sponsoring terrorism, so it could cooperate with the world economic institutions and settle its debts. He also pledged 60 million euros in aid. During his visit, M. Le Drian met with Foreign Minister Ms. Asma Mohamed Abdalla, Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok and the head of the Sovereign Council, General Abdel-Fattah al-Burhan, as well as former protest leaders.

At a joint press conference with Ms. Abdalla, M. Le Drian said France would support Sudan "in this sensitive transitional phase of its history," adding that if the transitional period was implemented as planned, Sudan would become an example to all countries of the region and the Arab world. He said France would help Sudan to normalize relations with international financial institutions to solve the debt problem, help it to reintegrate into the international community, and remove its name from the list of state sponsors of terrorism. It would also work to develop cultural relations with Sudan.

The Sudanese Foreign Minister said that the challenges facing Sudan were not only those related to the transition to democratic civil rule but the biggest challenge was to reach a comprehensive and just peace agreement. She said France had expressed its readiness "to contribute to efforts to advance the peace process in accordance with the vision of the Sudanese government, and the two sides agreed that peace in Sudan will contribute positively to the regional stability considering the important geopolitical position of Sudan." France in recent years has hosted leaders of the Darfur armed groups including Abdel Wahid al-Nur who has yet to join the peace process. M. Le Drian said France would work to convince armed groups to reach a peace agreement with the civilian-led government after the two sides charted a

roadmap for their peace talks. He said “We support the will of Sudan’s authorities to reach a peace agreement within six months.”

South Sudan peace agreement: Steps in the right direction but time is running short

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development envoy in South Sudan, Ambassador Ismail Wais, welcomed the outcome of the meeting between President Kiir and opposition leader Riek Machar last week. He described it as a positive and significant step in the right direction. In a statement on Friday last week (September 13), he said IGAD was pleased with the positive progress (achieved by the two leaders) in the implementation of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. "

The two leaders at their meeting on Wednesday had discussed implementation of several matters necessary before formation of the transitional government in November. They had agreed to form a committee to look into the final report of the Independent Boundary Commission on the number of states and their boundaries and come up with findings suitable for both parties and people of South Sudan. They had discussed security arrangements, draft constitutional amendments, security laws, peace dissemination, and funding the peace process as well as the matter of engaging with non-signatories to the revitalized peace accord.

Ambassador Wais said that only unity and compromise could allow the completion of the remaining critical tasks of the implementation process. He said: "The mood in Juba is very encouraging," adding that it was feasible to form a unity government in November 2019. He renewed calls for the non- signatory groups to join the revitalized peace deal and to take part in nation-building, and stressed need for the international community to back the "positive momentum" of the talks and provide necessary support for the completion of remaining tasks.

The European Union also hailed the talks, stressing that trust between the political leaders was of the essence and urged them to continue meeting regularly to take the peace process forward resolutely and firmly. A statement said that while it was positive that the ceasefire continued to hold with only two months before the end of the extended pre-transitional period, it was necessary for “the pace and the quality of implementation to urgently increase” in order to facilitate the formation of the transitional government in November.” The statement said: “We expect all parties to work in a spirit of goodwill and compromise, reflecting the constructive atmosphere of the talks between the leaders this week.” The EU said it would continue to support the process of peace in close coordination with IGAD, the African Union, the United Nations and the wider international community.

The Chairman of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, Lt. General Njoroge, who said the leaders’ meeting was critical to build trust and confidence and address the challenges facing implementation, told the Commission’s monthly meeting in Juba on Thursday last week, that time was running short. He said cantonment, selection and training for half of the necessary unified force of 83,000 troops should be completed by the end of September. Some progress had been made but General Njoroge called on the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Commission to operationalize an action plan immediately. This, he said, was vital for the cantonment process. He reminded the parties that there was only two months to accomplish the remaining critical pending Pre-Transitional tasks. The Egyptian government announced at the weekend it had sent three shipments of medicines, tents and military uniforms

to Juba last week and was sending another two shipments to support the establishment of cantonment sites.

Meanwhile, the African Council of Religious Leaders, in a statement issued on Monday September 16) after meeting in Nairobi, expressed concern over the progress of implementation of the September 2018 revitalized peace agreement. The statement said the agreement had reduced violence but the humanitarian crisis had resulted in the deaths of thousands of people with over 2 million displaced. It said the crisis could only be resolved if political leaders embraced true peace and loved their people and the nation, adding: “South Sudanese leaders have a moral obligation to their citizens to end the violence and ensure continued progress toward peace, stability and justice.” The statement, which also emphasized disquiet over “increasing criminal acts, human rights violations and political intolerance in several locations in South Sudan,” said “failure to implement the agreement risks the country collapsing back into war and destruction and exacerbates the misery and hopelessness of the millions of South Sudanese forced to flee their homes because of war, including the almost 3 million refugees living in neighboring countries.”

IMF first review under the 4th Somali Staff Monitored Program

An International Monetary Fund staff team met with the Somali authorities to carry out the first review under the fourth successive Staff Monitored Program, covering the period May 2019 - July 2020. The 4th Staff Monitored Program is part of the ongoing agreement between Somalia and IMF to allow monitoring of the government’s efforts to mobilize revenues, including across the Federal Member States, to strengthen public financial management, enhance financial sector stability, and strengthen compliance with the framework for anti-money laundering and combating financing of terrorism.

The meeting, attended by Finance Minister Abdirahman Beyle, was held last week in Addis Ababa. In a subsequent statement this week, the IMF praised Somalia’s commitment to realizing debt relief, noting robust revenue mobilization, new mobile regulations and agreements between the Federal Government and Federal Member States on securing debt relief ‘despite broader political differences’. It said economic growth was projected to remain broadly stable at 2.9 % this year, but warned that inflation could be expected to increase temporarily to 4.0% in 2019 due to higher food prices as a result of poor rainfall earlier in the year. Other key risks to the outlook continued to reflect the difficult security situation and vulnerability to climate shocks.

The statement said the IMF staff welcomed the authorities’ ongoing commitment to reform and noted all the structural benchmarks for the first review had been met. Although risks remained, it also said progress was being made towards meeting those set for the second review. The fiscal policy framework continued to strengthen, with domestic revenue mobilization up to July exceeding the target set in the program. The plan to revise projections for domestic revenue for 2019 in the forthcoming supplementary budget reflected this strong performance. It also noted the government had decided to set aside some specific savings to ensure critical expenditure could be met even if there were unexpected revenue shortfalls. The IMF also welcomed the new mobile money regulations, describing them as a further important step in protecting financial stability.