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**Africa and the African Union**

The 36th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union was officially opened on Thursday (February 6) at 10:00 EAT in Addis Ababa in the presence of the leaders and officials of the AU Commission. The opening ceremony included, among others, a speech by the Chairperson of the Executive Council, and a welcome remark by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission. **(See article)**

More than half of the total 55 African countries have ratified the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) that will go into force on July 1, 2020, AU Trade and Industry Commission disclosed on Thursday (February 6). Briefing journalists on leveraging AfCFTA in silencing the guns in Africa, Trade and Industry Commissioner Muchanga Albert said “28 countries have ratified the agreement and more are expected to deposit instruments of ratification during the upcoming summit.” He added that establishment of regime on rules of origin, development of schedules of tariff concession in trade in goods, non-tariff barriers monitoring and others are underway to ensure the continental trade is rolled out on time. “We are working towards deeper integration of African countries and economies,” Muchanga noted. According to him, AfCFTA broadens the policy space for development and complements the program of silencing the guns in Africa.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Mediation Support Unit (MSU) has conducted Training of Trainers Workshop on 3-5 February for women from Sudan’s Nuba Mountains and Blue Nile regions –with the aim of equipping the group with skills and knowledge on preventive diplomacy and mediation. The 3-day training will enhance mediation, negotiation and conflict resolution capacities of Sudanese women from conflict zones to strengthen and capacitate networks of trained women peace builders and mediators.

AMISOM, in a statement issued on Sunday (February 2) congratulated all the newly elected members of the Galmudug State Assembly, the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, the President and the Deputy President of the Federal Member State of Galmudug and wishes them success in their new positions. AMISOM is aware that a lot still needs to be done and urges President Ahmed Abdi Kariye to continue with the spirit of the Galmudug Reconciliation Conference and ensure that all stakeholders that constitute the State of Galmudug have a guaranteed place around him, the statement reads.

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) military commanders have resolved to cut another 1,000 troops from the regional peacekeeping force despite increased attacks from Al-Shabaab militants. According to AMISOM, the drawdown of an additional 1,000 uniformed personnel will take place by February 28. "The meeting agreed to implement the drawdown as per the timelines and to further study the implications to ensure mitigation of potential risks of reversing the security gains so far achieved," said the AU mission this week. Under a transition plan agreed in 2017, AMISOM is also required to conduct gradual handover to Somali security forces, secure main supply routes, reduce the threat posed by Al-Shabaab and conduct targeted offensive operations that support the transition plan, among other deliverables.

## **Ethiopia**

Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan on Saturday (February 1) concluded the negotiation held on the filling and operation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). Foreign and Water Affairs Ministers of the three countries and their delegations consisting of legal and water technical experts took part in the talks. The four-day negotiation held in Washington D.C. was also attended by the United States Department of Treasury and the World Bank as observers. The countries have reached a general understanding on the rules and guidelines concerning mitigation measures during drought, prolonged drought, and prolonged periods of dry years. The outstanding issues will be resolved at subsequent negotiations and documents detailing rules and guidelines on filling and operation will be prepared. Documents to be signed by the end of February, 2020 will be further deliberated by legal team supported by technical team. **(See article)**

Organized by Institute for Strategic Affairs (ISA), a seminar on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) negotiations was held on Thursday (February 6). The discussion which took place in Addis Ababa was attended by Dr. Seleshi Bekele, Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy As members of the Ethiopian National Panel of Experts and the GERD negotiation team, Engineer Gedion Asfaw, Engineer Kifle Horo and Tefera Beyene also attended the event. **(See article)**

Ethiopia's Minister of Defense Lemma Megersa, met on Saturday (February 1) with Florence Parly, Minister of Defense of France. Henok Teferra, Ethiopia's Ambassador to France said that the two sides held a productive discussion. Minister Lemma also held talks with Admiral Bernard Rogel, Chief of General Staff at French Presidency. The two countries agreed to scale up their cooperation with support for Ethiopia's navy establishment and modernization of Air Force. Last Thursday, Lemma also met with Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne, French State Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Foreign Minister Gedu Andargachew has held a series of meetings on the sidelines of the 36th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union which has been held in Addis Ababa on 6-7 February 2020. **(See article)**

President Sahle-Work Zewde has praised UNESCO for its ability to bring together people from across the world to work together to tackle problems. "UNESCO has, as it always does, brought relevant stakeholders from all over the world to exchange ideas and deliberate on next steps," she stated. She was speaking at UNESCO's International Commission on the Futures of Education meeting held to take stock of the global situation in education on Saturday (February 1) and what can be predicted for 2050 and beyond. The International Commission, chaired by President Sahle-Work, held its first meeting on 28 and 29 January 2020 at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed visited on Saturday (February 1) the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) project. Following the visit, a presentation of the project's progress was made to the Prime Minister by heads of the project. Reflecting on the progress, the PM recounted the enormity of the vision and emphasized the importance of working effectively to realize dreams. The Prime Minister expressed commitment to equitable usage of the waters without any ill intentions for downstream countries, according to office of the prime Minister.

The Ministry of Health said it has tightened measures to prevent the spread of Coronavirus to Ethiopia from other countries. The country is undertaking screening of travelers arriving at Bole International Airport and 27 other entry/exit points, said the Ministry of Health in a statement issued on Monday (February 3). The Ministry indicated that it has so far screened 47, 162 travelers. Following the screening, additional four people with suspected Coronavirus have been put into isolation, it said. Three of the suspected cases were Ethiopian nationals and had been held in quarantine centers at Bole Chefa in Addis Ababa and Axum, Tigray regional state. The fourth suspected case was a Chinese national. Their blood samples sent to South Africa for further examination have tested negative, said the Ministry.

Ethiopia is facing a "life and death" stage of the politics of intrigue, said the country's prime minister in a meeting on Monday (February 3) with members of parliament. An intrigued politics and extremism are growing at the heart of state's integrity, said Abiy Ahmed. "Foreign terrorist groups have been moving in, using Ethiopia's transition as an opportunity to wreak havoc on the country," he said. He said over the last year the terrorist group al-Shabaab recruited young people in the regional states of Oromia and Amhara. "This is a test, and a difficult social and political milieu that the country has now found itself in," he said. "But I am confident we will surmount all these challenges and move forward to prosperity."

State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hirut Zemene received on Tuesday (February 4) China's Assistant Foreign Minister Chen Xiaodong. The State Minister briefed Chen Xiaodong on the preparations being made to celebrate the 50th year anniversary of the diplomatic relations between Ethiopia and China. Ethiopia is confident in China's capacity to control Coronavirus outbreak, she said, adding Ethiopia, as usual, stands in solidarity with China to control the spread of the disease. China is working closely with WHO to control the outbreak, Xiaodong said,

adding the government is committed to protect foreigners and Ethiopians living in China from the virus.

The Ethiopian Embassy in Qatar in collaboration with Qatari company KON held the Ethiopian Business Forum, (EBF 2020) on Monday (February 3) at the Millennium Hotel in Doha.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed inaugurated on Tuesday (February 4) the Genale Dawa III hydropower project. The 254MW power project was built with \$451 million on Dawa River, Southeast Ethiopia. Launched in 2010, the 110 meter high and 426 meter long dam has the capacity to hold 2.5 billion cubic meters of water. The project was undertaken by China Gezhouba Group Company Limited (CGGC).

‘Addis Weg’ expert’s round table took place on Wednesday (February 5) at the office of the Prime Minister. The roundtable, which aimed to gather information that would be beneficial for the agricultural sector, had been held under the theme “key reforms of the agricultural sector!” Dr. Anteneh Girma, from the Ministry of Agriculture, provided a briefing on the key reform measures undertaken by the government to increase the role of stakeholders.

Regional training on emerging and re-emerging animal and zoonotic pathogens is underway in Ethiopia. DR Congo, Niger, Senegal and Namibia are participating in the four-day training (February 4-8) organized by the Ministry International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The training would help build the countries’ capacity to diagnose animal and zoonotic pathogens using efficient and cost effective tools.

Ethiopia is implementing the third phase of the Urban Institutional and Infrastructure Development Program (UIIDP). The program was implemented in 19 urban areas in the first phase and in 44 in the second phase, said the Ministry of Urban Development and Construction on Wednesday (February 5). The third phase was launched last year in 117 urban areas at a cost of 859 million US dollars, said the Ministry in a press conference issued on Wednesday (February 5). UIIDP which was implemented in the past 11 months created job opportunities for more than 800,000 unemployed youth, the Ministry noted.

Ethiopian Airlines said on Wednesday (February 5) it will not suspend flights to China following an outbreak of the Coronavirus. Ethiopian currently operates a total of 35 flights per week to five gateways in China-Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chengdu and Hong Kong. Ethiopian Group CEO, Tewolde Gebremariam said that suspending flights to China cannot be an immunity to combat the spread of the virus to Ethiopia. “Ethiopian operates many international flights and suspending flights only to China won’t be an immunity to prevent the spread of the disease,” he said. “The only solution is to make the necessary care for passengers and staff,” the CEO noted.

## **Djibouti**

Finance Ministers of Ethiopia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya and Somalia met on Monday (February 3) in Djibouti to discuss on policy directives that seek fostering economic integration and regional cooperation in the Horn of Africa. In the two-day meeting, the ministers evaluated the joint trade and investment activities undertaken since the five countries came together to launch

the Horn of Africa Initiative last year. After considering the global experiences in regional integration, the countries discussed ways to search sources of finance for the \$15 billion required to foster cooperation. **(See article)**

## **Kenya**

Former Kenyan President Daniel arap Moi, the country's longest-serving leader, has died aged 95. President Uhuru Kenyatta announced his death, saying the nation had lost a "great man" in a statement carried by the state broadcaster on Tuesday (February 4). President Kenyatta has declared a period of mourning, including the flying of flags at half-mast, until a state funeral is held for Mr Moi. Meanwhile, Ethiopia's President Sahle-work Zewde has issued a statement expressing condolences over the death of former Kenyan President Daniel Torotich Arap Moi. In a message delivered to Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta, President Sahle-work Zewde said that she was deeply shocked and saddened to hear of the death of the great leader of Africa. In her message, the President pointed out Daniel Arap Moi's significant role in the liberation of Kenya and in the formation of IGAD for the betterment of the region. Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Abiy Ahmed also has expressed his condolences over the death of former Kenyan President. He expressed his heartfelt condolences to Kenyans, the Kenyan Government and the families of the late president on their saddest loss.

President Kenyatta held a meeting with US President Donald Trump at the White House on Thursday (February 6) where they agreed to commence talks leading to a trade pact between Kenya & the US. The two leaders said a new trade pact would help increase trade & investment volumes between the two nations. President Kenyatta said Kenya needs to move faster and set the pace for other African countries in formulating new trade and investment arrangements with the United States as the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) comes to an end in 2025. He told the Kenya-US forum that his Administration is committed to develop and conclude the strongest ever trade & investment framework that would deliver increased trade between the two nations. President Kenyatta has assured that a new bilateral trade deal between Kenya and the US won't undermine the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA). The President made the assurance when he addressed business leaders attending a US-Kenya Trade Forum in Washington DC.

## **Somalia**

The Ugandan military plans to begin the second phase of withdrawing its peacekeeping troops from Somalia by the end of February. Xinhua news agency reports an army official to say that the second-condition-based drawdown of it's over 6,000 troops serving under the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) will take place by Feb. 28. "The numbers are yet to be decided upon and consultations continue. The drawdown (plan) in all fairness should be conditions based," Brig. Richard Karemire said. AMISOM military commanders resolved in January to cut down another additional 1,000 troops from the regional peacekeeping force in Somalia. Somalia

is expected to fully take over the security responsibility of its borders once the AMISOM troops complete their evacuation.

In coordination with the Federal Government of Somalia, U.S. Africa Command conducted an airstrike targeting an al-Shabaab terrorist in the vicinity of Jilib, Somalia on Sunday (February 2). "Al-Shabaab is an al-Qaeda affiliate seeking to further its jihadist agenda," said U.S. Army Maj. Gen. William Gayler, director of operations, U.S. Africa Command. "Removal of even one terrorist makes the region and the U.S. safer. Continuous pressure on the network is necessary to prevent al-Shabaab from building a safe haven and exporting violence." Initial assessment concluded the airstrike killed one (1) terrorist. U.S. Africa Command also conducted an airstrike against al-Shabab militants in Somalia on Tuesday — a strike that comes on the heels of several operations and airstrikes in Somalia last month that resulted in the destruction of two al-Shabab compounds.

A regional security minister in Somalia arrested for “serious crimes” on 31 August 2019, who recently escaped from detention and is currently in Kenya, must be returned to face justice, Amnesty International said on Monday (February 3). “It is unconscionable that Abdirashid Janan, who is suspected of responsibility for crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations, has evaded attempts to bring him to justice,” said Seif Magango, Amnesty International’s Deputy Director for East Africa, the Horn and the Great Lakes. Meanwhile, Somali government troops have taken control of Bula Hawo and Dolow towns near the border with Kenya on Wednesday (February 5). It came after Jubbaland security minister Abdirashid Janan, who escaped government detention in Mogadishu, arrived in the town on Tuesday (February 4) and held meetings there. A Kenyan aircraft flew him to Bulo Hawo, according to reports. The Somali police have issued an international warrant of arrest for Janan and have asked the Interpol to assist in the matter. Somalia also urged Kenya to arrest Janan and hand him over as soon as possible. The Somali Federal Government on Wednesday sent a warning to Kenya, saying that the use of Kenyan peacekeepers inside Somalia for interference in internal Somali affairs will not be accepted.

At least 18 people including eight Somali government soldiers and 10 al-Shabaab militants were killed, and more than 13 others wounded when fighters from al-Shabaab attacked Somali National Army and African Union peacekeeping mission troops bases in the middle Shabelle region on Sunday (February 2). Hassan Ibrahim, a military official in the region said that the main attack took place at AMISOM and SNA base in the vicinity of Qalimow in the region. "The terrorist group al-Shabaab attacked our base in Qalimow on Sunday morning. Eight soldiers were killed, more than 13 others wounded but we have killed more than 10 al-Shabaab militants," Ibrahim said.

Somalia's federal authorities and the United Nations (UN) are calling for urgent humanitarian assistance to avert an acute food insecurity situation that could threaten millions of people. The call was made during the launch of the post-Deyr (October - December) seasonal Food Security and Nutrition Assessment for Somalia on Monday (February 3). The assessment notes that up to 1.3 million people in Somalia face acute food security and require urgent humanitarian assistance. At the same time, more than 690,000 children below five years of age could become acutely malnourished by the end of the year.

Bangladesh has agreed partially pay to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as debt relief for Somalia under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, as per a letter sent by the finance ministry on Wednesday (February 5) to the Washington-based multilateral lender. Somalia, a majority Muslim nation just like Bangladesh, is among the top ten poorest countries of the world. "Therefore, Bangladesh's international image would benefit from the grant," said a finance ministry official.

Somalia has joined many other countries in expressing solidarity with China in the fight against the novel Coronavirus. Earlier this week, Somalia's foreign minister Ahmed Isse Awad hosted the Chinese Ambassador to Somalia Qin Jian at his residence. Awad assured the ambassador of his country's solidarity with China as it confronts Coronavirus. Health officials in Somalia have heightened surveillance at all ports of entry to contain the spread of the virus. Meanwhile, the Somali mission to China says all fifty Somali nationals residing in Wuhan, the epicenter of Coronavirus in China are all in good condition, with none of them affected.

Somalia on Sunday (February 2) declared a locust infestation sweeping the Horn of Africa to be a national emergency, as insects devastated food supplies in one of the world's poorest and most vulnerable regions. "The ministry of agriculture ... has declared a national emergency in view of the current desert locust upsurge that poses a major threat to Somalia's fragile food security situation," a ministry statement read. Experts said the locust swarms were the result of extreme weather swings and Somalia's declaration, the first country in the region to do so, was aimed at boosting national efforts to tackle the hungry insects. The locusts have led to what the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has termed the "worst situation in 25 years" in the Horn of Africa.

Turkey's parliament approved an extension on Wednesday (February 5) of Turkish forces serving in the Gulf of Aden, Somalia and the Arabian Sea. Parliament ratified a motion extending the authorization of the deployment until Feb. 10, 2021. Since it was first approved by parliament in 2008, the motion for the deployment has been extended 12 times. The Gulf of Aden, near Yemen and close to the world's fourth-biggest chokepoint for oil transit, the Bab el-Mandab Strait, is a strategic energy route for Mideast crude oil.

Somali jihadist group Al-Shabaab has expelled top members of its executive council after they expressed concern over attacks against civilians, according to Somalia's intelligence agency. Attacks on civilians have intensified in the past year in Somalia, and the group are thought to have struck nearly 800 times in 2019. Al-Shabaab's leader Ahmed Diriye fired senior members Mahad Karate and Bashir Qorgab after the two asked him to stop targeting civilians in the capital Mogadishu, the National Intelligence and Security Agency, said on Twitter on Tuesday (February 4).

## **South Sudan**

South African presidency last week said President Salva Kiir was in Pretoria for talks on the implementation of the comprehensive peace agreement. On Thursday (January 30) the South Sudanese presidency said that Kiir headed to South Africa in a three-day work visit without further details. For its part, the presidency in Pretoria issued a statement saying the visiting South

Sudanese leader would discuss with President Cyril Ramaphosa the implementation of the revitalized peace agreement.

The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union on Wednesday (February 5) said that the South Sudanese government released \$40m for the implementation of the revitalized peace agreement. The Council in a statement released on 5 February said that the government disbursed 40 million dollars. The PSC “Takes note of the 40 million United States Dollars released by the government for support to the implementation process of the Revitalized Agreement”. Further, the regional body called “for the urgent release of the balance of funds” required to undertake critical tasks towards the formation of the national unity government. **(See article)**

The U.N. special envoy on sexual violence in conflict on Tuesday (February 4) welcomed the release of 78 women and 50 children held by the SPLM-IO in South Sudan’s Western Equatorial region. The released women were part of more than 500 abducted between April and August 2018 and subjected to repeated rape, sexual slavery and forced marriage by the rebel group according to a report by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in October 2018. "I welcome the release of these women and children, which follows many months of sustained advocacy and engagement by my Office, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), and the Senior Women Protection Advisor with Dr. Riek Machar and his local commanders," said Special Representative Pramila Patten.

United Nations Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan nowadays is visiting the country to inspect the situation ahead of the formation of a national unity government this month. The eighth mission of the human rights three commissioners started on Monday (February 3) and will be concluded on 9 February 2020. The Commission will report on the human rights situation in South Sudan to the Human Rights Council in March 2020. "The Commissioners intend to visit camps and settlements for internally displaced persons across South Sudan, including UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) Protection of Civilian sites, to meet those living there as well as holding discussions with community leaders and civil society organizations, including women’s organizations," said the UNHCR. Also, the commissioners are expected to meet Government officials, civil society groups, diplomats, UN agencies and UNMISS head and the mission’s senior staff, to discuss the current human rights situation in the country.

## **Sudan**

The African Union’s Peace and Security Council (PSC) voiced concerns over the continued designation of Sudan as a State Sponsor of Terrorism (SST) by the American administration. In a statement released on Wednesday (February 6), the Council welcomed the diplomatic rapprochement between the U.S. and Sudan, and Washington’s decision to remove Sudan from its list of governments that are engaging in or tolerating systematic and ongoing religious freedom violations. **(See article)**

The armed groups of the Sudanese Revolutionary Front (SRF) on Saturday (February 1) announced their willingness to meet with the ruling coalition Forces for Freedom and Change

(FFC) to discuss differences on ways to achieve peace during the transitional period. After the collapse of the al-Bashir regime, the FFC and the SRF traded accusations over the formation of the transitional government, the appointment of states' governors and the formation of the transitional legislative council. Recently, the armed groups in Darfur have called to extend the transitional period.

In a troubling public meeting held in the capital of South Darfur on Saturday (February 1) Sadiq al-Mahdi, head of the National Umma Party (NUP) repeated his call to hand over the ousted President Omer al-Bashir to the International Criminal Court. Al-Mahdi is touring the country to rebuild his party 30 years after a military coup by the Sudanese Islamists waged war and dismantled the social fabric of his main electoral bastion of Darfur.

The head of Sudan's Transitional Council Abdel Fattah al-Burhan received an invitation to visit Washington this week, said the official news agency SUNA on Sunday (February 2). SUNA added that the "official invitation" was conveyed by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in a phone call with al-Burhan. "Pompeo invited the President of the Sovereign Council to visit the United States of America to discuss bilateral relations between the two countries and ways of developing them," further said the agency

Sudan's paramilitary force of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on Sunday (February 2) arrested four members of the South Sudanese armed opposition group National Salvation Movement (NAS). The four NAS members are indicted of "disturbing security and safety, purchasing uniforms and military insignia, stirring up war against the state, transnational organized crime, sabotage and war, disturbing relations with South Sudan and working to create tensions between the two countries," said the RSF spokesman Jamal Juma.

The Islamist Popular Congress Party (PCP) on Sunday (February 2) said that the authorities arrested a leading member of the party in connection with the ongoing investigations on the 1989 coup that brought to power the ousted president, Omer al-Bashir. Omer Abdel-Marouf was taken from his home in al-Manshiya suburb in Khartoum state by a police force on Sunday, for questioning regarding participation in planning the coup, and then he was transferred to Kober Prison. He is the third PCP leader who is arrested under the Islamist coup's investigation. The authorities have already arrested both PCP General Secretary Ali al-Haj and the head of the PCP Shura Council, Ibrahim al-Sanoussi.

The Trump administration last week on Friday (January 31) announced an expansion of the travel ban to include six new countries. Immigration restrictions will be imposed on Nigeria, Eritrea, Tanzania, Sudan, Kyrgyzstan and Myanmar, with exceptions for immigrants who have helped the US. The administration has argued that the travel ban is vital to national security and ensures countries meet US security needs, by requiring a certain level of identity management and information sharing requirements.

Sudan and Israel on Monday (February 3) agreed to work for normalizing bilateral relations, according to the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who spoke after a meeting in Uganda with Abdel Fattah al-Burhan the head of the Transitional Council. "I met in Entebbe with the Chairman of Sudan's Sovereign Council Abdel Fattah al-Buهران, and we agreed to

start a cooperation that will normalize relations between the two countries. The meeting between al-Burhan and Netanyahu was organized by President Yoweri Museveni. Meanwhile, the head of Transitional Sovereign Council has admitted he overstepped his constitutional powers when he met with the Israeli prime minister but he stressed it was motivated by Sudan's national security. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan met with Benjamin Netanyahu in Uganda and agreed to work for normalizing bilateral relations. The government did not condemn the meeting but issued a statement saying they were not informed of this step. The Sudanese Prime Minister Abdallah Hamdok on Wednesday (February 5) welcomed the statement issued by the chairman of the Transitional Sovereign Council over his meeting with Israel's Prime Minister. "We welcome General Burhan's statement about his meeting with the Prime Minister of Israel," Hamdok said in a series of tweets posted on Wednesday morning.

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### ***AU Holds the 36<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of Executive Council***

The 36th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union was officially opened on Thursday (February 6) at 10:00 EAT in Addis Ababa in the presence of the leaders and officials of the AU Commission. The opening ceremony included, among others, a speech by the Chairperson of the Executive Council, and a welcome remark by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

The Executive Council considered the draft agenda and the draft decisions and declarations of the Assembly with appropriate recommendations for consideration by the Heads of State scheduled to take place from 9-10 February 2020.

The meeting of the Executive Council brought together all the Ministers of the 55 African Union Member States based in Addis Ababa, as well as AU officials.

For two days Participants deliberated on the report of the Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC); the Annual Report on the Activities of the Union and its Organs for the period of January to December 2019 and the 14th Report of the Africa Union Commission (AUC) Chairperson on the implementation of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA).

The Executive Council also considered the reports and updates of the sub-committees of the Executive Council and Ad-hoc Ministerial Committees, among others, on the theme of the Year 2019: "Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons: Towards Durable Solutions to Forced Displacement in Africa"; Statute for the Establishment of African Centre for the Study and Research on Migration; the 3rd Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment; Statute of the African Peer Review Mechanism; and the Progress Made by the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

The Council also conducted the election and appointment of One (1) Member of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), Six (6) Members of

the African Union Commission on International Law (AUCIL), Ten (10) Members of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union- where Ethiopia has been elected to secure a seat for two years.

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### ***FM Gedu holds series of bilateral meetings on sidelines of Au Summit***

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia Gedu Andargachew has met with Dr. Vincent Biruta, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Rwanda on Thursday (February 5) to discuss issues of mutual concern.

Gedu congratulated Dr. Biruta for his appointment as Rwandan Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and expressed his belief that relations between the two countries will be strengthened during Dr. Biruta's tenure. Gedu also briefed his Rwandan counterpart on the recent talks Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt have held regarding the filling and operation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.

On his part, Dr. Biruta commended the strong bilateral relations the two countries have and underlined the need to continue cooperating in continental and other multilateral fora. The two foreign ministers have agreed to hold a joint committee meeting which the two countries have set up to help strengthen cooperation. Dr. Vincent Biruta has been appointed as the Rwandan Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation in November 2019.

Mr. Gedu on Thursday (February 5) also held discussion with the Foreign Minister of Kenya Raychelle Omamo on ways of further enhancing bilateral relations and cooperation in the multilateral fora. Gedu appreciated the long-standing and consistently peaceful relationship between the two countries which is based on trust and mutual respect. The two countries should strive to implement their agreement to scale up their relations to a strategic partnership level through widening cooperation and engagement in the socio-economic arena, he added. Gedu also took the opportunity to express his condolences to the Government and people of Kenya on the passing away of Kenya's former President Daniel arap Moi. The two countries should further expand their cooperation with IGAD, the African Union, the UN, and other international fora too, he said.

Kenya's Foreign Minister Raychelle Omamo commended the constantly growing relations between the two countries. She underscored the need to work together to identify common projects that can improve the lives of the people of Ethiopia and Kenya who, she said, "share similar lifestyles, customs, and language in addition to borders." In particular, Raychelle Omamo noted that the two countries need to work together in designing a joint project to protect their people from the worst locust invasion that is currently ravaging East Africa and the destructive force of flooding in the region.

Mr. Gedu Andargachew also on Thursday (February 6) held discussions with Irish and Palestine Special Envoys to the African Union on the sidelines of the 36th African Union Executive Council meeting. In his meeting with Ambassador Kenneth Thompson, the Special Envoy of the Government of Ireland, Gedu appreciated the cordial relations between the two countries and urged Ireland to continue its successful development program in Ethiopia.

Ambassador Kenneth said Ireland will continue to strengthen its comprehensive and long-standing relationship with Ethiopia and he assured that the Irish Government would provide the necessary support for Irish investors to invest in Ethiopia. In related news, Gedu also exchanged views on Ethiopia's ongoing reform and issues related to the filling and operation of GERD with the Minister of Labor and Special Envoy of Palestine, Dr. Nasri Abu Jaish. Dr. Nasri Abu Jaish appreciated Ethiopia's role in promoting peace and stability in Africa and expressed his belief that the ongoing talks on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam would be completed peacefully. Palestinian is committed to further strengthen its cooperation with Ethiopia, Dr. Nasri added.

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### ***Latest Statement on Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt Talks Over GERD***

The Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Water Resources of Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan and their delegations met with the Secretary of the Treasury and the President of the World Bank, participating as observers in negotiations on the filling and operation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), in Washington, D.C. on January 28-31, 2020. At the conclusion of the meetings, the Ministers reached an agreement on the following issues, subject to the final signing of the comprehensive agreement:

1. a schedule for a stage based filling plan of the GERD;
2. a mitigation mechanism for the filling of the GERD during drought, prolonged drought, and prolonged periods of dry years; and
3. a mitigation mechanism for the annual and long-term operation of the GERD in drought, prolonged drought, and prolonged periods of dry years.

They also discussed and agreed to finalize a mechanism for the annual and long-term operation of the GERD in normal hydrological conditions, a coordination mechanism, and provisions for the resolution of disputes and the sharing of information. Moreover, they also agreed to address dam safety and pending studies on the environmental and social impacts of the GERD.

The Ministers have instructed their technical and legal teams to prepare the final agreement, which shall include the agreements reached above, for a signing of the three countries by the end of February, 2020.

The Ministers recognize the significant regional benefits that will result from this agreement and from the operation of the dam with respect to transboundary cooperation, regional development and economic integration. The Ministers reaffirmed the importance of transboundary

cooperation in the development of the Blue Nile to improve the lives of the people of Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan.

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### ***Djibouti Hosts Horn of Africa Initiative Ministerial Meeting***

The Horn of Africa Initiative (HoA) Finance Ministers and Senior Officials from Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia held a two-day meeting on 3 -4, February focusing on promoting economic integration and regional cooperation in Djibouti. The meeting was aimed at reviewing the overall policy approach to ensure effective trade amongst the countries. The ministerial meeting conferred as well on how to finance identified critical economic corridors, prioritized infrastructural projects, and regulatory changes required. In this aspect, the meeting has been able to demonstrate the need to mobilize over 15 billion USD investment.

In delivering a speech, Dr. Eyob Tekalign, State Minister of Finance said: “So much progress has been made since we have launched this initiative last year to take forward the collective desire of our countries to deepen regional economic integration and promote regional cooperation by leveraging the renewed political momentum in the Horn of Africa.”

The State Minister also affirmed his country’s commitment to work towards better coordination among the Horn countries. He emphasized the need to prioritize collaboration on job creation for the vast- working-age youth in the sub-region and stressed the need to further develop infrastructure networks in transport, energy and digital sectors to bring about an effective and functional market in the Horn. Taking into account that this part of the world has suffered through years of conflict, the State Minister emphasized that much care should be taken so countries do not undermine the remarkable progress being made in terms of promoting peace and stability in the region which is critical in promoting regional integration. Furthermore, he explained the importance of addressing climate change and promoting resilience to reduce the region's vulnerability to shock.

This Ministerial meeting was able to allow the ministers to update their plans for the outreach to financing partners and in ensuring implementation readiness of the Initiative. The Ministers also discussed requirements for providing coordination support to the Initiative. Countries under the HoA Initiative have been instrumental in providing oversight and guidance for the work over implementing agreements reached to promote trade and economic integration.

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### ***AU Peace and Security Council meeting on the Situation in Sudan***

The Council admired the Transitional Sovereign Council and the Transitional Government of Sudan for their ongoing cooperation, commitment and coordinated engagements in addressing the multiple challenges facing the country and called on all Sudanese stakeholders to maintain the cooperative spirit thus far displayed. The council called on the Government of Sudan to remain committed to the timelines articulated in the Constitutional Declaration and implement

the priority areas of the peace process, especially the appointment of Civilian Governors to the States, as well as the establishment of the Sudanese Legislative Council. The Council also Noted with appreciation the efforts exerted by the government of Sudan to take control of the management of public assets, companies and entities formerly held illegally by the previous government, therefore, strongly urged the government of Sudan to transform these public assets, companies and entities and place them under civilian control.

The Council welcomed the diplomatic rapprochement between the Governments of the United States of America (USA) and Sudan, including recent announcements of exchange of Ambassadors by the two countries for the first time in 23 years. It also welcomed the commitment by the USA to continue providing financial assistance towards the recovery and development of Sudan and further welcomed the decision by the United States Department of State to remove Sudan from its list of governments that are engaging in or tolerating systematic and ongoing religious freedom violations. The council, however, stated that it is concerned over the continued listing by the US of Sudan as a State Sponsor of Terrorism (SST) which, the council said, “continued to negatively affect the political, economic and security transition of Sudan.” Welcomes the commitment expressed by the Government of Sudan to compensate the families of the victims of terrorist attacks for the bombing of the United States Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 and the carrier USS Cole in 2000, as part of the efforts towards the delisting of Sudan as a state sponsor of terrorism;

The Council welcomed the confirmation by the USA government that the Sudan government is no longer under economic or trade sanctions and, therefore, no government or company doing business with or in Sudan would be liable under US laws and therefore wishes to encourage governments and companies, wishing to do so, to invest in Sudan in order to help the Sudan resuscitate its economy.

It also urgently called on Sudan and the international financial institutions to intensify their engagements in order to facilitate the country’s access to concessional loans that will be critical to its economic recovery and encouraged the government Sudan and the international financial institutions to engage in transparent and constructive discussions on how this matter should be addressed, without undermining the current fragile economic situation in Sudan;

The Council also urged the AU Commission Chairperson to elevate and sustain the AU participation in the Friends of Sudan meetings, in order to contribute towards the search for lasting peace in Sudan. It also reaffirmed the determination of the AU, in close coordination with the international community, to assist the Government of Sudan in all efforts aimed at ending the conflicts in Sudan and restoring peace, security, stability and development.

The Council also noted the persistent challenges posed by the presence of individuals who may be keen to undermine current efforts to attain peace, security and stability in Sudan, and undertakes to impose punitive measures on any one with such intentions and calls on the international community to do the same. The Council finally reiterated its decision of the 884th meeting of the PSC held on 10 October 2019, to visit the Republic of Sudan, in 2020, with a view to express AU’s solidarity to the Government and the people of Sudan and better

understand the developments in the country since the signing of the Constitutional Declaration; in this regard, agreed to undertake this visit in February 2020.

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### ***AU Peace and Security Council meeting on the Situation in South Sudan***

In a statement released on Wednesday (February 7, 2020), the African Union Peace and Security Council extended its appreciation for all of the positive strides made by parties participating in the South Sudan peace process while pointing out some measures that should be taken seriously by the peace deal signatory parties. The Council applauded President Salva Kiir, Dr. Riek Machar, and leaders of the other opposition groups for continuously holding generative dialogue and encouraged all parties to continue to address the difficult issues confronting the implementation of the Peace Agreement; as well as to sustain the dialogue. The Council also welcomed the ongoing participation of Dr. Riek Machar in the implementation of the Peace Agreement and encouraged him to relocate to Juba permanently as part of the efforts to rebuild South Sudan.

The Council hailed President Salva Kiir for the release of a large number of prisoners to mark the New Year 2020 and encouraged him to release all remaining political prisoners as a confidence building measure especially at this very critical period of the peace process. The Council also took note of the 40 million United States Dollars released by the government for support to the implementation process of the Revitalized Agreement and it further called for the urgent release of the balance of funds required to undertake critical tasks towards the formation of the T-GoNU;

To rebuilding trust and confidence, the Council also urged all parties to unequivocally adhere to the extended deadline of 22 February 2020, the second extension of 100 days for the formation of an inclusive Revitalised Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU). The Council also underscored the importance of committing to and respecting the agreed timelines in the R-ARCSS, to pave way for the effective organisation and creation of a conducive environment for holding national elections at the end of the interim process; which would enable the people of South Sudan to enjoy their democratic right of electing political representatives of their choice;

The council demanded that all military and security personnel illegally occupying the 25 civilian buildings immediately vacate these premises without preconditions and warned that such actions constitute violations of international law and continued defiance of this warning will lead to instituting of sanctions on all those responsible. It also encouraged the Security Supervisory Mechanism (SSM) to engage and support the Parties to develop measures to resolve the logistical challenges that constrain the training of the Necessary Unified Forces and called upon the SSM to release its 100 days mid-term report as soon as possible.

The Council noted with serious concern, the escalating humanitarian crises in South Sudan; and strongly appealed to the African Union member states and the international community for

material and where necessary financial contributions towards alleviating the plight of the people of South Sudan.

The Council thanked individuals, groups and regional and international organizations who have helped the South Sudanese Peace process. It commended David Mabuza, Deputy President of South Africa and Special Envoy to South Sudan for his tireless negotiation of the South Sudan boundaries and States issue and encouraged him to sustain his engagement; it paid tribute to the AU, IGAD, RJMEC, and CTSAMVM for holding a workshop of the security mechanisms on 18 and 19 November 2019, which further produced a roadmap with timetable and budgets to guide the security mechanisms on their tasks in the 100 days. The Council also expressed its gratitude to the Sant'Egidio Community of Rome for successfully facilitating the Rome Declaration with the holdout groups to agree to a ceasefire in South Sudan; and took note with satisfaction of the pledge made by General Thomas Cirilo, General Paul Malong, and Mr. Pagan Amum to cease hostilities. Furthermore, it encouraged them to intensify efforts towards their active contribution to the stabilisation and development of South Sudan.

Taking the importance of the R-ARCSS in providing the South Sudanese a unique and sustainable platform for ending the war in South Sudan, the Council requested the international community, especially AU member states, to continue providing technical and financial support to the peace process, in order to ensure respite from persistent war and end the misery for the people of South Sudan.