

A Week in the Horn 19.09.2023

News in Brief

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Africa and the African Union

The African Union Commission (AUC) and the Vaccine Alliance (Gavi) signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Monday (May 15) to increase access and accelerate the uptake of life-saving vaccines across African Union member states towards supporting immunization, providing technical and learning assistance and strengthening health systems.

The African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) on Monday (May 15) commissioned a water project in the Lower Shabelle region of Somalia. The facility will provide potable water to over 200 homes and reduce the long distance that people used to travel, especially women and children, in search of water.

Ethiopia

During its 19th Regular Meeting on Tuesday (May 16), the House of Peoples' Representatives (HPR) approved bills on *Extradition* and *Cooperation in Criminal Matters* between the Governments of Ethiopia and Türkiye and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The bill was initially approved by the Council of Ministers (CoM) in January this year.

Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Molly Phee, during a three-day (May 14–16) official visit to Addis Ababa, met with Prime Minister Abiy and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Demeke Mekonnen and conferred on bilateral, regional, and multilateral issues of mutual interest.

The Vice President of the Republic of Colombia, Francia Elena, who arrived in Addis Ababa on Wednesday (May 17) for an official working visit to Ethiopia, met and discussed with President Sahle-Work Zewde, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Demeke Mekonnen. The Vice President's discussions with high-level

Ethiopian officials revolved around strengthening Colombia-Ethiopia ties through various engagements. During their discussion, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Demeke expressed his appreciation for Colombia's decision to reopen its embassy in Ethiopia after 50 years, recalling that the two countries have similar experiences in international forums. He told the Colombian Vice President that Ethiopia is interested in working in cooperation with Colombia in the fields of trade, investment, tourism, aviation, and technology.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Ethiopia, Demeke Mekonnen, conferred on Tuesday (May 16) with Ethiopia's Honorary Consul in Belarus, Dmitry Lukashenko. Demeke stated that it is high time that Ethiopia and Belarus strive towards strengthening bilateral ties, among others in the areas of investment, tourism, agricultural mechanization and mining.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Demeke Mekonnen had a telephone conversation with Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia, on Tuesday (May 16). The two sides exchanged views on a number of issues of mutual concern. They agreed to further strengthen the bilateral relations between the two countries, including regarding Ethiopians residing in Saudi Arabia. The conversation also included an exchange of views on the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's ongoing efforts to help the parties in Sudan reach a negotiated settlement. Demeke commended the Sudanese sides, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the United States of America for their joint efforts in facilitating the signing of the Jeddah Declaration of Commitment. Demeke also assured the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia of Ethiopia's commitment to supporting Sudan in reaching a peaceful settlement through a Sudanese-owned process. Regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), Demeke reiterated to the Foreign Minister the need to respect and support the African Union-facilitated trilateral negotiations. He cautioned that any pronouncement by the League of Arab States on this matter of great importance to Ethiopia and the rest of Africa must not be counterproductive to the trilateral negotiations.

Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the African Union and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), Ambassador Ayele Lire, presented his Letter of Credence to the Acting Executive Secretary of the UNECA, Antonio Pedro, on May 16.

This week the National Bank of Ethiopia issued the first foreign mobile money licence to Safaricom's M-Pesa to operate in the country as a licenced mobile money firm. The licence,

coming seven months after the commercial launch of GSM services, will open the country to the world's largest mobile payment system and Africa's largest Fintech, and the world's first mobile money transfer system.

Ethiopia has earned 172.25 million USD from mineral exports over the past nine months of the current fiscal year. The Ministry of Mines presented its nine-month plan and its performance report for the current Ethiopian fiscal year. Strategic Affairs executive officer at the ministry, Meseret Nigusei, said the nation has produced 2.68 tonnes of gold, 255.7 tonnes of jewellery minerals, and 164.05 tonnes of tantalum.

Ethiopia began selling shares to raise funds required to set up its first-ever securities exchange as Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed pushes to modernize eastern Africa's largest economy. The sale, which kicked off in the capital on Tuesday (May 16) aims to mobilize 75% of the required funding, said Michael Habte, a project manager for the planned Ethiopia Securities Exchange, or ESX.

UNOCHA announced on Wednesday (May 17) that recent floods in Ethiopia have caused significant displacement of people and damage in the country's south and east. With more than 35,000 households displaced and more than 45 lives lost, Somali Region is the most affected. More than 23,000 livestock have died, while nearly 100,000 hectares of farmland has been destroyed. Food, shelter, agriculture, nutrition and health support are the top humanitarian needs.

Eritrea

During his state visit to Beijing over the week, President Isaias Afwerki and, President Xi Jinping, held extensive talks on Monday (May 15) on enhancement of strategic bilateral ties and regional matters between Eritrea and China. President Isaias also met with Premier Li Qiang of the State Council to capitalise on further enhancing bilateral ties.

Djibouti

The Ethiopian Embassy in Djibouti participated in a highly successful Business-to-Business (B2B) platform organized by AfroValley, an Ethiopian-based company, fostering valuable exchanges between companies from Ethiopia and Djibouti. This event served as a platform to showcase Ethiopia's unique coffee industry, explore import-export prospects, and highlight

the Ethiopian government's commitment to creating an efficient and investor-friendly business environment. **(See article)**

Kenya

Three neighbouring East African nations—Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia—launched a joint "Borderlands Project", on Thursday (May 11), at Mandera, the North Eastern County of Kenya. The project, which is also named "Deris Wanaag" in Kiswahili to signify "good neighbourliness," is aimed at enhancing the socio-economic development of the communities living around the cross-border areas of the common cluster. **(See article)**

Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, during a visit to the country on Thursday met with President William Ruto and discussed matters of mutual interest between the two countries, including ways of fostering greater trade and investment facilitation.

During a media briefing on Wednesday (May 17), the Commissioner of the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner (ODPC), Immaculate Kassait, announced that the East African nation has been voted to host the next *Network of Africa Data Protection Authorities (NADPA)* general assembly slotted for next year in a meeting held in Burkina Faso.

Somalia

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud paid a two-day (May 16–17) state visit to Qatar. During the visit, he met with Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and discussed ways of further enhancing bilateral ties, including in the areas of security and economic cooperation.

Floods caused by the annual rains have left "a trail of destruction" across Somalia, a United Nations spokesman, Stephane Dujarric, said, citing inundated homes and farmland as well as the shutdown of health facilities.

South Sudan

Ethiopia and South Sudan inked an agreement on Thursday (May 18) to construct the Paloch-Mathiang-Maiwut-Pagak Road in Juba. President Salva Kiir Mayardit witnessed the signing ceremony for the construction of the highway, which connects western Ethiopia with north-eastern South Sudan. The agreement was signed by Eyob Tekalign, State Minister of Finance

of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and, on behalf of the Republic of South Sudan, Finance Minister Dier Tong Ngor. **(See article)**

South Sudan's leaders have conducted consultations with experts on transitional justice mechanisms to help the country implement Chapter 5 of the 2018 revitalised peace agreement. The three-day (May 15–17) conference was attended by experts from Ethiopia, the Gambia, South Africa and Rwanda and called for the establishment of the critical commission on truth, reconciliation and healing, which is very important for post-conflict recovery.

On Monday (May 15), Minister for Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management Albino Akol Atak told reporters based in Juba, South Sudan has opened a new refugee camp in its northern region to receive people fleeing conflicts in neighbouring Sudan.

UNESCO House on Tuesday (May 16) hosted an exclusive peace meeting with producer-director Forest Whitaker, featuring the screening of his film "For the Sake of Peace." The filmmakers, supported by the *Whitaker Peace and Development Initiative*, focused on South Sudan, the world's youngest state.

Sudan

It has now been a little more than a month since the conflict in Sudan erupted between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on April 15, 2023. The repercussions of whatever occurs in Sudan will be felt throughout the region. Ethiopia is deeply concerned with the continuation of the conflict and the increasing human cost and material damage. The peace and stability of Sudan is the peace and stability of the region. As Ethiopia shares a lot in common with Sudan, including people of similar kinship, borders, resources, and a common aspiration of achieving peace and stability as well as development, it wishes the immediate resolution of the conflict by peaceful means. **(See article)**

In a joint press release on Wednesday (May 17), OCHA and UNHCR called for US\$3 billion to rush life-saving aid and protection to people impacted by the Sudan crisis. The Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan seeks \$470.4 million to support refugees, returnees and host communities in the Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia and South Sudan, the statement read.

Resolving the Problem in Sudan: The Need for Coherent and Coordinated Action

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Ethiopia, as it has been doing for a long time, stands with the brotherly and sisterly people of Sudan at this difficult time. It therefore opposes any external intervention that aggravates the crisis, as it will only prolong the misery of the people of Sudan. Achieving peace in Sudan is in the best interest of the parties and, above all, the people of Sudan. It is, therefore, necessary for the parties to choose the path of peace. The international community should also support genuine initiatives that ensure the ownership of the Sudanese in resolving the conflict peacefully. A peace process owned by the Sudanese will thus be critical to achieving long-term peace in the country.

It is noticeable that there are multiple actors in the current crisis in Sudan. We have seen a number of initiatives. In this context, the proliferation of peace initiatives may not help in resolving the conflict. Uncoordinated and competing, sometimes conflicting, initiatives will mostly serve to exacerbate the crisis. That is why a genuine dialogue and peace process owned by the parties themselves is the way forward. Ethiopia's recent experience in resolving the conflict in northern Ethiopia can be regarded as an example of such an approach.

Based on the principle of "African solutions to Africa's problems," the continental organization-the African Union (AU), and the regional block, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), can play a leading role in facilitating the peace talks in the Sudan. Considering the intensity of the conflict and its increasing damage, an immediate ceasefire should be the target. Once the guns are silenced, the next step will be a permanent cessation of hostilities among the parties.

In this regard, it is encouraging that the two parties have commenced dialogue and that the representatives of SAF and RSF signed the Declaration of Commitment on May 11, 2023, in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Safeguarding civilian lives at all times is necessary. This would have also opened an opportunity for the parties to engage themselves in taking confidence-building measures. The reports from the ground, nonetheless, show the conflict has continued unabated with huge human and material costs.

As long as there is political will, a peaceful settlement of the conflict is possible. A political dialogue that includes the multiple political actors, armed or civilian, in Sudan should follow any immediate cessation of hostilities the parties might reach. Before the outbreak of the current crisis, the Sudanese actors were in the process of reaching a permanent political settlement through the December 5, 2022 Framework Agreement. The Trilateral Mechanism of IGAD, AU, and United Nations supervised the Sudanese parties inking the Framework Agreement with the support of the Troika (the UK, Norway, and USA) and the Quad consisting of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

It was the coherent and coordinated action and endeavour of the international community that helped realize the Framework Agreement. The ongoing crisis also requires such a coordinated approach. This will facilitate a peace dialogue owned by the people of Sudan and the multiple Sudanese political actors and yield a positive outcome. The call of the people of Sudan in every medium available with the slogan "#No_to_war" also rings out to the international community. Such a call will only be answered with the willingness of the parties to negotiate and the coordinated approach of friends of Sudan who genuinely seek the country's peace and stability.

New Agreement to Construct Cross-border Highway between Ethiopia and South Sudan to Boost Economy and Cement Peace

Ethiopia and South Sudan inked an agreement on Thursday (May 18) to construct the Paloch-Mathiang-Maiwut-Pagak Road in Juba. President Salva Kiir Mayardit witnessed the signing ceremony for the construction of the highway, which connects western Ethiopia with north-eastern South Sudan. The agreement was signed by Eyob Tekalign, State Minister of Finance

of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and, on behalf of the Republic of South Sudan, Finance Minister Dier Tong Ngor.

During the ceremony, President Kiir said, "Our hope is to move together to help one another; this is what our people want to see. This is a strategic project that connects our people and serves their needs." He said that the cross-border highway project would strengthen economic ties as well as enhance the free movement of people and goods in the Horn of Africa.

From the Ethiopian side, the State Minister of Finance, Eyob Tekalign, said that the construction of this road will not only provide seamless commercial connectivity but also rectify the artificial border separation and bring the people of two sisterly countries much closer. He said the project is a historical and significant development, adding, "When the road is completed, it will reduce the cost of doing business in the region."

Dhenge Boru, State Minister of Transport and Logistics of South Sudan; Mohammed Abdurahman from the Ethiopian Roads Authority; Ethiopian Ambassador to Kenya, General Bacha Debele; Ethiopian Ambassador to South Sudan, Nebil Mahdi; and various Ethiopian and South Sudanese higher officials were in attendance.

The signing ceremony that took place in Juba recognized the initiatives and commitments demonstrated by the heads of state of the two governments to boost bilateral cooperation between the two sisterly countries. During the ceremony, both sides exchanged views on enhancing infrastructure development, including electricity, oil pipelines, and other components that accelerate regional economic integration.

The most anticipated construction of this road is expected to impact the economic activities of the sisterly countries as well as play a pertinent role in cementing peace in parts of the regions of both countries.

Project 'good neighbourliness' to encourage borderland cooperation between Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia

Three neighbouring East African nations—Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia—launched a joint "Borderlands Project", on May 11, 2023, at Mandera, the North Eastern County of Kenya. The project, which is also named "Deris Wanaag" in Kiswahili to signify "good

neighbourliness," is aimed at enhancing the socio-economic development of the communities living around the cross-border areas of the common cluster. The joint project, which is to be financed by the government of the United Kingdom, is estimated to cost around 13 million USD (Ksh1.7 billion) in the first three years of its implementation.

Rigathi Gachagua, Deputy President of the Republic of Kenya; Binalf Andualem, Minister of Peace of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia; Prof. Kithure Kindiki, Interior Cabinet Secretary (Minister) of the Republic of Kenya; and Mohamed Ahmed Sheikh, Minister of Security of the Federal Republic of Somalia; Jane Marriot, High Commissioner of the United Kingdom to the Republic of Kenya, were present at the launching ceremony of the project.

The aforementioned Ministers of the Parties in the joint project also convened trilateral meetings on a range of issues, including the approach to the implementation of the project to counter the perennial insecurity and instability in the region. The project is aimed at bringing an everlasting solution by addressing the challenges related to the predominantly witnessed insurgency in the cluster and addressing the root causes of the problem.

The project was initiated in partnership with the United Kingdom and will be implemented in the borderland areas of Mandera County, Kenya, which have been suffering from several incidents of insurgent attacks. During the launching ceremony, the three parties reaffirmed their respective nations' commitment to the implementation of the project, stressing its indispensability for fighting against terrorism and violent extremism in the region.

B2B Event in Djibouti Showcases Ethiopia's Potential for Growth and Investment

The Ethiopian Embassy in Djibouti participated in a highly successful Business-to-Business (B2B) platform organized by AfroValley, an Ethiopian-based company, fostering valuable exchanges between companies from Ethiopia and Djibouti. This event served as a platform to showcase Ethiopia's unique coffee industry, explore import-export prospects, and highlight the Ethiopian government's commitment to creating an efficient and investor-friendly business environment.

During the event, Hayder Abdella, the Business Diplomacy Minister Counselor at the Ethiopian Embassy, announced the Ethiopian government's initiative to streamline business

registration and licencing procedures, creating a transparent regulatory framework. This crucial initiative aims to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and foster sustainable economic growth in Ethiopia.

One notable highlight of the B2B event was an exhibition of Ethiopia's esteemed coffee. Collaborating with a Korean company, the embassy presented a demonstration of the processing techniques behind their signature cold coffee brand, "AYANTU." This showcase not only underscored the potential for ground-breaking partnerships but also illuminated the abundant investment prospects within Ethiopia's thriving coffee sector. Complementing the exhibition was an engaging Ethiopian Traditional Coffee ceremony, providing attendees with an authentic cultural experience.

Moreover, representatives from the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce met with their Djiboutian counterparts, further strengthening bilateral business ties and fostering collaboration. The Ethiopian Veterinary Institute showcased their veterinary vaccines and medication, showcasing their expertise in the field.

The event facilitated fruitful discussions between Ethiopian companies and their Djiboutian counterparts, with a particular focus on import-export opportunities. Additionally, participants had the opportunity to visit the Djibouti International Free Trade Zone (DIFTZ), gaining valuable insights into the two countries' economic potential and infrastructure. In light of the recent progressive economic reforms and the immense potential for growth and investment in Ethiopia, the Ethiopian Embassy extended an invitation to companies based in Djibouti to explore and expand their businesses in Ethiopia.
