



A Week in the Horn

22.03.2024

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Africa and the African Union

The African Union announced on Monday (March 18) that the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), as part of the [Extraordinary Session of the Sixth Parliament Of the Pan-African Parliament](#) scheduled for 20-27 March 2024 at its Headquarters in Midrand, South Africa, will hold elections for members of the Bureau on the 25 March 2024 including President, First Vice President, and Fourth Vice President, positions which fell vacant following elections and unconstitutional changes of government in some of the African Union Member States.

The Singapore-based social media firm, TikTok on Tuesday (March 29) announced its partnership with the African Union Commission's Women, Gender, and Youth Directorate (WGYD) to raise online safety awareness among youth and parents across the continent through the continent-wide [#SaferTogether Campaign](#), aimed at reaching out to and educating the youth, parents, educators and community leaders, among others, on online safety through its app and on-ground activities. The Campaign officially launched in Accra, Ghana on 14 March 2024 at the inaugural *TikTok Safer Internet Summit*.

Speaking on Tuesday (March 19) on behalf of AUC Commissioner Moussa Faki Mahamat at the *Second African Union Reflection Forum on Unconstitutional Change of Governments (UCGS)* in Accra, Ghana, AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS), Ambassador Bankole Adeoye called upon participants to

“embrace stable democratic dispensations that will respond adequately to the will and voice of the African people and by this, we can foster good and effective governance. “

The African Union Development Agency-NEPAD on Tuesday (March 19) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with California-based tech giant, Meta Platforms, Inc., to tap into Africa’s collective potential and to drive positive change by harnessing the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital technologies to cascade innovation across the continent. AUDA-NEPAD said, the partnership will support key AU strategies such as *The Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020-2030)* and the *African Union Artificial Intelligence Roadmap*. The MoU was signed by AUDA-NEPAD CEO Nardos Bekele-Thomas and Meta Global Affairs President Nick Clegg.

Ethiopia

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on Tuesday (March 19) engaged in discussions with leaders of the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council and fathers from various regions on pertinent issues and later hosted them for an Iftar program. Similarly, the Premiere graciously treated refugees from various countries and low-income sections of society residing Addis Ababa to Iftar dinner, on Wednesday (March 20) and Thursday (March 21), respectively.

The national Joint Security and Intelligence Taskforce (JSITF) during a consultative meeting held on Wednesday (March 20) inaugurated national-level committee to resolved border disputes in the contested areas bordering Amhara and Tigray regional states. The meeting was attended by Deputy Prime Minister Temesgen Tiruneh, National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) Director-General Ambassador Redwan Hussein, Presidents of Amhara and Tigray Interim Administration, Arega Kebede and Getachew Reda, respectively, among others.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Taye Atske-Selassie together with his Swiss counterpart Ignazio Cassis co-chaired a bilateral meeting at the Sheraton Addis Hotel and discussed bilateral, regional, and multilateral issues of mutual interest. They later engaged in a joint press conference with the media corps to highlight major takeaways of the high-level deliberations. On Tuesday (March 19), the Foreign Ministers laid a cornerstone for the new Embassy of Switzerland to be built in Addis Ababa (**See Article**).

State Minister at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Birtukan Ayano met on Tuesday (March 19) at her office with U.S. Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, Ambassador Julieta Valls Noyes and discussed cooperation on education, refugees, climate change and other international matters of mutual interest to Ethiopia and the United States (**See Article**).

State Minister Ambassador and Chair of the National Committee for the Repatriation of Nationals from Saudi Arabia, on Thursday (March 21), announced that the third phase of the repatriation of 70 thousand Ethiopians, who are bearing the brunt of an array of insufferable conditions in Saudi Arabia, will commence in a fortnight.

Ethiopian Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Nebil Mahdi conferred with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of South Sudan James Pitia Morgan on ways of enhancing bilateral relations between the two countries. They also discussed on expediting the upcoming Joint Border Administrators and Commissioners' and Joint Ministerial Commission meetings to further cement multifaceted ties.

During a bilateral meeting with Greece Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece, Alexandra Papadopoulou in Athens on Monday (March 18), Ethiopian Ambassador to Italy, Demitu Hambisa stressed Ethiopia's keenness to further enhance longstanding diplomatic relations between Ethiopia and the southeastern European country in the areas of trade, tourism, investment and education. DFM Papadopoulou expressed her country's readiness to bolster the historical relations.

The U.S. Embassy in Addis Ababa on Tuesday (March 19) disclosed that U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator and Senior Bureau Official for Global Health Security and Diplomacy for Health Diplomacy Ambassador Dr. John N. Nkengasong announced on Monday (March 18) the approval of USD 111 million *Country Operational Plan 2023 (COP23)* through the [U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief \(PEPFAR\)](#) program to support Ethiopia's continued response to end HIV/AIDS as a public health threat by 2030. The virtual inaugural event was attended by Minister of Health Dr. Mekdes Daba and U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia Ervin Jose Massinga.

Newly appointed Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nebiyu Tedla, gave the *Bi-Weekly Press Briefing* of the Ministry to local and Addis-based international media corps on Thursday (March 21). In his presser, Nebiyu told reporters that, Addis Ababa at the moment is the seat of 134 diplomatic missions and various regional and international organisations, a testament to perennial significance of the nation's Capital as the third largest diplomatic hub of the world, only preceded by New York and Geneva.

Safaricom Ethiopia on Wednesday (March 20) announced that it has reached an agreement with South Africa-based digital transaction company, Onafriq, to facilitate remittance flows in Ethiopia thereby enabling users to receive inbound remittances through the telecom firm's mobile money platform M-PESA.

Djibouti

President Ismail Omar Guelleh on Wednesday (March 20) received at the Palais de la République, the Foreign Minister of Switzerland, Ignazio Cassis and held bilateral discussion on further strengthening economic, commercial, tourism, scientific cooperation, as well as cooperation in peace and regional stability. The Presidency stated that this is the first visit by a member of the Swiss Government to the Horn of African country.

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Mahamoud Ali Youssouf met with the new U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan Tom Perriello on Monday (March 18) and discussed the crisis in Sudan and working with Sudan stakeholders to bring about a cessation of hostilities.

Djiboutian Dr. Ayan Mahamoud was appointed on Tuesday (March 19) as the Head of Partnership and Resource Mobilization for the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

Eritrea

President Isaias Afwerki held bilateral talks with Somalia counterpart Hassan Sheikh Mohamud in Asmara on Monday (March 18) on enhancing bilateral, regional and international partnership, during the latter's two-day (17-18 March) working visit to Eritrea upon the invitation of President Isaias.

Kenya

President William Samoei Ruto during a meeting with Facebook President of Global Affairs, Nick Clegg, at the State House Nairobi on Monday (March 18) revealed that Kenyans will begin monetizing their content on Facebook and Instagram by June this year, making the East African country one of the few countries in the continent enjoying the feature. President Ruto said, *"We are banking on the digital space to create jobs for the millions of jobless youths in our country."*

Prime Cabinet Secretary and Cabinet Secretary for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs Wycliffe Musalia Mudavadi on Friday (March 15) on the leg of the 22nd Extraordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union welcomed the Council's unanimous decision to nominate a candidate for the position of the AUC Chairperson from the Eastern Africa region. Office of the Prime Cabinet Secretary later announced in a press release, *"It is now clear that ...Hon. Raila Odinga will be in the race for the AU Commission Chairperson,"* and *"Effectively, there are no more technical or legal hurdles preventing Kenya from submitting its candidate."*

In a column published in Business Daily Africa on Wednesday (March 20), Swiss Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis reflecting on the 60th anniversary of Swiss-Kenyan ties said, *“As we develop Switzerland’s Africa Strategy for 2025-2028, this visit allows me to gather insights while highlighting Kenya’s increasing significance on the global stage, especially for the economy, regional security and democracy.”* FM Cassis added, *“Kenya’s emergence as a hub for fintech startups has captured the attention of Switzerland, one of the leading financial centres in the world.”*

Virgin Atlantic and Kenya Airways on Tuesday (March 19) announced a new codeshare that boasts of providing Virgin passengers greater access to flights from London-Heathrow (LHR) to Nairobi and via connecting flights to other destinations across East Africa. The agreement will also enable Kenya Airways customers to connect seamlessly on Virgin flights from London-Heathrow and heading to Virgin destinations in the United States and the Caribbean. Both carriers are members of the SkyTeam alliance.

Somalia

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamoud, upon being invited by Eritrean counterpart, paid a two-day (17-18 March) working visit to Eritrea. During his visit, President Mohamud discussed with President Isaias on ways of further scaling up defence cooperation as well as working closely on regional peace and stability.

Female Members of Parliament voiced their utter frustration over the lack of political will to include a 30 per cent women quota in the constitutional amendments. A heated debate on the proposed Provisional Constitution is raging. Women activists such as MP Ifrah Naaleeye during a presser on Monday (March 18) stressed the non-conducive political environment, characterized by male leaders promoting male candidates and violence and discrimination targeting women activists.

South Sudan

President Salva Kiir Mayardiit on Monday (March 18) presided over the swearing-in ceremony of the newly appointed Minister of Finance and Planning Awou Daniel Chuang at Office of the President in the Capital Juba. On the occasion, President Kiir instructed incoming Finance Minister Daniel and Central Bank Governor, Dr. James Alic Garang, to urgently curb the economic inflation facing the country.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) announced on Monday the appointment of South Sudanese Dr Victoria Anib as the Head of its Social Development Unit.

Sudan

Director of Operations and Advocacy of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), Edem Wosornu, while briefing the UN Security Council on Wednesday (March 20) on behalf UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths said, due to the ongoing war “By all measures – the sheer scale of humanitarian needs, the numbers of people displaced and facing hunger – Sudan is one of the worst humanitarian disasters in recent memory.” She mentioned, the fight has already precipitated the world’s largest internal displacement crisis with 6.5 million people internally displaced and additional 1.8 million people seeking refuge in neighbouring countries.

A delegation from the mainstream Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) met with the Chairman of the Sudanese Sovereignty Council, in Port Sudan on Tuesday (March 19) local media reported. DPU Deputy Chairman Jafar Al-Sadiq Al-Mirghani speaking of the meeting told local media, “*We discussed various issues, including the country’s security status, ... and ongoing developments.*”

Premiere Abiy’s Public Consultations Signify the Government’s Commitment to upholding home-grown solutions to facilitate nationwide dialogue

Over the span of the past couple of weeks, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, presided over a cascade of public consultations with representatives of the various regional states and leaders of the major religions in the country. The Premiere throughout the series of discussions with the zonal community representatives and religious elders and fathers listened to the concerns of the public on the need to address matters of importance to them including peace, development and gradually, prosperity.

Accordingly, PM Abiy met with representatives from the various zones in Amhara, Somali, Afar, Harari, Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz South West, Central, South, Sidama and Tigray regional states as well as Dire Dawa and Addis Ababa Cities. In the same token, the Prime Minister also conferred with members of the Holy Synod of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, the Ethiopian Evangelical Council and member churches and the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council.

The series of public discussions proved crucial in fostering a mutual understanding of the existing gaps and identifying potential opportunities in the various regions and religious establishments of the country. Most importantly, they were a clear demonstration of the Government’s continued commitment to ensure peace and

stability and capitalize on community-centred development that will materialize the prosperity aspirations of fellow Ethiopians.

On the other hand, the meetings signified the Government's reaffirmation of the need to uphold home-grown, in-house mechanisms to facilitate nationwide dialogue on cross-cutting matters of shared and communal importance. The phenomena, technically speaking, echoed loud and clear that Ethiopia's challenges could be overcome with the concerted participation of its fellow nationals while espousing the Pan-African motto of *African Solutions for African Challenges*.

Last but not least, the series of meetings with different sectors of our society, will indisputably serve as a clarion call to the citizenry to unequivocally voice concerns, champion peace and development, promote tolerance and peaceful coexistence among the diverse communities and faiths towards a more resilient and vibrant multi-ethnic polity fit for the current generation and worth bequeathing to posterity.

Swiss Foreign Minister Cassis' Visit: Prospects for Better Cooperation

Federal Councillor and Head of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, Ignazio Cassis, made official visit to Ethiopia from 17 to 19 March 2024 and discussed with Ambassador Taye Atske-Selassie, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia on bilateral, regional, and international issues.

Switzerland and Ethiopia have longstanding historic relation. Ethio-Swiss relation dates back to the late 19th century when Swiss Engineer Alfred Ilg, became advisor to Emperor Menelik II. Alfred played a key role in advising the king to start the Ethio-Djibouti railway construction, and the establishment of the modern postal system in Ethiopia. He also had significant role in promoting Ethiopia in Switzerland.

During the accession to the League of Nations, Switzerland supported Ethiopia; and later in 1924, Ethiopia opened its consulate in Zürich, Switzerland. On its part, Switzerland opened its consular office in Addis Ababa in 1956, which was later upgraded to an Embassy in 1962.

During the meeting the two Ministers exchanged views on regional issues, of common concern including the security situation in the Sudan. Both Ministers observed that the internal situation in Sudan is deteriorating and Sudanese conflict should be solved by themselves. Further Switzerland has appointed special envoy for the Horn of Africa and is cooperating with neighbouring countries to resolve the conflict through dialogue.

Ambassador Taye, updated his counterpart on the implementation of the Pretoria Peace Agreement and expressed that Switzerland's balanced position in the UNSC. He stressed that the reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts require support from the international community.

The Swiss Minister underlined that Switzerland as a Non-Permanent Member of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) supports the UN-AU joint Framework for enhanced partnership in peace and security. During the discussion it was mentioned that UNSC was challenged by the wars in Africa, Middle East and Ukraine.

The two countries have established a Joint Political Consultation in 2014. The sixth-round of political consultation was held in Bern, last December at the level of two State Ministers of Foreign Affairs. During the political consultation the two sides agreed to further enhance the economic and political cooperation.

These consultations were also useful to take stock of the implementation of bilateral agreements and explore new areas of cooperation.

Previously signed agreements between the two countries were in Air Service Agreement, Investment Protection and Double Taxation Agreements and this fortifies especially the strengthening of the economic relationship.

Switzerland is the 5th largest trading partner to Ethiopia; and the trade balance with to Ethiopia is positive. In this connection, direct flights between Addis Ababa and Geneva, and Addis Ababa and Zürich also played a greater role.

Finally, on the second day of the visit Foreign Ministers Ambassador Taye and Cassis laid the foundation for the new Swiss Embassy building in Addis Ababa during an inaugural ceremony at the Swiss Embassy in Addis Ababa.

The 2024 High- Level Development Forum

A High-Level Development Forum, jointly organized by the Ministry of Finance and the Development Partners Group (DPG), was held on March 12, 2024 in Addis Ababa. The Forum aimed at stimulating policy discussions, coordinating efforts to address strategic challenges of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding priorities related with the Ethiopian national development plan. High-Level Government Officials from the Federal Government and Regional States, Ambassadors and Heads of International Organizations from Development Partners group (DPG), the Private Sector and civil society organizations (CSOs) took part in the Forum.

The Government of Ethiopia put forward presentations on three thematic areas namely strengthening resilience in Ethiopia, peace building and consolidation as

well as Ethiopia's Macro-Economic reform agenda of the *Homegrown Economic Reform (HGER) 2.0*.

In his opening remarks, Minister of Finance Ahmed Shide stated that, Ethiopia has made remarkable achievements in securing robust economic recovery after the launch of the *Ten-Year Development Plan* back in 2018, in spite of climate shocks, drought, conflicts and desert locust invasion. The Minister urged Development Partners to provide financial support for Ethiopia's efforts to realize *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) and address humanitarian situation.

Minister of Planning Development, Fitsum Assefa, also addressed the gathering and stated that, building a resilient Ethiopia requires disaster risk management, sustainable development and community empowerment. She added, "*Ethiopia's National Development Plan is paving the way for a future where every citizen thrives.*" Minister Fitsum also expressed the Government's commitment to continue working with Development Partners to address development challenges, to implement the national development plan and also meet the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

During his presentation, Minister of Justice, Gedion Timotheos, highlighted key challenges to peace including youth unemployment and climate change. He stressed that, *National Peace Policy Framework* is also aimed at bringing about sustainable peace through rule of law and inclusive development. The Minister further briefed the gathering regarding the *Transitional Justice Policy* mechanism, *National Dialogue* and other initiatives of the Government to consolidate peace and stability in the country.

State Minister of Fiscal Policy and Public Finance at the Ministry of Finance, Eyob Tekalign, also highlighted Ethiopia's economic potential and ongoing reforms focusing on macro-economic stability, investment climate, trade, efficiency and as well as public service sector. He also touched upon *HGER 2.0*.

From the Development Partners Group side, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Ethiopia, Ramiz Alakbarov, echoed the Development Partners Group's shared vision for a resilient and prosperous Ethiopia. "Through high-level policy exchange and joint action, DPG is committed to supporting peace and security initiatives and the National Development Plan, to ensure a brighter future for all Ethiopians", Alakbarov stated.

The co-chair of the Development Partners Group and Development Director at the British Embassy in Addis Ababa, Paul Walters, on the other hand, said that, "*Our commitment to partnership is vital for addressing humanitarian, development, and peace building priorities to deliver the SDGs*" and "*Together, we will drive positive change, leaving no one behind.*"

During the discussion, major challenges of humanitarian issues and the development sector were deliberated and ways to addressing the challenges were charted out. In this regard, the humanitarian challenges exacerbated by climate and conflict-induced problems were discussed and addressing the funding gap was critically underscored.

Apart from cooperating to address humanitarian challenges, the need to move forward on long-term areas of cooperation in the investment and business ties were also discussed. In this regard, the Ethiopian Government reiterated its commitment to solve impediments in the investment sector and to continue implementing the ease of doing business to create a more conducive environment as per the stipulations of *HGER 2.0*.

The Forum culminated with issuance of a [*Joint Communiqué*](#) charting the course for a heightened partnership to further consolidate peace, to provide humanitarian assistance, and to foster development in Ethiopia. The Joint Communiqué was co-signed by Finance Minister Ahmed Shide on the Ethiopian side and co-chairs of the Development Partners Group, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Ethiopia Ramiz Alakbarov and UK Embassy Addis Business Development Director Paul Walters.

The Joint Communiqué underscored the Development Partners Group's commitment to establish a renewed partnership to strengthen a democratic and peaceful Ethiopia that is on a path towards prosperity. It also welcomed the leadership demonstrated by the Ethiopian Government working with other stakeholders in implementing the *Pretoria Agreement* and progress towards an inclusive *National Dialogue* for a lasting peace.

Furthermore, the Forum recognized the progress in the execution of the Home-Grown Economic Reform Agenda and the Ten-Year Development Plan, facilitating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The 13 points Joint Communiqué also embodied the renewed commitments of the stakeholders towards implementing the agreed upon measures and actions and reviewing the overall progress made in the enactment of the commitments outlined on the basis of the principle of mutual accountability during the next upcoming *HLDF* in 2025.

G7+EU Commends Government's Steadfast Commitment to Pretoria Peace Agreement

In the aftermath of the *First Strategic Reflection Meeting on the Implementation of the Permanent Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA)* convened by the African Union on 11 March 2024, a group of countries that are members of the Group of 7 (G7) and the European Union released a joint statement on 13 March 2024. The diplomatic missions of Canada, the European Union (EU), France, Germany, Italy, Japan, United Kingdom, and United States in Addis Ababa were party to the Joint Statement that commended the “the continued commitment of the Government of Ethiopia (GOE) and Tigray Interim Regional Administration (IRA) to implement outstanding provisions of the Permanent Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA) signed on November 2, 2022 in Pretoria, South Africa.” The statement also welcomed the *First Strategic Reflection Meeting*.

We note significant progress on COHA implementation, including with respect to silencing the guns, providing unfettered humanitarian access, restoring basic services, and establishing an IRA in Tigray, the statement read.

On the other hand, the G7+EU in the dispatch, commended the initiation of a political dialogue in accordance with provisions of the COHA to resolve outstanding issues critical to the orderly, secure, and voluntary return of internally displaced persons.

While reaffirming their steadfast commitment to supporting efforts that advance peace and prosperity in Ethiopia, they also lauded the activities of the African Union Monitoring, Verification and Compliance Mission and called for its expansion and extension.

US Government Hails Ethiopia for Hosting Refugees

United States Assistant Secretary of State for Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Ambassador Julietta Valls Noyes paid official visit to Ethiopia from 18-19 March 2024.

During her visit, Ambassador Noyes conferred with Ambassador Birtukan Ayano, State Minister of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia on 19 March 2024. They discussed shared priorities of the two countries, including support for and resettlement of refugees.

Ambassador Birtukan highlighted Ethiopia's long history of receiving asylum seekers and protecting refugees, stressing Government's open-door policy. The State Minister also indicated that Ethiopia is currently home to more than one million refugees from 26 different countries, elaborating ongoing efforts to strengthen refugee response mechanisms with a view to maximize the benefits of refugees and communities hosting them, albeit limited resources. She underscored the immense socio-economic and environmental burden and called on all

stakeholders, including United States of America to continue to uphold the principle of burden and responsibility sharing.

Ambassador Noyes, on her part, explained that Ethiopia is the model in Africa in terms of generously supporting refugees, including many who recently fled conflict in Horn of Africa. She highlighted President Biden's policy of supporting refugees across the globe and emphasized cooperation for resettlement.

While in Ethiopia, the Assistant Secretary also met with Director General of Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS), Teyba Hassen. Afterwards, she visited urban refugee centers in the Capital.

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A Week in the Horn is a weekly online publication dedicated to regional developments in the Horn of Africa. It aims to promote good will and fraternal relations among states of the region by highlighting major geopolitical events and publicizing news stories as well as feature articles. It features detailed commentaries, analyses and intelligent debate on weekly developments throughout the Horn of Africa region. It is an essential read for policymakers, the diplomatic community, think-tanks, academia, corporate executives and enthusiastic citizens, at large.

It is published by the **Spokesperson's Directorate General** of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, a leading diplomatic institution in Africa that boasts of inspiring Africa's future.