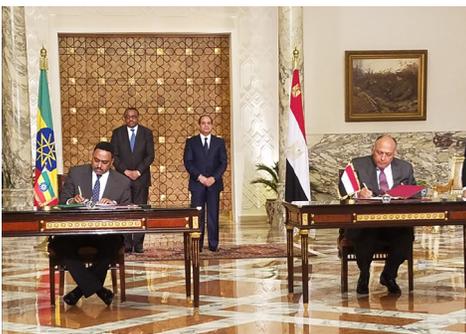




ETHIO NEWS

Politics

THE PRIME MINISTER'S CAIRO VISIT: RENEWED COMMITMENTS TO COOPERATION



Signing of Political and Diplomatic Consultation agreement between Ethiopia and Egypt by Foreign Ministers Dr. Workneh and Sameh Shekury in the presence of President EL Sisi and PM Hailemariam in Cairo.

Photo: mfa

Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn attended the Sixth Egyptian-Ethiopian High-Level Joint Ministerial Commission meeting and met with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi on January 18. The two leaders held bilateral discussions in the spirit of longstanding ties and solidarity between the peoples of both countries. They stressed the need for further cooperation and mutual understanding, transcending cooperation on the Nile and the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). During the Commission meeting, they also agreed to further economic cooperation in various areas, including trade, investment, tourism, livestock, fisheries, and health, and the two leaders witnessed the signing of Memoranda of Understanding on Political and Diplomatic Consultation and on Industrial Cooperation.

During their talks, Prime Minister Hailemariam and President El-Sisi focused on bilateral and regional as well as international issues of mutual concern. Prime Minister Hailemariam underlined the need for furthering the bilateral relationship and expanding cooperation on regional and international issues of mutual interest, which he said, required the promotion of shared values and the exercise of collective responsibility. President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi also noted the importance of exploring areas of shared interest and fostering economic cooperation between the two countries. President El-Sisi underlined Egypt's keenness to further economic cooperation on a range of areas, including trade and investment. Both leaders noted the level of the current eco-

conomic cooperation did not match the legacy of the longstanding relationship between the peoples of the two countries. Prime Minister Hailemariam, who also met with Egyptian investors during his visit, emphasized that Ethiopia was keen to receive Egyptian businesses, adding "my government is committed to create a conducive business environment for Egyptian businessmen."

Both leaders recognized the pivotal role the two nations have played in the development of the continent, and they agreed to work in close cooperation to tackle the challenges facing Africa in general and the Horn of Africa and Red Sea region in particular. They discussed the threats of terrorism and religious extremism, and Prime Minister Hailemariam took the opportunity to express his heartfelt condolences to the people and Government of Egypt for the murderous and cowardly attacks perpetrated against Egypt by terrorist groups: "The pain is ours too, as much as it is yours."

Both Prime Minister Hailemariam and President El-Sisi emphasized the need to build trust and common understanding in a bid to expedite their existing cooperation beyond just the Nile and GERD. They stressed that the Nile and GERD should not be viewed as a source of conflict. Prime Minister Hailemariam said: "The Renaissance Dam is a central factor of our collective development. You should see it as a development of your own as much as it is ours. It happens to be in Ethiopia but it is a vehicle designed for the benefit and development of the whole of the Nile Basin and more particularly for the downstream countries." Ethiopia, he said, was growing and rising, "but we want to rise as a peaceful and responsible African nation that must inspire hope not a threat to anyone and the Renaissance Dam must serve to promote that hope." The Prime Minister underlined that Ethiopia fully understood the needs and aspirations of the People of Egypt and that the Nile was a lifeline for their existence. In the same way, Egypt understood Ethiopia's development needs and aspirations to "tackle the recurrent drought and associated poverty through development." This, he said, had been underlined most comprehensively in the Declaration of Principles, which had emphasized their commitment to mutual cooperation and trust building. Similarly, President El-Sisi noted, "The Nile should serve as a source of solidarity and not a source of conflict." He added: "We have an unwavering belief that Ethiopia has the right for development", adding that "Egypt has the right strategic orientation to deepen its cooperation with Ethiopia." President El-Sisi said "Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn's visit gives a clear sign to our peoples and the entire world that we have the political will and determination to overcome all the obstacles we face."

Following his visit to Egypt, Prime Minister Hailemariam at a subsequent media briefing described his visit to Cairo as "very fruitful." Referring to discussions, he and his delegation had held with President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi and members of his Cabinet on wide-ranging issues of bilateral, regional and International concerns, he said, "In light of the profound spiritual and social bonds that link our peoples, we also discussed ways of furthering our bilateral ties. We have of course, deliberated on the Nile River, the river that forms the basis of livelihood for, and a permanent bond, between our peoples. The Nile offers, of course, and always should, the opportunity for cooperation. We agreed that we must make sure that this great river never becomes an object of competition or mistrust."

PRESIDENT DR. MULATU TESHOME'S STATE VISIT TO CUBA

President Dr. Mulatu Teshome made a state visit to the Republic of Cuba from January 9 – 11, at the invitation of the President of the Republic of Cuba, President Raúl Modesto Castro Ruz. Dr. Getahun Mekuria, Minister of Science and Technology, and Professor Yifru Berhan, Minister of Health, as well as representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs accompanied the President on a very successful visit that has moved in general, the state visit was very successful and moved bilateral relation forward.

On the first day of his visit, President Mulatu attended a wreath-laying ceremony to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of Cuban soldiers who died alongside Ethiopians during the Ethio-Somalia War of 1977-78. President Mulatu said Ethiopians would always remember the noble cause that the Cuban people and Government stood for during the war; he thanked the people of Cuba, and especially the families of fallen soldiers, for the sacrifices they made in Ethiopia. He emphasized it was the responsibility of the two countries to uphold the legacy of brotherhood and move their existing friendship and cooperation forward in different areas. President Mulatu also met with the Vice President of the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution, Brigadier General Delsa Esther Puebla Viltres and some of the Cuban soldiers who fought in Ethiopia. Mrs. Viltres noted Ethiopia's engagement in regional and international peacekeeping missions, reflecting a commitment to their common cause.

President Mulatu and President Raúl Castro had a bilateral meeting after the official welcoming Ceremony. President Mulatu stressed that the diplomatic relationship over more than four decades and the sacrifices



made by the Cuban soldiers had laid the foundations for the strong bond between the two countries. They agreed that this historic relation tied by blood needed to be strengthened through economic cooperation in the future, and discussed existing cooperation in health, science and technology. President Casto Raul pledged Cuba would continue to work with Ethiopia in health and technology transfer.

During the visit, the delegation visited various scientific centers: the Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology Center, Biocubafarma, Finlay Institute, Immunoassay center, Rosafé Signet Artificial Insemination Provincial Center, Pradera Roja (Red Prairie) ranch, National Institute of Oncology and Radiobiology, and Business Group of Biopharmaceutical and Chemical Productions LABIOFAM. These organizations showed their latest developments and expressed their interest in sharing their knowledge and expertise with their Ethiopian counterparts. Besides the official program, side events were organized for the Ministers of Science and Technology and of Health. Both Ministers met their Cuban counterparts and discussed on the ongoing cooperation. Dr. Getahun, Minister of Science and Technology met with Mrs. Elba Rose Perez Montoya and expressed Ethiopia's need to acquire and develop technology especially in the Agricultural Development sector. Mrs. Montoya said her Ministry was ready to cooperate and it was already working on a proposal for the livestock improvement program. The Ministers agreed to speed up the progress of the projects. The two Ministers of Health agreed to finalize negotiations on a draft agreement on the health sector and continuing cooperation in capacity building for Ethiopian health institutions by Cuban medical professionals.

TRIPARTITE SUMMIT IN ADDIS ABABA



Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt affirm their Unity and Solidarity after Tripartite Summit in Addis Ababa Photo: mfa

Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt on a Heads of States level convened on January 29 on the sideline of the 30th summit of the African Union (AU) at Sheraton Hotels, Addis Ababa. Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir and Egypt President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi, met and discussed on issues of mu-

tual interest. During their deliberations, the three leaders noting the fraternal relations and cooperation among the three countries, assured their unity and solidarity. With this spirit they have also underscored that "at all levels the three countries should work as one, not as three". They have also reaffirmed the Agreement on Declaration of Principles (DOP) as important milestone for their engagements regarding the GERD.

To further strengthen the three countries' infrastructural demands in the region, the countries agreed to set and equally contribute for an infrastructural fund.

The leaders further agreed to meet once a year to enhance their tripartite relations and cooperation.

Furthermore, the leaders have agreed to establish a committee and discuss issues pertaining to the GERD in one-month time. They have also agreed to demonstrate this same unity at the level of technical expertise and other stakeholders.

RELEASE OF IMPRISONED POLITICIANS

Prime Minister Hailemariam announced in early January that some politicians currently facing prosecution and those previously sentenced will either have their cases annulled or be pardoned in accordance with the law of clemency and the country's constitution as well as following appropriate verification procedure. Those released would be allowed to participate in a national dialogue to "widen the political space". He also announced the Maekelawi prison would be closed and turned into a museum. Opposition leader Merera Gudina alongside more than 100 other prisoners have already been released from the Kilinto federal prison.

Transport

AFRICAN AIRSPACE UNIFIED



The Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), said to be vital for the aspired continental integration, was launched on January 28. The realization of the single African air transport market is vital to the achievement of the long term vision of an integrated, pros-

perous and peaceful Africa. Ahmed Shide, Ethiopia's Minister of Transport said "The government of Ethiopia confirms its solemn commitment to the unconditional implementation of single African air transport market on a reciprocity bases to all the 22 member state that joined the single Africa air transport market."

The Single Africa Air Transport Market is expected to create additional 300,000 direct jobs and 2 million indirect jobs.

He added, "The free air transport will contribute significantly to free market movement and free movement of people."

Speaking on the occasion, CEO of Ethiopian Airlines Tewolde Gebremariam said the freeway would be beneficial to boost the continent's share of the sector, indicating to the low level of free market share of the continent. He also stressed that the African free air movement would be able to support all countries. The declaration on the establishment of a Single African Air Transport Market was adopted by the AU Assembly in January 2015.

SAATM is a flagship project of the Agenda 2063, an initiative to create a single unified air transport market and the liberalization of civil aviation in Africa, and as an impetus to the Continent's economic integration agenda. The Single Africa Air Transport Market has so far been ratified by 23 countries.

ETHIO-DJIBOUTI RAILWAY BEGINS COMMERCIAL OPERATIONS



Ethio-Djibouti railway line

Photo: mfa

The electrified railway between Djibouti and Addis Ababa officially started commercial operations on January 1 with a ceremony held in Addis Ababa. Speaking on the occasion, Ahmed Shide, Ethiopian Minister of Transport, hailed the standard gauge project a milestone in China-Africa cooperation. The Minister underlined that in addition to further enhancing economic ties as well as the people-to-people links between Ethiopia and Djibouti, the railway have make significant contribution to the ongoing development efforts of building a new Ethiopia and developing the region. Commending China as well as other



stakeholders for their contribution towards the successful realization of the project, the Minister urged local people, especially residents living by the line of the rail to take care of it for its successful and sustainable operation.

Ambassador Tan Jian, Chinese Ambassador to Ethiopia, emphasizing the line's significance and importance, noted that the project would contribute to the industrialization and diversification of the Ethiopian economy, and also towards successful implementation of the country's growth and transformation plan. He said: "It is the first trans-boundary and longest electrified railway on the African continent. We, the Chinese, see this as earlier harvest project of the Belt and Road initiative. It is regarded by many as a lifeline project for both countries, for Ethiopia and for Djibouti. And we see this as a railway of development; as a railway of cooperation; and as a railway of friendship." The ambassador reiterated China's commitment to further cooperate and closely work with Ethiopia and Djibouti for the railway's smooth operation.

The railway will now play a role in transforming economic growth not only in Ethiopia and Djibouti but also throughout the whole of the Eastern Africa region. It used to take at least three days to get to Djibouti using road transport. Now by rail it is only 10-12 hours, in comfort and with less expense. Ethiopia's Ambassador to Djibouti, Ambassador Shamebo Fitamo said: "It is the face of China in Africa ... it's the best and most modern railway that connects Ethiopia and Djibouti, and for the future it will connect also up to Senegal. Its economic importance is very big for both countries."

The cargo train connecting Djibouti port to the heart of Ethiopia has a capacity to transport 3500 tonnes at a time in about ten hours. This would have previously required 70 trucks over three to four days. The 756 km line was built by the China Rail Engineering Corporation between Sebeta and Mieso (320 kms) and the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation between Mieso and Djibouti (436 kms). Chinese engineers say the project has helped them transfer skills and knowledge to their counterparts in Ethiopia and Djibouti.

Fares have also been announced for four of the 19 stations on the line. An ordinary seat from Addis Ababa to Adama, Dire Dawa, El-sabeh and Negad will cost, respectively, 68 birr, 308 birr, 459 birr and 503 birr, equivalent to an average of 0.68 birr per kilometer. The sleeping coaches provide triple bunk beds with varying fares, ranging from 91 birr to Adama, 410 birr to Dire Dawa, 612 birr to El-sabeh and 671 birr to Negad for the upper berth, to 137 birr, 616 birr, 918 birr and 1,006

birr for the lower berths. The most expensive sleeping berths are the lower berths for the VIP sections priced at 182 birr, 821 birr, 1,224 birr and 1,341 birr respectively.

Economy

IMF'S EXECUTIVE BOARD: GROWTH IN ETHIOPIA TO REMAIN HIGH

The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reported on the conclusion of its Article IV consultation with the Government of Ethiopia noting growth is expected to stay high in 2017/18. The Directors said that behind Ethiopia's high growth at 8.5% for the year was "continued recovery from droughts and export expansion as new manufacturing facilities and infrastructure come online – offsetting the potentially dampening impact of restrictive macroeconomic policies." The Board noted that Ethiopia had recorded annual average GDP growth of around 10% over the last decade. This had been driven by public investments in agriculture and infrastructure. It commended Government's efforts in reducing poverty significantly from 44% in 2000 to 23.5% in 2015/16. The report identified key moves by the Government, including devaluation of the birr by 15% in October last year by the National Bank of Ethiopia, and the simultaneous increment of interest rates and adoption of a restrictive stance to minimize adverse effects on inflation. It also noted that Government policies envisaged under the second Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II) were expected to underpin domestic private sector development and foreign direct investment. GTP II also envisages allocating significant resources to poverty alleviation and the social safety net as well as efforts to strengthen financial inclusion.

Overall, the Board commended Ethiopia's impressive record of human development improvements and output growth over the last decade, and the effective policy response to the recent drought. It noted that the preconditions for export expansion and a transition to private sector-led growth, including investments in trade-enhancing infrastructure, were in place and private direct investment was growing strongly. The Board stressed the need to continue determined implementation of policies to reduce external imbalances. It commended the restrictive public sector borrowing policy to contain external debt and imports while protecting pro-poor spending, the devaluation of the currency to regain compet-

itiveness, and the tight monetary policy to rein in inflation.

Directors also commended the progress in strengthening the legal framework for Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) and urged the authorities to ensure that their use struck an appropriate balance between boosting private sector participation and minimizing fiscal risks. They noted PPPs, long-term concessions, and privatization of State Owned Enterprises could offer opportunities to fund critical infrastructure development. They referred to the importance of continued efforts to improve the business climate, promote financial inclusion, and improve governance. In this context, they also welcomed ongoing efforts by the Government to strengthen the compilation and dissemination of economic statistics, highlighting the importance of addressing data weaknesses in national accounts and public sector financial reporting.

Diaspora

MEETING WITH STATE MINISTER KÖPPING IN DRESDEN

An attack on an Ethiopian citizen occurred on January 9 in Dresden. The female victim was verbally abused by unknown assailants and a dog was set upon her. Bystanders intervened and called the police. The victim suffered light injuries. Two state Ministers, Dr. Eva-Maria Stange and Petra Köpping (both SPD) immediately and publicly condemned the attack. While both civilians and authorities acted exemplary, it is still within the embassy's duties to guarantee the well-being of all Ethiopians living in Germany. Minister Counselor Johannes Shode therefore arranged a meeting with the Saxony State Minister for Equal Opportunity and Integration, Petra Köpping, to inquire about the proceedings of the case and offer assistance wherever possible. State Minister Köpping and the LKA Sachsen were grateful when being offered translation assistance in all future cases involving Ethiopians, as language barriers often prove a formidable hindrance to police investigations. Köpping also assured Minister Counselor Yohannes that the Federal State of Saxony is well aware of its association with racially motivated incidents and is doing everything in its power to better integrate migrants and to raise acceptance for foreign cultures and customs among the citizens.

We are deeply saddened by the loss of Ute Gaertner, who passed away during the last weekend of January 2018. A long-standing friend to Ethiopia and former colleague at the embassy, Ute, by decade-long dedication and diligence, provided an important contribution to cross-cultural exchange and Ethio-German relations. She will be missed dearly and we offer our sincere condolences to her family.