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Negotiators from more than 170 countries in Kigali on Saturday (October 15) reached a legally binding accord to cut the worldwide use of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), by 2018 for developed countries and by 2024 for developing countries. The Kigali deal, seven years in the making, is “much stronger than Paris” and is a mandatory agreement. **(See article)**

Morocco which holds the Presidency of the 22nd Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) hosted a Pre-COP Ministerial Meeting in Marrakech this week (October 18-19), in preparation for COP22 in Marrakech, November 7 to 18. **(See article)**

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) held its 19th Summit October 18-19, in Antananarivo, Madagascar. The meeting discussed issues of trade, industrialization, infrastructure and peace and security in the region under the theme: “Inclusive and Sustainable Industrialization”, as well considering the progress made with the Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement signed with the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community last year. **(See article)**

The King of Morocco, Mohammed VI, left Morocco on Tuesday (October 18) for a tour of East Africa. He is visiting Rwanda, Tanzania and Ethiopia. The visits come just three months after Morocco announced its intention to return to the African Union. The King is accompanied by a delegation including the Ministers of Interior, Foreign Affairs, Endowments and Islamic Affairs, Economy and Finance, Agriculture and Fisheries, and other civil and military officials.

Ethiopia

President Dr. Mulatu praised Dr. Carlos Lopes, the departing Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa who took leave of the President on Wednesday (October 19) for his contribution in promoting Africa to the rest of the world. Dr. Lopes said he would be continuing to be involved in Africa and commended the progress of Ethiopia in industrialization, social and economic development.

President Dr. Mulatu met with the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Peter Maurer, on Tuesday (October 18). Mr. Maurer reaffirmed that his organization is ready to maintain collaboration and cooperation with Ethiopia on humanitarian activities. He welcomed Ethiopia's constructive role in safeguarding the region's peace and security and its support for the ICRC's operations in the region.

National Flag Day was celebrated in institutions across the country and in missions abroad on Monday (October 17). The Speaker of the House and Chairperson of the National Flag Day Committee, Abadulla Gameda, emphasized celebrating the National Flag Day enabled the youth to have full understanding of the values of National Flag. **(See article)**

A Command Post headed by Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn was set up at the weekend and made public a series of directives for the implementation of the nation-wide six-month State of Emergency announced on October 8. **(See article)**

The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and Vice-President of the EU Commission, Federica Mogherini, has encouraged Ethiopia to respect democratic principles and civil rights. Ms. Mogherini in a telephone call to Prime Minister Hailemariam underlined the need to initiate an inclusive political dialogue within the shortest possible time. She further emphasized the need for transparency and said the EU expected opening up of the democratic space, and respect of fundamental freedoms. The Prime Minister stress that the state of emergency would not breach human rights protected by the Ethiopian constitution.

Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros Adhanom, meeting with Ambassador Macharia Kamau, Chairperson of the United Nations Peace Building Commission, pledged Ethiopia's support for promotion of a people-centered approach to champion sustainable peace at global and regional levels.

Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros met the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, Peter Maurer on Tuesday (October 18) and discussed ways to bolster continued cooperation and collaboration to further improve the humanitarian situation in Africa. The talks also focused on the overall humanitarian situation in South Sudan and Somalia.

Dr. Tedros received a high-level delegation of the World Council of Churches on Friday (Oct 21). The delegation said Ethiopia was a showcase of religious and cultural tolerance and commended its efforts to promote peace and stability. Dr. Tedros underlined that Ethiopia has put in place a system that accommodated diversity and nurtured harmony among its peoples.

Dr. Tedros met with David Harden, Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance of USAID on Thursday (October 20). Dr. Tedros commended USAID's contribution to Ethiopia's socio-economic development, its support to the country's efforts of realizing some of the Millennium Development Goals, and its help in mitigating the El-Nino induced drought. Mr. Harden said USAID was committed to further build

on their longstanding cooperation He said the US was keen to support government efforts to reform Ethiopia's electoral law.

Dr. Tedros met with the outgoing Ambassador of Sudan to Ethiopia, Ambassador Osman Nafie Hamad, on Thursday (October 20). Dr. Tedros said the exchange of visits made by the Public Diplomacy Teams of the two countries had laid a solid foundation for the strengthening of Ethio-Sudanese ties. Ambassador Hamad noted that Ethiopia and Sudan enjoyed excellent relations

Dr. Tedros met the outgoing Ambassador of Ireland, Ambassador Mr. Aidan O'Hara, on Thursday (October 20). He noted the visit made by President Michael Higgins of Ireland in 2014 was a milestone to expanding bilateral relations. The Foreign Minister and Ambassador O'Hara discussed ways to increase cooperation in trade, investment and tourism.

State Minister for Agriculture and Natural Resources, Wondirad Mandefro, opening an International Enset Policy and Research Conference in Addis Ababa on Monday (October 17) said the government wanted to introduce Enset, (false banana), scientifically known as *Ensete Ventricosum*, more widely. It was "a multipurpose crop which provides a range of uses, including food, forage, medicine, rituals, construction and even environment protection."

The Fourth Ethio-Sudan Joint Technical Committee Meeting opened in Addis Ababa on Wednesday this week (October 19). The three day meeting brought together a range of stakeholders from the governments of Ethiopia and Sudan to review the progress of the various agreements signed during the previous Joint Technical Committee Meeting and consider other potential areas of bilateral cooperation. **(See article)**

Djibouti

President Ismail Omar Guelleh met with President Idriss Deby of Chad, Chair of the African Union, in Lome on Saturday (October 15) for talks on bilateral relations. President Guelleh was in Lome attending last week's Special Summit of the African Union on Security and Maritime Safety and Development in Africa.

Eritrea

The Italian Foreign Ministry has announced that Ambassador Stefano Moscatelli has been approved as the new Italian ambassador to Eritrea. A former Ambassador to Zimbabwe, he was most recently deputy director general for administration, information technology and communications in the Ministry.

Dozens more former workers alleging forced labor and intimidation at the Bisha mine are set to join in a civil action against the mining company, Nevsun Resources. This follows the recent ruling by the British Columbia Supreme Court rejecting arguments by Nevsun that the case should be heard in Eritrea rather than Canada.

Kenya

The Chief of Kenya's Defence Forces Samson Mwathethe said on Friday last week (October 14) that the Defence Forces had set up a border command unit to counter AL-Shabaab infiltration. He said "the newly proposed border command will play a major role in securing our porous border with Somalia." He added the Defence Forces would continue to maintain their presence in Somalia until "our objectives and those of the international community are achieved, including security for Kenyans and the restoration of peace and stability in Somalia".

Somalia

State Assemblies have been electing candidates to seats in the Upper House of Parliament this week, voting on candidates endorsed as acceptable by the State Indirect Electoral Implementation teams (SIEIT). At least two candidates have been required for each seat and there has been the added requirement of a 30% quota for women. There are 11 seats available for Puntland and for those claiming to represent Somaliland, and 8 each for Jubaland, South West, Galmudug and the newest state, Hir-Shebelle. **(See article)**

AMISOM and UNOCHA this week held the first Regional Civil-Military Working Group meeting in Baidoa to discuss humanitarian challenges in Bay, Bakool and Gedo regions. Participants included local and international NGOs, UN agencies and an AMISOM team from Mogadishu. The meeting agreed to develop a reliable mechanism to ensure humanitarian supplies were safely delivered. Similar groups have been established in Belet Weyne and Kismayo; others are planned for Dhobley and Jowhar.

AMISOM began training on Monday (October 17) for Somali police officers in Mogadishu to improve their capacity to safeguard the 2016 electoral process. The training, funded by the Japanese government, covers the importance of elections and election security, voting systems, electoral justice and the role of police and security forces before, during and after elections. It includes prevention of electoral violence, and screening and searches.

UNHCR said on Sunday (October 16) in its bi-monthly report that a total of 26,819 Somali refugees have confirmed their intention to voluntarily return home. UNHCR said 2,525 returnees had returned September 16-30, and in total, as of September 30, 32,949 Somali refugees had returned since December 8, 2014, when UNHCR started supporting voluntary return of Somali refugees in Kenya. Road convoys were suspended on August 30, after Jubaland refused to receive any more returnees until integration processes were improved. Flight departures to Mogadishu were also suspended on September 25 for security reasons.

The Chinese government donated \$US2 million to the World Food Program on Tuesday (October 18) for its humanitarian work in Somalia. WFP Somalia Country Director Laurent Bukera thanked the Chinese government at a ceremony held in Mogadishu. He said the donation would be used to provide access to nutritious and curative food for malnourished children and mothers. A UN FAO report last month said, over 300,000 children under five in Somalia are acutely malnourished.

AMISOM completed a two-day training workshop on Thursday (October 20) aimed at improving relationship between the military, civilians and humanitarian actors to help improve delivery of aid in the country. The training, brought together civilians, Somali police force and AMISOM's security officers, civil affairs and gender unit also discussed how to tackle humanitarian challenges in Somalia.

Prominent religious scholars have called on Galmudug and Puntland States to stop the fighting in Galkayo and help displaced civilians return to their homes. In a statement on Sunday (October 16), the religious leaders urged immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities. According to the UNHCR 50,000 people have fled the town since the fighting broke out nearly a month ago. Both sides blame each other for starting the latest clashes.

A delegation led by Puntland President Abdiwali Mohamed Ali Gaas left for the UAE on Saturday (October 15) where the President is expected to hold meetings with UAE-based firm which agreed in May 2015 to carry out expansion of Bossaso port. Nothing has yet materialized, and last week President Ali appointed a new Minister for Ports and Marine Transport.

Ali Abdullahi Osoble has been elected as the president of the newest state, Hir-Shabelle State. President Osoble won 61 out of 97 votes cast by the members of the state assembly. He promised to serve the people of Hir-Shabelle with diligence, determination and sincerity.

South Sudan

The 22.3 billion South Sudanese pounds (SSP) budget presented to the national parliament by Finance Minister, Stephen Dhieu Dau, on Tuesday (October 18) allocated half of expenditure to the security sector. The Minister said the government would improve net oil revenues this fiscal year to 7.2 billion SSP; non-oil revenues were estimated at 9.2 billion SSP, and grants from donors are expected to amount to 2.4 billion SSP.

Sudan

A four-day workshop to develop a legal framework for a single border crossing point between Ethiopia and Sudan was held in Khartoum this week. Legal experts from the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa participated. The Minister of Presidential Affairs and head of the higher committee for border crossings Fadl Abdalla Fadl, said the workshop aimed to develop a draft agreement on the border crossing as part of efforts to combat cross-border crimes such as illegal drug trade and human trafficking. **(See article)**

The Director General of Sudan's Police, Lt. General Hashim Osman al-Hussein, said on Sunday (October 16) that a delegation from the Sudanese Ministry of Interior had concluded a visit to Berlin where it held talks with the German police on transfer of crime-fighting technology and illegal migration. The delegation also discussed ways to promote cooperation between Sudan's police and German federal police in the various fields. It reached a joint understanding with the German police on ways to combat illegal migration and human trafficking. Germany promised to provide Sudan's police with advanced crime-detection equipment and training opportunities.

Directives for implementation of Ethiopia's State of Emergency

A Command Post headed by the Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn was set up at the weekend and made public a series of directives for the implementation of the nation-wide six-month State of Emergency announced on October 8. The State of Emergency declared by the Council of Ministers is aimed at maintaining law and order as well as preserving the integrity of the country. The directive, comprising 31 articles in three sections, provides details of coordination of law enforcement measures against security threats endangering the safety and security of the people and the sovereignty of the country.

It was in this context that the country's Minister of Defense and Secretary of the newly established Command Post, Siraj Fegessa, gave details to the media on Saturday (October 17), highlighting the new directives and the actions prohibited under the six-month long State of Emergency. The Minister emphasized that the diplomatic community should not travel outside a 40 kilometer radius of Addis Ababa without notifying the Command Post and seeking its permission. The object of this is to provide a guarantee for their safety and security during the implementation of the State of Emergency. The Minister noted that the new directive also required refugees residing in refugee camps across Ethiopia not to travel without any prior authorization from the Command Post.

The directives prohibit any form of action, agitation or communication that incites violence and public disturbances across the country. This includes anything that might precipitate violence and public disturbance, or sows seed of mistrust and hostility among peoples. Addressing the issue of terrorist and anti-peace activity, the directive prohibits any form of contact and communication with terrorist groups and anti-peace organizations or groups. It forbids making use or circulating documents or reports relating to terrorist groups and anti-peace elements as designated by the House of Peoples' Representatives. It also forbids flaunting of any logos or material showing terrorist or anti-peace markings. The directive proscribes watching or reporting any media, including television and radio broadcasts, that emanates from terrorist and anti-peace groups. Among these it specifically mentioned the Oromo Media Network and Ethiopian Satellite Television and Radio.

Underlining the importance of safeguarding the peace and security of the people, the directives proscribe holding public assemblies and demonstrations without the authorization of the Command Post. No one is allowed to close public institutions, shops or commercial entities or discontinue provision of services, or to call for a strike. The directive prohibits absence from work without any justifiable excuse. It also forbids acts of deliberate incompetence at the workplace or any intimidation against public servants and employees engaged in the private sector which might prevent people from carrying out their regular duties.

The directive also prohibits strikes at educational institutions including schools and universities, and forbids acts that disrupt the traffic or movement of any form of transportation. These

prohibitions cover anything that might damage or destroy private and public institutions, infrastructure, public and private investment projects, or religious institutions. The directive makes it clear that no one is permitted to impede public and national holidays, and prohibits acts that call for any political activity during the celebration of such holidays. It makes it illegal to make any statements that incite violence or provoke mistrust and suspicion at religious, cultural and public holidays. Hindering law enforcement agencies and their personnel or failing to cooperate with such bodies is also prohibited.

The directive prohibits any unauthorized person from wearing the uniform of law enforcement personnel; from carrying weapons at religious institutions, sites of celebration for public holidays, and business centers; or passing on firearms to a third party. The directive forbids anyone from trying to disrupt or endanger the country's sovereignty, national security, and constitutional order. Anything that endangers or threatens the long-standing spirit of tolerance and unity among the peoples of Ethiopia is forbidden. Similarly, no one should extend support to anyone bent on disrupting the state of peace and security of the people. The directive requires law enforcement personnel to carry out their duties without taking annual leave during the six-month period of State of Emergency.

The Command Post, which is in charge of coordinating the law enforcement measures, will make public as necessary where some of the specific measures are to be applied. This includes any imposition of curfews, or authorization of law enforcement personnel to take measures against attacks against infrastructure or investments. The directive also covers measures to list where violations of the State of the Emergency take place and steps for rehabilitation to be taken by the Command Post according to the constitution.

The 9th National Flag Day celebrated across Ethiopia and abroad

Ethiopians at home and abroad celebrated the 9th National Flag Day on Monday (October 17), hoisting the National Flag at schools, government offices and non-government institutions as well as at all Ethiopian missions abroad. The theme of this Flag Day was: "Our flag is the symbol of our sovereignty and emblem of our unity in diversity". President Dr. Mulatu Teshome, sending a congratulatory message to the public on National Flag Day, called for all Ethiopians to work collectively towards a strong, democratic and prosperous nation regardless of differences of religion, ethnicity, political attitude or opinion. The President underlined that "We all have the responsibility and duty to sustain the ongoing development," adding that the country's ongoing development and democracy-building efforts would only be sustainable when the country's peace and security was reliably ensured.

The President noted that anti-peace elements had been hijacking and manipulating public grievances and using them against the country's ongoing efforts to establish peace and build development and democracy. The President cautioned people to remain vigilant against what he called the "vicious plots of our enemies" Their coercive treatment of differences, he said, was undemocratic and destructive. President Dr. Mulatu said Ethiopia's flag was flying high across

the world because of the works of its citizens for decades. He called on the present generation to condemn those forces that disgraced the national tricolor.

The occasion was observed with panel discussions in various places, focusing on the meaning and values of the flag. Abadula Gameda, the Speaker of the House of People's Representatives, briefing journalists on the celebration of the national flag, underlined that it was the symbol of the sovereignty, democracy and unity of the nation. The people of the country celebrated the National Flag Day with increased commitment, rallying to a common cause; pledging and reaffirming their support for the realization of the nation's renaissance.

The staff and officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs celebrated the 9th National Flag Day on Monday at the Ministry's offices in Addis Ababa. Speaking on the occasion, Foreign Minister Dr. Tedros Adhanom said the occasion came at a watershed moment when everyone should reflect on the past successes of the country's democratization and development efforts as well as deliberate on ways to open up new prospects for the realization of the goal of building a single political and economic community under the federal democratic system. Dr. Tedros reiterated the need to recognize the threats posed against the country's peace and stability by anti-peace elements backed by foreign forces. He underlined that this was a time to pledge allegiance to the National Flag of Ethiopia, uniting under a common cause for the continued peace, stability, development and democratization of the country. The Minister said the recent violence and disturbances in some parts of the country and their repercussions, must be condemned: they represented an attempt to drag the country back into the realm of poverty and undo the benefits achieved in recent years

This week's COMESA Summit in Antananarivo

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) held its 19th Summit from October 10-19 in Antananarivo, Madagascar. Among those attending were the Presidents of Madagascar, Zimbabwe and Zambia as well as the Vice-Presidents of Burundi, the Union of The Comoros, Kenya and Sudan and representatives of COMESA states, the Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission and representatives of the EU Commission, USAID and seventeen other countries. Ahmed Shide, State Minister for Finance and Economic Cooperation led the Ethiopian delegation, and, on behalf of Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn, handed over the chair of COMESA to President Hery Rajaonarimampianina of Madagascar. Burundi now takes the Vice-chair, and Ethiopia will serve as Rapporteur.

The Summit on Tuesday and Wednesday this week (October 18-19) was preceded by meetings of COMESA Ministers, who considered the challenges that Member States face in implementing COMESA regional integration programs at national and regional levels. All Member States have ratified the Protocol on Gradual Relaxation and Eventual Elimination of Visas (Visa Protocol) but implementation has been slow. This is also true of the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Services, Labor and the Right of Establishment and Residence (Free Movement Protocol). Ministers also reviewed the status of market integration in the region with a focus on

how member States were implementing the COMESA Free Trade area, 16 out of the 19 member States have joined. Another issue was energizing the implementation of the Tripartite Free Trade Area launched in June 2015; 17 countries out of 26 have so far signed the agreement but none has yet ratified it.

The Ministers also reviewed the peace and security situation in the COMESA region. Secretary General, Sindiso Ngwenya, briefed ministers on the crisis prevention measures to detect simmering conflicts now on place. He said, “We have put in place a robust early warning system on conflicts in the region known as COMWARN and completed our first structural vulnerability assessments which we disseminated to all countries last year. Other peace building initiatives include support to ten countries (Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, Somalia and Tanzania) affected by maritime piracy with COMESA strengthening their capacity to fight financial crimes resulting from piracy.

The Ministers adopted COMESA Medium Term Strategic Plan for 2016 – 2020, designed to contribute to structural transformation of the economies of the COMESA member States and foster overall economic development through trade, investment and regional infrastructure development. The plan, developed under the theme “In pursuit of Regional Economic Transformation and Development” is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Continental Agenda 2063. It identifies nine Strategic Objectives to drive the regional integration agenda for the period 2016-2020: Strengthening Market Integration, Attracting Increased Investments, Strengthening Development of Economic Infrastructure, industrialization, Blue Economy, Gender and Social development, capacity building and Regional and Secretariat readiness.

Prime Minister Hailemariam in his capacity as retiring chair of COMESA gave a keynote speech, which was delivered by Ahmed Shide. The Prime Minister noted that COMESA was among the fastest growing regions of the world, its free trade area remained vibrant and in June last year, COMESA had signed the agreement establishing the Tripartite Free Trade Area between COMESA, the East African Community and the Southern African Development Community. The region had continued its economic infrastructure development programs covering rail, road, water, energy and transport. COMESA’s gender policy had been revised. He said “our policies are evidenced-based through analytical work integrating COMESA economies. The region was implementing the industrial policy agreed at the last summit, leveraging the region’s comparative and competitive advantages in light manufacturing, agro-processing, minerals availability and logistics. He noted the promising trend of cross border investments in manufacturing and services between and among member states. This would contribute to regional value-chains. Creation of a single investment area would, he added, facilitate this. In fact, achieving competitiveness in manufacturing would depend upon implementation of common policies and programs aimed at improving transport, logistics and services. An effective COMESA trade and transit program would mean an average drop of 20% in trade costs. Equally, power generation and inter-connection links over the next two years would contribute to competitiveness.

In his speech, the Prime Minister noted that projections that intra-COMESA trade would reach 25 billion dollars by 2018 were unlikely to be met. Indeed, current figures indicated intra-regional trade had actually declined. This was a sharp reminder that COMESA needed to urgently put in place investment programs for the infrastructural transformation of economies. Removing supply side constraints would generate economic growth and millions of jobs. COMESA's Adjustment Support Facility was a key element to promote regional integration. It currently provided funding to eleven projects whose implementation would be completed by the end of the year. In terms of progress over the previous year, Prime Minister Hailemariam mentioned the completion of the 750 km Djibouti to Addis Ababa railway, Kenya's start of the Mombasa to Nairobi link, with its planned extension to Uganda, the Mombasa to Nairobi highway, and the new port at Lamu. Egypt had completed the Suez Canal expansion in July last year and this had already brought major benefits to the global community in reducing delays and transport costs. Zambia had commissioned the Mongu to Kalaboro road and the bridge over the Zambezi, providing a link with Angola; the Kazangula Bridge currently under construction would link Zambia and Botswana. The Prime Minister underlined the importance of corridor development, of one-stop border posts, and of COMESA developments on air safety and river transport. It was now mobilizing resources for a detailed feasibility study for a navigational route between the Mediterranean and Lake Victoria. He referred to substantial progress made in regional power generation and interconnections and the adoption of renewable energy guidelines to enhance energy security. He referred to the creation of COMESA institutions to support regional integration and the need for reliable statistic. He also noted that COMESA had revised its 2002 Gender Policy and developed mainstream gender guidelines. It was partnering with the African Development Bank to implement the African Women Speak Networking project. Prime Minister Hailemariam urged member states to sign and ratify the COMESA social charter.

During the Summit, COMESA leaders considered and adopted the Report of the Fifteenth Meeting of the COMESA Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of the Thirty Sixth Meeting of the COMESA Council of Ministers. They launched the COMESA Annual Report for 2015 and thanked COMESA's partners for their continued financial and technical support. In their final communiqué, the Summit called on member states that have not yet signed the COMESA Social Charter to do so. It urged Eritrea and Ethiopia to take definitive steps to join the COMESA FTA in order to enhance integration of the Common Market; and called on Member States to implement the COMESA Industrialization Policy in order to produce value added products and increase intra-COMESA trade in manufactured and inter-mediate products. It welcomed the Decision of the COMESA Business Council to establish a regional forum for national trade promotion organizations, and underscored the critical importance of prioritizing the elimination of barriers to trade and investment through facilitating movement of goods and services, relaxation and gradual elimination of visas to movement of people, and addressing economic structural bottlenecks in COMESA.

The Summit welcomed the Launch of the Tripartite Free Trade Area on 10 June 2015 and commended the 18 Member States that have signed the Agreement. It also called on Member States that have signed the TFTA Agreement to complete the ratification process so that the Agreement can enter into force for implementation. It urged member states to finalize work on the industrial and infrastructure development pillars and urged them to attend the Tripartite

Ministerial Meetings to be held in Nairobi, next week so that the Tripartite FTA Agreement can be implemented as soon as possible. It also welcomed the launch of the negotiations for the Continental Free Trade Area on 15 June 2015 and called for member states to try to complete the negotiations within the indicated time frame. It reiterated that both the TFTA and CFTA should pursue the broader objectives of the African Union to accelerate economic integration of the Continent with the main aim of achieving economic growth, alleviating poverty and attaining sustainable economic development.

The leaders welcomed the extension of AGOA, and commended the decision to launch the COMESA Virtual University. It commended the investment for infrastructure development especially in air, rail, road and water transport as well as energy and ICT. They called on Member States to implement air transport liberalization in the COMESA region. They also emphasized the importance of improving maritime connectivity between island and mainland Member States. They welcomed the decision to establish the COMESA Railways Association. They called on Member states to address illegal migration and the human trafficking prevalent in the COMESA region; and urged Member States to fully implement the COMESA Protocol on Gradual Relaxation and Eventual Elimination of Visa Requirements. The communiqué also called on member states to duly make their contributions to COMESA and underlined the importance of financing the elimination of trade barriers to create a seamless COMESA regional market, as well as the industrialization and economic infrastructure interconnectivity program. It agreed to prioritize these sectors for financing. In conclusion it expressed appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Zambia for donating 10 hectares of land for the construction of the new COMESA Headquarters.

A deal to reduce HCFs in Kigali and a pre-COP22 meeting in Marrakech

Nearly 200 countries struck a landmark deal on Saturday (October 15) in Kigali to reduce emissions hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), one of the most powerful greenhouse gases. This could prevent up to 0.5°C of global warming by the end of this century. The amendment to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer agreed in Kigali is the single largest contribution the world has made towards keeping the global temperature rise "well below" 2°C, the target agreed at Paris last year. UN Environment chief, Erik Solheim, said "Last year in Paris, we promised to keep the world safe from the worst effects of climate change. Today, we are following through on that promise. This is about much more than the ozone layer and HFCs. It is a clear statement by all world leaders that the green transformation started in Paris is irreversible and unstoppable." The Kigali deal, seven years in the making, is "much stronger than Paris", and it is mandatory. US Secretary of State, John Kerry, said, "It is likely the single most important step we could take at this moment to limit the warming of our planet and limit the warming for generations to come."

HFCs, commonly used in refrigeration and air conditioning as substitutes for ozone-depleting substances, are currently the world's fastest growing greenhouse gases, increasing by up to 10% a year. They are also one of the most powerful, trapping thousands of times more heat in the

Earth's atmosphere than carbon dioxide. They have shown rapid growth in recent years, driven by a growing demand for cooling, particularly in developing countries with a fast-expanding middle class and hot climates. It's estimated that 1.6 billion new air conditioning systems could be put in place over the next three decades, to add to the billions already in use, with the growing need for air conditioning in countries on either side of the equator being exacerbated by record heat caused by the accumulation of global greenhouse gases.

Now agreement has been reached for developed countries to start to phase down HFCs by 2019. The final deal will divide the world economy into three tracks. The richest countries, including the United States and those in the European Union, will freeze the production and consumption of HFCs by 2018, reducing them to about 15 percent of 2012 levels by 2036. Much of the rest of the world, including China, Brazil and all of Africa, will freeze HFC use by 2024, reducing it to 20 percent of 2021 levels by 2045. A small group of the world's hottest countries, India, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, will freeze HFC use by 2028 and reducing it to about 15 percent of 2025 levels by 2047.

Countries also agreed to provide adequate financing for HFCs reduction, the cost of which is estimated at billions of dollars globally. The exact amount of additional funding will be agreed at the next Meeting of the Parties in Montreal, in 2017. Grants for research and development of affordable alternatives to hydrofluorocarbons will be the most immediate priority. Those currently being explored include substances that do not deplete the ozone layer and have a smaller impact on the climate, such as ammonia or carbon dioxide. Super-efficient, cost effective cooling technologies are also being developed, which can help protect the climate both through reducing HFCs emissions and by using less energy.

The Kigali Amendment adds momentum to two other climate action milestones this month. One, of course, was achieving the critical mass of ratification for the Paris climate accord. On 5 October 2016, the Secretary-General of the United Nations announced that conditions for the entry into force of the Paris Agreement had been met and that it would enter into force on November 4, 2016. The two requirements, that over 55 parties ratify the Agreement and that they accounted for more than 55% of the total greenhouse gas emission, had been met. The second milestone was the agreement to curb aviation emissions. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) meeting on October 6 successfully negotiated a global emissions-reduction scheme for the aviation industry. This will be voluntary until 2027, after which most states will be obliged to participate.

This week, too, the Moroccan Presidency of the 22nd Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) hosted the Pre-COP Ministerial Meeting in Marrakech (October 18-19), in preparation for the COP22 Marrakech Climate Change Conference, taking place, in Marrakech, November 7 to 18. The opening plenary was chaired by Salaheddine Mezouar, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Morocco and COP22 President, and Segolene Royal, Minister of Environment of France and COP21 President, with Ministers, Special Envoys, Ambassadors and Representatives from over 70 countries present.

Salaheddine Mezouar congratulated the international community for the successes achieved, triggering the early entry into force of the Paris Agreement, the ICAO agreement to curb CO2 emissions from the international aviation sector and the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol for the phasedown of hydrofluorocarbons. He emphasized that Morocco would like to see all Parties that have not yet ratified the Paris Agreement do so rapidly. It would also like to see Parties implement and strengthen their Nationally Determined Contributions to climate change; Morocco would set an example and therefore, said Mr. Mezouar, “we have revised our greenhouse gas emissions reduction goal from 32% to 42% by 2030.” The final aim was to mobilize non-state actors with the goal of institutionalizing their actions under the Global Climate Action Agenda. Morocco wants COP22 will be a COP of action with a special focus on the important contributions of civil society.

The Pre-COP Ministerial Meeting finalized preparations for COP22, as well as for the 12th Session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (CMP12), and the 1st Session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement (CMA1). The main areas of discussion covered the early entry into force of the Paris Agreement scheduled for November 4 and the holding of the first meeting of the Parties to the Agreement (CMA1) on November 15 during COP22. Participants addressed the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the development of its rulebook, finance for climate adaptation and mitigation in developing countries including a \$100 billion dollar per year roadmap proposal made by donor countries for climate finance by 2020, the issue of Loss and Damage as per the Warsaw Mechanism, capacity-building initiatives such as the Paris Committee on Capacity Building, the Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency and the Nationally Determined Contributions Partnership to strengthen and help countries implement these.

In Marrakech, the aim will be to strengthen action on mitigation and adaptation by all Parties before 2020, to make concerted efforts to support domestic action that will give effect to nationally determined contributions, and combine this with collaborative initiatives as part of intensified Global Climate Action with non-state actors. Efforts will be made to put in place measures for strengthening appropriate financial flows, a new technology framework and an enhanced capacity building framework as envisioned in the Paris Agreement with a view to supporting action by developing countries and the most vulnerable countries, in line with their own national objectives. COP22 will also include a series of thematic days, on agriculture and food security, cities, energy, forests, business, oceans, transport, water, and gender, focusing on accelerating and mobilizing climate action by non-state actors including businesses, cities, sub-national governments and NGOs. Gender Day will be on November 15, the Women’s Leader Summit on November 16 and the High-Level event on November 17, with the presentation of the Global Climate Action Agenda report. The 22nd Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP22) will also include the Marrakech Call to Action.

Somalia Upper House elections have been taking place this week

This week, Somali state assemblies have been electing candidates for seats in Somalia's new Upper House of Parliament. The State Assemblies have been voting on candidates picked by the State administrations and endorsed as acceptable by the State Indirect Electoral Implementation teams (SIEIT). At least two candidates have been required for each seat and there has been the added requirement of a 30% quota for women. The states have made considerable efforts to achieve this, with some success. There are 11 seats available for Puntland and for those claiming to represent Somaliland, and 8 each for Jubaland, South West, Galmudug and the newest state, Hir-Shebelle.

Candidates standing in Puntland gave their campaign speeches on Wednesday (October 19). The more than 22 candidates presented their respective agendas to members of the assembly in the presence of Speaker of Puntland Parliament and Deputy Speakers, as well as government and security officials. The Speaker commended the candidates for their participation in the process and noted that all candidates had satisfied the SIEIT panel's conditions and were worthy to represent the Puntland people. The voting took place the next day. Among the candidates were the outgoing Federal Prime Minister, Omar Abdirashid Sharmarke, who is also standing as a candidate for the federal presidency and former Puntland President Abdirahman Mohamed Farole, both of whom won their seats easily. Another more controversial candidate, General Mohamed Said Hersi Morgan failed to win. The original Puntland list of candidates was revised after the Federal Indirect Electoral Implementation Team rejected it as failing to fulfill the quota for women candidates. It announced an amended list on Sunday this time in accordance with the National Leadership Forum decision to have a 30% quota for women in the electoral process. The results of the election for the Upper House seats on Thursday gave three seats to women, one of whom defeated three male candidates.

Galmudug State Assembly chose its Upper House members on Sunday (October 16) with the 88 Assembly members electing six men and two women. Jawaahir Ahmed Elmi, a member of the last parliament, won over two male contestants; Zamzam Dahir Mohamed defeated another woman. The election process was carried out peacefully without any disturbance.

After the election, Galmudug dismissed calls by the UN to drop the name of Abdi Qeybdiid from the list of senators elected by the State Assembly. The State Assembly speaker called upon the UN to respect the wishes of Galmudug people and support those who were elected by the people. The UN Special envoy to Somalia Michael Keating in a letter last week called on Galmudug President Abdikarim Guled to remove the name of Abdi Qeybdiid from the list of candidates: "Given Abdi Qeybdiid's past history, in particular his role during Somalia's civil wars, his inclusion in the list of Upper House candidates is a matter of serious concern. His candidature and the potential election of any individual with such a history represents a regressive step."

Similar concerns had been expressed over some other names, including the former deputy leader of the Islamic Courts Union, Abdifatah Mohamed Ali in Jubaland, and of General Mohamed Said Hersi Morgan in Puntland. A group of Somalilanders vociferously opposed General Morgan's inclusion because of his role as former army commander in northern Somalia, now

Somaliland, during the civil wars towards the end of President Said Barre's regime in the late 1980s. Mr. Ali's name was withdrawn by Jubaland and General Morgan was defeated.

Jubaland Upper House election concluded on Wednesday evening but failed to manage 30% for women with men taking seven of the eight seats. One female candidate dropped out shortly before the votes were cast and this left only one woman representative for Jubaland. A second female candidate lost to the former Jubaland Vice-President Abdullahi Ismail Fartaag. One loser was the seasoned politician, Professor Mohamed Abdi 'Gandi'. The South West State voting also provided some surprises. After three candidates had been elected on Wednesday afternoon, five candidates dropped out leaving the remaining five candidates to be elected unopposed. Two of the 8 successful candidates were women, providing South West with the required 30%. Elections for the Somaliland seats will take place in Mogadishu, and Hir-Shabelle will hold its election in Jowhar or Mogadishu.

After this selection of the 54 members for the Upper House by the State assemblies, 14,025 delegates selected by 135 clan elders will choose the 275 members of the Lower House, each member being elected by 51 voters. The Lower House voting is scheduled to start on Sunday (October 23). The two Houses of Parliament will then elect Somalia's new president on November 30.

The 4th Ethio-Sudan Joint Technical Committee Meeting

The Fourth Ethio-Sudan Joint Technical Committee Meeting opened in Addis Ababa on Wednesday this week (October 19) at the Elili Hotel. The three day meeting brought together a range of stakeholders from the governments of Ethiopia and Sudan to review the progress of the various agreements signed during the previous Joint Technical Committee Meeting and to look into other potential areas of bilateral cooperation, such as possible joint cooperation for further economic integration.

In a keynote address, State Minister of the Ministry of Industry and Head of the Ethiopian technical committee, Dr Meberhatu Meles, emphasized that Ethiopia and Sudan had enjoyed a strong, longstanding and historic relationship. He said the ties between the two countries remained outstanding both at government and people-to-people levels. He said, "We have an excellent relationship, and will continue to build on that so that we can further deepen the relationship between the two sisterly countries." Dr. Meberhatu noted that "Ethiopia and Sudan were not only neighboring countries, but also shared strong political, economic and cultural bonds. He said, "Today the peoples of Sudan and Ethiopia are 'surfing in the same boat'. The peace, stability and development of Sudan are our security, peace and development. The peace, security and prosperity of Ethiopia likewise provide the same for Sudan. Indeed, we can say our two countries are moving together, hand in hand, towards the same common destiny."

The State Minister also noted that their current cooperation was the best witness that the two countries could surmount any bilateral or regional challenges together. He said, "Our two

governments have frequently consulted and coordinated positions on matters of trade, investment, and economic integration". He took the opportunity to express the commitment of the Government of Ethiopia to strengthen economic integration via railway connectivity, which he said, would further lift bilateral socio-economic ties to a new high. Emphasizing the possibility of enhancing cooperation in the banking sector, he said the Government of Ethiopia was also working to establish a branch office in Khartoum for the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia. The State Minister said the current meeting sought to develop a draft agreement between Sudan and Ethiopia, with particular reference to the development of a free trade zone and a special economic zone. This he said would further facilitate bilateral trade and investment, as well as support the banking and transport industry. State Minister Dr. Meberhatu also noted that Ethiopia, in order to extend economic ties, would soon establish industrial parks in the corridor of north eastern Sudan stretching up to port Sudan for better utilization of the port. A multimodal structure has been prepared and would be implemented after ratification by the two parties.

Sudan's Finance State Minister, Dr. Abdurahman Mohammed Drir underlined that the friendly relations of the two countries emanated from historical roots and the Joint Technical Committee shouldered great responsibility for their continuation. He said their economic and political ties had brought immense benefit for both countries and their peoples. Dr. Abdurahman emphasized that extending road and railway links was vital for the advancement of their mutual benefit and this would require the involvement of international financial institutions. He also stressed that Sudan welcomed Ethiopia accessing the Red Sea to help maximize its trade benefit from foreign markets.

Ethiopia and Sudan have been able to sign numerous protocols and agreements paving the way for continued and mutually beneficial cooperation. It is the best interest of the two countries to work towards the effective implementation of the bilateral cooperation agreements signed in the areas of trade and infrastructure interconnections. Ethiopia is an anchor of peace and stability in the Horn of Africa and in addition to involvement in regional peace and stability, has been working hard to encourage regional economic integration. The relations Ethiopia has with Sudan are based on trust and a win-win approach. Indeed, these economic and political relations could serve as a model for other countries in the region. Their strong economic interdependence and cooperation can, in fact, be seen as a necessary ingredient for sub-regional integration efforts in the Horn of Africa. Strengthening Ethiopia and Sudan bilateral cooperation will help realize economic integration and peaceful coexistence in the region.

In addition to this Fourth Ethio-Sudan Joint Technical Committee Meeting in Addis Ababa, a four-day workshop to develop the legal framework for border crossings is being held in Khartoum. It opened on Monday (October 17) with the participation of legal experts from the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). Sudan's Minister of Presidential Affairs and head of the higher committee for border crossings, Fadl Abdalla Fadl, said the workshop sought to develop a draft agreement between Sudan and Ethiopia on the creation of a border crossing, and he emphasized that a single border crossing between Ethiopia and Sudan would facilitate efforts to combat cross-border crimes such as the illegal drug trade or human trafficking.

Abdel-Hafiz Salih Ali, Director of Sudan's General Administration of Customs, stressed the need to develop a legal framework to regulate border-crossings through the implementation of the joint border station and coordinated border management systems. He also highlighted the importance of such a project to achieve the optimal use of resources, and increase volumes of international trade as well as combat cross-border crime. Mr. Ali said the General Administration of Customs, as well as other government and private entities, wanted to benefit from international trade facilitation standards, integrating the work of international organizations such as the World Customs Organization and the World Trade Organization together with regional economic and political blocs such as COMESA and IGAD. He said a number of African countries have applied the joint border station system which led to enhancing international trade flows. President Omar al-Bashir said earlier Sudan was determined to promote the relations with Ethiopia within their shared strategic vision for joint cooperation in all fields. He said Khartoum would work hard to transform the Ethiopia/Sudan border into a comprehensive economic integrated zone.

Human Rights Watch encourages opposition violence in Ethiopia

We noted last week that Felix Horne, Human Rights Watch's Ethiopia researcher, has recently been making considerable efforts to push the European Union to use its role as Ethiopia's main development cooperation partner to force Ethiopia to accept an international investigation into the way the government had responded to recent protests. He has been writing articles on the subject, giving interviews to Reuters and, last week, addressing the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights. In all of these, in order to support his demands, he has deliberately given impressions and made claims he knows to be false about recent events, notably the Ireecha tragedy on October 2.

During his briefing to the EU Parliament subcommittee, Mr. Horne said a "an unknown number of people, possibly hundreds, died during a stampede after security forces used teargas and gunfire to control a tense crowd at the annual Ireecha festival. Ireecha is an important cultural event for the Oromo ethnic group and draws millions of people each year to the sacred site at the town of Bishoftu. The deaths have exacerbated pre-existing anger and frustrations throughout Oromia. Since that terrible day, there have been more anti-government protests and destruction of government buildings and properties." In his earlier interview with Reuters, Mr. Horne carefully ignoring much of the actual evidence that is available (including videos of the event) also suggested that the numbers who died in the tragedy on October 2 were far higher than the official figures, that the stampede which led to the deaths was purely the result of over-reaction by armed security forces to a few protestors shouting anti-government slogans, He added that the government had from the outset been trying to interfere in the organization of the festival.

There is, in fact, no evidence (though there are a multitude of allegations made over social media) of any more deaths than the official figures of 55 who died, all from being tragically drowned or crushed in the stampede. None of those who died were killed by gunshots, despite Mr. Horne's claims, as has been confirmed by reports from the hospitals in Bishoftu. Mr. Horne

claims Human Rights Watch spoke to hospital staff and “it is clear that the number of dead is much higher than government estimates.” No it isn’t. That is merely Mr. Horne’s allegation. He clearly wanted the number to be higher to fit in with his preconceived ideas that hundreds must have been killed, as Human Rights Watch claims, equally arbitrarily, there have been in other protests around the country in recent months. It is worth noting that, despite Mr. Horne’s attempts to hint to the contrary by throwing doubt on the comments of doctors and nurses on duty at the town’s hospitals, that all of those who died suffered from being crushed or drowned in ditches and shallow water. No one was shot. Indeed, it is quite clear from the videos that there was no shooting and the police were unarmed.

It is also quite clear from the videos of the event that one protestor, shouting anti-government slogans, aggressively forced his way onto the stage, followed by others, driving away the Aba Gadaa and other community elders, violently trying to take over the Ireecha, the most notable celebration in the Oromo calendar. As can be seen in all the videos of the occasion, the unarmed police showed extraordinary patience as they were pushed and jostled by a huge and threatening crowd.

Mr. Horne’s technique is clear. He carefully chooses words calculated to mislead. In his interview with Reuters, he says “eventually, a man went on stage and led the crowd in anti-government chants, the crowd grew more restless, more people went on stage, and then security forces fired teargas and people heard gunshots.” Since in fact there were no gunshots, Mr. Horne, in order to substantiate this allegation, immediately adds: “the security forces have used live ammunition while confronting and attempting to disperse numerous public gatherings in Oromia for almost a year. As Human Rights Watch has documented in many of those protests, teargas preceded live ammunition, so when the pattern seemed to be repeating itself at Ireecha, panic very quickly set in.” The police at the Ireecha were not armed. Whatever Human Rights Watch claims happened elsewhere is hardly relevant. Exactly why the panic started is still uncertain, and the government has already launched an independent investigation, but one reason for the panic, of course, might very well be people’s awareness of the scare stories Human Rights Watch has so assiduously propagated over the last few months.

The suggestion that there were hundreds killed originally came from members of opposition groups in the Diaspora who even claimed that hundreds were shot by helicopter gunships. This was a palpable invention, but Human Rights Watch was quick to claim: “an unknown number of people, possibly hundreds, died during a stampede after security forces used teargas and gunfire.” One result of this, and similarly invented claims immediately after the tragedy, was an outburst of further demonstrations and attacks on property as well as a number of deaths in various parts of the Oromo regional state. It is very clear this happened because of the statements of Human Rights Watch and of the Diaspora opposition encouraging and feeding rumors.

In fact, it appears, Human Rights Watch has a lot to answer for. It should be deeply embarrassed by its behavior. As usual with Human Rights Watch comments on Ethiopia it is clear that Mr. Horn, who was not in Ethiopia at the time, made no effort to check the political affiliations of his informants. He appears to have spoken exclusively to people whose stories agreed with his own previously established anti-government views, of which he has indeed made no secret. He,

therefore, viewed everything through his prism of condemnation of the government. He made, for example, no mention of the fact that this year's Ireecha, the culmination of Ethiopia's New Year festivals, following the celebrations of Inqutatash and Meskel, was intended to be a showcase to persuade UNESCO to gazette the Ireecha as a World Heritage festival. This had been the subject of Government's discussions with the Abba Gadaas, the council of Oromo traditional leaders and Oromo community elders.

Mr. Horne told the EU Parliamentary subcommittee: "As protests have unfolded, Human Rights Watch interviewed several hundred individuals from more than 80 locations across Ethiopia. We were able to document how security forces used excessive and unnecessary lethal force and killed at least 500 protesters, and detained tens of thousands, often without charge. Released detainees told us of widespread mistreatment and torture." This statement, as so often with Human Rights Watch, raises very serious concern about its accuracy. Human Rights Watch has not been present at all in Ethiopia during this period. There is no way to evaluate where or when it was able to "document" these allegations, who it might have talked to or how many people, if any at all. Human Rights Watch always refuses to give any details of who, where or when it talks to people in Ethiopia. It claims that it cannot release any details for the safety of the people concerned. This is of course very convenient as it makes it impossible to check any of the details or indeed any of the allegations made. Since Human Rights Watch methodology includes never bothering to question the political affiliations or interests of the people it talks to, this is of some relevance. Human Right Watch's arrogant view is that everyone else should automatically acknowledge everything it says without question.

This is particularly difficult to accept in the light of well-authenticated errors that have peppered Human Rights Watch reports in the past, mistakes, whether deliberate or accidental, that it has never bothered to respond to or consistently refuses to own up to. It remains locked into its own high-handed certainty, disdainfully refusing to accept any other views except its own. Human Rights Watch's investigation into alleged abuses by the Ethiopian army in the Somali Regional State, some years ago, is a perfect example of the way it operates. The report made a whole series of claims of abuses committed, drawing exclusively on sources outside Ethiopia and making no effort to investigate the political interests or affiliations of its informants, or to investigate on the ground. When in turn, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs commissioned an independent investigation into Human Rights Watch's claims, this found, *inter alia*, a number of villages that Human Rights Watch claimed had been burnt to the ground had been untouched, and people whom it claimed had been tortured to death were unharmed, alive and well. Indeed, it turned out almost all the claims made by Human Rights Watch were either unfounded or could not be substantiated, not least because it consistently failed to provide sufficient detail to allow the incidents to be identified, claiming, as usual, this vagueness is necessary for the security of their informants. As mentioned this does mean Human Rights Watch's claims cannot be investigated or checked!

Mr. Horne's view is apparently that since there is a difference between his allegations and the reports on the ground then there must be an independent international investigation. He ignores the fact that an investigation into the Ireecha tragedy has already begun. Mr. Horne is, of course, already discounting this as it hasn't been approved as independent by Human Rights Watch. He

says, “Ideally the Ethiopian government should investigate, but in the past, it has conducted investigations into alleged abuses by security forces that were neither impartial nor credible.” That is an allegation that Human Rights Watch has repeatedly made and it’s based on the fact that other investigations never seem to agree with Human Rights Watch’s claims. An investigation by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission into possible abuses committed by the security forces during the earlier demonstrations, and presented to Parliament earlier this year concluded the measures taken by police and security agencies, in general, had been proportionate, though it also noted that in some specific cases excessive force had been used to control the violence. Mr. Horne claimed this demonstrated its lack of independence. This was, perhaps, not surprising: Human Rights Watch never accepts anyone else evidence, however well sourced, if it disagrees with its own conclusions; and this report came out only a few days before its own report claiming there had been widespread use of excessive force.

Similarly, Mr. Horn inaccurately, and damagingly, claimed the Government has done no more than blame "anti-peace elements" for the deaths. This is simply not true. The Government has clearly demonstrated its own shock and horror at the tragedy. It promptly expressed its very deep sorrow and its condolences to families on behalf of all the peoples of Ethiopia, it declared three days of national mourning and promised a full investigation into what happened. Mr. Horne displays similar ignorance of government activity when he says the government should demonstrate a commitment to respecting human rights by creating a forum to listen to protesters' grievances in Oromia and other parts of Ethiopia. The government has, of course, set up a whole range of discussion fora across the country to listen to grievances over the last few months and held numerous meetings with various groups, as well as talking to political parties and others. It has made it clear it will respond on a large scale to legitimate protests and the President’s speech at the beginning of last week at the opening of Parliament promised consideration of proportional representation and various other reforms.

Most regrettably, as remains the norm with Human Rights Watch’s comments on Ethiopia, it is clear that Mr. Horne refuses to consider any evidence that might disagree with his own preconceptions, or with Human Rights Watch’s apparent aim of bringing an end to development aid for one of the poorest countries in the world. He compounds this by demanding outside intervention in Ethiopia’s internal affairs, another of Human Rights Watch’s attempts to manipulate Ethiopia’s policies, provide support for the country’s external opposition some of which is openly and publicly committed to the violent overthrow of the government and, indeed, consistently indulges in terrorist operations. Human Rights Watch still continues to believe that claiming the moral “high ground” is a substitute for accurate reporting or factual evidence. It is not. Nor, it must be said, is Human Rights Watch’s patronizing and egotistic (and inaccurate) claim that ‘we are always right’, and a persistent refusal to admit any possibility of error, a proper foundation for genuine advocacy.

