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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Ethiopia - Council conclusions (19 November 2018)

Delegations will find attached the Council conclusions on Ethiopia as adopted at the 3652nd meeting of the Council on 19 November 2018.

Council conclusions on Ethiopia

1. Ethiopia has witnessed momentous change. Political and economic reforms have gained a new impetus under the leadership of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. His ambitious agenda towards a more democratic and just Ethiopian society is a positive example for the region and beyond.

2. The Council welcomes the commitment of the Government of Ethiopia to multi-party democracy, respect for human rights, the rule of law and gender equality. The recent appointment of Sahle-Work Zewde as the President and nominations of 50% women in the cabinet by the Prime Minister, promoting the role of women in Ethiopian society, represent important and encouraging steps toward a greater degree of gender equality and inclusiveness. The Council encourages the Government to continue its efforts in this regard and towards developing an inclusive dialogue with all stakeholders, including federal and regional authorities, opposition groups, civil society, youth groups and media, on sustainable solutions towards better governance, justice and accountability, elections, job creation, and security challenges. The EU stands ready to support Ethiopia in their continued work to ensure the respect for the fundamental rights of freedom of opinion, expression and access to information, the right to assembly, to foster religious tolerance and to safeguard gender mainstreaming, promote women and girls' education and empowerment, eliminate all forms of violence against women, also in view of the next elections that should be inclusive, credible and transparent.

3. The Council welcomes the announcement of reforms aiming at revitalising the economy by improving the investment climate, strengthening the role of the private sector, engaging in multilateral free trade mechanisms, reforming key state-owned enterprises and opening them to competition and foreign participation, and putting the economy on a fiscally sustainable path. The Council encourages the Government to implement the reforms announced. These measures, together with participation in the G20-led Compact with Africa initiative, should contribute to address the crucial need for job creation in a country where two thirds of the population is under the age of 30. The EU, a key trade and investment partner of Ethiopia, will intensify its support in areas related to job creation, industrial and agro-industrial parks, export and trade promotion and private sector development. The recently proposed 'Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs' promotes a strengthened framework to support Ethiopia's economic transformation.

4. Over the past two decades Ethiopia has made important improvements in reducing extreme poverty and expanding access to basic social services. However, despite significant efforts by the Government, serious development challenges remain, including food insecurity and undernutrition. The EU has been a steadfast ally in supporting Ethiopia through EU development cooperation, as well as through the European Investment Plan and the EU Trust Fund for Africa. The EU-Ethiopia Strategic Engagement, signed in June 2016, elevated the political significance of this partnership. The Council stresses the need to support the Government's reform agenda. The EU and its Member States will step up coordination through the existing Joint Programming exercise in order to make EU support to the reforms agenda more meaningful and effective. It should further be underscored that all these efforts need to be undertaken with respect to sustainable development goals of Agenda 2030, as well as in light of the Paris Agreement.

5. Insecurity and the rise in ethnic violence are leading to rapid and large-scale displacement, significantly increasing the existing humanitarian challenges and posing a risk to the reform process. The humanitarian situation is deeply concerning. The Council calls for restraint from all sides, encourages the Government to provide security and equal access to services for all, and stresses the need of respecting and upholding human rights while addressing these issues. The Council underlines the need for continued efforts for peaceful resolution of internal tensions. The EU and its Member States are providing humanitarian support for the more than 2.7 million internally displaced people across the country. The Council highlights that the return of internally displaced people should take place on a voluntary and safe basis and once necessary conditions are in place. Unhindered humanitarian access should be ensured in areas of displacement and return.

6. The Council supports the driving role Ethiopia has been playing in the regional Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) process as the second largest refugee-hosting country in Africa. To allow for the implementation of Ethiopia's ambitious pledges, the Council urges Ethiopia to urgently move forward with the adoption of the refugee proclamation. The Council also welcomes EU-Ethiopia cooperation on migration and forced displacement, and commends Ethiopia for its constructive role in the Khartoum Process and the follow-up to the Valletta Summit. The Council welcomes the decision to grant visa-upon-arrival to citizens of African countries as a step towards further regional and continental integration.

7. The Council welcomes the new approach to regional issues promoted by Prime Minister Abiy that opens a unique opportunity for greater cooperation, good neighbourly relations and economic integration in the Horn of Africa and beyond. The Council welcomes in particular the historic peace agreements between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and stands ready to support the continued implementation of these through relevant instruments and mechanisms. The Council further welcomes the commitment to comprehensive cooperation made between Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia - which also opens perspectives for a better environment for State-building in Somalia. Taking note of the increased engagement between Eritrea and Djibouti, the Council underlines the importance of continuing efforts towards normalisation of their relations, which could contribute to strengthening the inclusive dimension of the regional reconciliation. The Council appreciates the role of Ethiopia in this regard and encourages Ethiopia to keep offering facilitation of the dialogue between Eritrea and Djibouti. In this context, the Council welcomes the UN Security Council's decision to terminate the restrictive measures against Eritrea. The Council positively notes the ongoing trilateral talks between Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam. The Council also commends the leaders of the region for their leadership and courage in resolving disputes and encourages them to sustain their efforts with a view to open a new chapter of cooperation in the Horn of Africa. The EU stands ready to support their efforts, using all available instruments to boost regional cooperation on peace and security and regional economic integration.
8. This new momentum should be used to reinforce cooperation between partners across the Horn of Africa, notably to increase further the effectiveness of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to provide a collective response to the new opportunities arising in the region. In this context, the EU looks forward to its continued cooperation with IGAD and for Eritrea's reintegration in the organisation.

9. This positive moment also offers a unique opportunity for relevant actors around the Red Sea to intensify dialogue and cooperation.. The EU stands ready to engage in this regard and share its own experiences where relevant, with the aim to support and join endeavours and initiatives from within the region aimed at strengthening dialogue and cooperation on a wide range of issues of common and shared interest.
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