

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, July 17 (Infosplusgabon) □ - The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, has commended the Eritrean and Ethiopian leaders for their steadfast efforts to enhance reconciliation, trust and cooperation between their two countries.

The visit of President Isaias Afwerki to Ethiopia, from 14 to 16 July, 2018, following that of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to Eritrea, a week ago, marks a new and important milestone, and is a further testimony to their commitment, he said.

He said "Coming at a time of renewed efforts to accelerate integration and silence the guns on the continent, the ongoing process between Ethiopia and Eritrea is a major and historic contribution to the stabilization and sustainable development of the Horn of Africa region.

"It will also go a long way in furthering continental priorities, as encapsulated in Agenda 2063 and other relevant African Union policies."

Applauding the leadership and courage of President Isaias Afwerki and Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, the Chairperson said he looks forward to similar bold initiatives in other conflict and crisis situations on the continent.

President Afwerki was in Addis Ababa, for a three-day visit following the thaw of relations between the two countries. This was his first visit since the start of the two countries' border war in 1998.

Amid the excitement over the thawing of strained diplomatic relations between the two sides since the 1998-2000 Ethiopia-Eritrea border war, President Isaias' visit is expected to seal the newfound comradeship.

Eritrean Information Minister Yemane Gebreab Meskel said "the visit will cement further and add momentum to the joint march for peace and cooperation for peace and cooperation set in motion by both leaders".

Ethiopian Prime Minister Ahmed paid a working visit to Asmara last weekend and announced a raft of measures earlier this week, among them, the opening of an Eritrean port for Ethiopia's use.

The two countries have stayed in a state of no war, no peace for 20 years over Ethiopia's dithering on a peace deal signed in Algiers to end the war.

However, latest revelations show backroom diplomatic negotiations had been going on between Ethiopian and Eritrean delegations.

The two countries agreed to landmark talks after the ruling Ethiopian Peoples Democratic Revolutionary Front (EPRDF) announced on 4 June it would accept the ruling of a UN Border Commission which granted Eritrea authority over the disputed territory of Badme, the flash point of the border war.

Eritrean authorities later announced they would engage in talks with Ethiopia and rapid plans were made for face-to-face talks between the two countries.

Ethiopia has announced the restoration of flights to Asmara, the Eritrean capital, and telephone links between the two countries were restored this week in the warming of relations.

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