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Ethio-Eritrea, Somalia alliance elevating regional stability

- Ends special interest groups' ill-conceived interference

BY HAILE DEMEKE

ADDIS ABABA -The large population of Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia and their untapped natural resources combined with the nation's strategic geo-political positions will have an immense role in bolstering inter-regional relations in the Horn of Africa and beyond, a political analyst said.

In September 2018, the three countries signed an agreement in Eritrea's capital

Asmara in a bid to consolidate partnership for peace and stability and promote economic and social development with a view to putting the vision for regional cooperation in a solid base. The three countries formulated a comprehensive plan to combat and neutralize the common threats they face, including terrorism, arms and human trafficking and drugs smuggling.

Speaking to *The Ethiopian Herald*, the political analyst Ephrem Madebo noted

that, apart from the political, military and economic significance, the alliance would have an immense role to solve differences independently thereby inhibiting foreign interference in the region. "Some Western interest groups are dismayed by the alliance and the recent pressure being exerted on Ethiopia is merely emanated from this. The alliance makes the three countries solid in solving problems by their own capacity and

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EHRC hails gov't for taking accountability, accepting recommendations

BETELHEM BEDLU

ADDIS ABABA- Government's response to the first of its kind Human Rights Situation Report and its willingness to react per recommendations to ensure accountability is something worth admiration, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) said.

Speaking to local media, EHRC Chief Commissioner Daniel Bekele (PhD) noted that, the government has made commendable activities to bring security forces who have been taking part in violence to justice. The government has also attached great consent and encouraging response to the finding of the report which is jointly conducted by the EHRC and *United Nations Human Rights Council* (UNHRC).

Noting the formulation of the ministerial taskforce as the manifestation of the government's commitment to the execution of the joint investigation report (JIR), the chief commissioner indicated the former also formed close partnership with the



Photo: Hadush Abreha

EHRC.

The report submitted to the House of Peoples' Representative details a number of grave human rights violations committed both by

state and non-state actors in the context of conflict that resulted in widespread deaths, psychosocial and physical injury, sexual and

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News

Committee to step up efforts in promoting Ethio- U.S. ties

- Renews commitment to fighting against false narration

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA—American Ethiopia Public Affairs Committee (AEPAC) stated that, it is committed to work hard in 22 states of the U.S with a view to further promoting the Ethiopia America relationship and pushing to the next level of success.

Holding the first annual American Ethiopian meeting, the Committee said that, it has aimed at strengthening the two countries relationships especially via fighting against false narration and boosting common interest.

AEPAC Executive Chairman, Mesfin Tegenu said that, AEPAC was formed about 16 months ago to advance pro-Ethiopia agenda in the government of the United States. The Committee has aimed at promoting the Ethiopian American relationship in a positive manner. In this regard, he said: “We have been working in 22 states in the U.S.



to realize the two countries relationship more than ever.”

AEPAC Board Secretary, Youm Fesseha on his part said that, it is the first discussion that has accomplished a lot of activities in the U.S. states. “We have worked with management groups, different organizations, community members and voluntaries, and the likes that have similar mission and values with us.”

Youm further stated that, the U.S.

Congressmen and Senators are running to office trying to build the U.S. and Ethiopian constructive relationships. He said: “We have established 20 election committees throughout the areas in the U.S. and in the midterm elections will be asking the people to vote those who are friends of Ethiopia.”

Ethiopian American Journalist, Harmela Aragawi on her part said that, AEPAC is the first pro-Ethiopian political action committee

and it was formed just a little over a year ago after the Northern Ethiopian National Command Force attack. It means that the AEPAC began in 2021 aiming at knowing the reality on the ground in Ethiopia. However, mainstream media outlets were misrepresenting and biased. To fight the false narratives, the co-founders of the ‘#No More’ targeting at exposing the fabricated news and false propaganda disseminated by T-TPLF.

She tweeted that the first annual American Ethiopia meeting was a success! The love and commitment is so real. The question is Horn of Africa. The answer is always: Unity. #No More is a journey, not a destination. Buckle up and stay curious!”

The event was attended by 200 people and participants called on supporters, contributors and the likes to carry out more activities in the future, it was learn

Ethiopia, Algeria keen on cementing ties

- Algerians celebrate 60th Independence Day

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA-President Sahlework Zewde stated that, Ethiopia and Algeria have shown keen interest to further bolster the longstanding bilateral ties between the two countries.

Participating in the celebration of 60th anniversary of Algeria’s Independence Day, Ethiopian President Sahlework Zewde stated that, Algeria liberation has been an historic, essential and significant moment in the march for liberating from colonial yoke for Africans.

The president remarked the above during her recent two day official visit to Algeria.

She noted that, during her visit that Ethiopia and Algeria have agreed to raise the economic cooperation to the highest level in relation to economic cooperation, political relations and other decisive ties between the two countries.



The President participated in the 60th anniversary of Algeria’s Independence Day following official invitation of her counterpart Abdelmadjid Tebboune, it was learnt.

During her stay in Algiers, Sahlework discussed a range of issues with President Abdelmadjid Tebboune on how to further

strengthen the long-standing ties between Ethiopia and Algeria.

Algeria had been a French colony since 1830 and was able to regain its independence on July 5, 1962, after years of armed struggle and great sacrifices, and the country celebrates its independence day every year on the 5th of July.



The war for independence lasted eight years, and it was one of the longest and most devastating periods in Algerian history, ending in 1962.

The nation marks its 60th of Independence Day with various events including a huge military parade in the presence of several foreign dignitaries.

Ethiopia to export fruits, vegetables to China

BY TAMERU REGASA

ADDIS ABABA- China has agreed to import fruits and vegetables from Ethiopia as part of strengthening economic ties between the two countries.

According to the information obtained from Ethiopian Embassy in China, Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in Beijing Ambassador Dawano Kedir held fruitful discussions with Vice Chairman of Chinese Fruit Marketing Association, Zhang Qingfeng and deliberate on issues revolving around facilitating fruit and vegetable markets.

Ambassador Dawano noted that, Ethiopian government is highly devoted



to boost fruit production and productivity citing the ever increasing production capacity and export of avocado as a good manifestation for this.

He called on the Marketing Association to play its role in promoting Ethiopian fruit products to Chinese users.

Zhang Qingfeng on his part said that, China is a big fruit producer while at the

same time a big consumer of fruit and vegetable products.

He stressed that, the association will work closely with Ethiopian companies that are currently working on fruit and vegetable keeping mutual benefit.

It is to be recalled that Ethiopia has been working on achieving the green legacy initiatives not only to mitigate climate

change but also to ensure its food security via planting tree and edible fruit seedlings.

The National Green Legacy Initiative Technical Committee Coordinator, Adefires Worku said that, Avocado, papaya, mango, and apple are the main edible fruit seedlings to be planted this year.

Meanwhile, Harari State President Ordin Bedri said that, several preparations have been underway for Green Legacy Initiative. Hence, the region has paid special attention to the Initiative to be successful. Moreover, 70 percent of the seedlings that will be planted in the state in this year are edible fruits and vegetables.

News



Ethiopia taking part in Paris Forum

- Finance State Minister discusses with officials, investors

ADDIS ABABA (ENA) - State Minister of Finance Eyob Tekalign held a fruitful discussion with different officials and investors on the sidelines of the Paris Forum.

On the sidelines of the Paris Forum Eyob met with the Co-Chairperson of the Paris Club, William Roos to get an update on the work of the creditor's committee that was set up to address Ethiopia's request for debt treatment under the G20 Common Framework.

Roos briefed the Ethiopian delegation on the promising progress by the creditor's committee and assured that all of the bilateral creditors who are part of the committee stand ready to support Ethiopia's request.

Furthermore, he also informed the delegation that the next creditor's committee meeting is scheduled to continue its work.

So far, the committee has met three times chaired by France and the People's Republic

of China, according to Ministry of Finance.

The State Minister also met with Ethiopia's Eurobond holders on the sidelines of the Paris Forum.

He briefed the bond holders on the current macroeconomic performance of Ethiopia and the resolute commitment to service coupon payments despite the significant headwinds the global economy is facing.

The investors in their part appreciated Ethiopia's diligence in honoring debt service obligations and discussed the performance of the Eurobond in the market in a tight liquidity environment.

They also noted the market discipline shown by Ethiopia in managing its debt vulnerability and shared their frank observations and extended their view regarding the common framework and the debt challenges faced by many countries.

Eyob assured the investors of Ethiopia's wish to be back into the credit market in the long term after addressing the macro constraints in line with the home-grown economic reform to fund development-focused projects.

Finally, the Ethiopian delegation met with Patricia Pollard, Deputy Assistant Secretary at the US Department of Treasury and the U.S. delegation at the Paris Club to discuss the Common Framework for debt treatment.

The state minister briefed Pollard on the significant progress made by Ethiopia and the creditor's committee and the overall effort by the chairs of the Paris Club to deliver the necessary financing assurance for Ethiopia.

Deputy Assistant Secretary at the U.S. Department of Treasury, Patricia Pollard in her part emphasized the interest of the US to see the Common Framework succeed and address the debt vulnerability of the three countries that so far requested debt treatment.



Industry delivers high-tech cross country buses

- Some 50 special cross country buses ready for service

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA—Bishoftu Automotive Industry has handed over 50 special cross country buses it assembled to Public Service Transport Enterprise.

Speaking at the handover ceremony, Transport and Logistics Minister, Dagmawit Moges said the ministry is working on providing modern buses transport services.

"Ticket service has started as of today using the technology network and the buses would possess 45 seats, adequate luggage storage, toilet, refrigeration unit and fully equipped with an artificial intelligent system," she said.

The buses are expected to address society's transport problems and would play the great role in overcoming nationwide transportation hurdles to some extent.

Ethiopia to push for intangible cultural heritages conservation

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA-Selection of Ethiopia to intergovernmental committee on Intangible Cultural Heritage at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) helps to actively participate in key decision-making processes on registration and protection of intangible cultural heritages, Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage (ARCCH) said.

ARCCH Cultural Anthropologist Gezahegn Girma told *The Ethiopian Herald* that the selection of Ethiopia as the intergovernmental committee on Intangible Cultural Heritage at UNESCO for the coming four years is a big

achievement to ARCCH in particular and to the country in general as it has opened the door wide for exercise its roles in this regard.

This opportunity will activate Ethiopia's efforts of heritages conservation at the African and global levels, he added.

As to him, the effort of Ethiopian delegates at the UNESCO general meeting helps the country to be selected for this position.

It was learnt that a total of 24 nations across the world will be selected as the member of the intergovernmental committee on intangible cultural heritage at UNESCE every four years.

Moreover, the committee held its convention to select one country as committee member to

follow up its effectiveness.

Ethiopia and the other intergovernmental committee states will evaluate the criteria and finally approve the nominated heritages to be registered in the representative list of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity.

According to him, Ethiopia represented African countries to maintain the equal and impartial intangible heritage registration of the African society.

Accordingly, Ethiopia will be the member of intergovernmental committee on Intangible Cultural Heritage at UNESCO from 2022 to 2026. UNESCO has inscribed Ethiopian intangible heritages including Meskel celebration, Gada System, Fiche Chambalala and Epiphany.

Ethio-Eritrea...

creates collective self-reliance."

The developing world has faced pressing challenges and several African countries are preferring South-South cooperation than South to North as to ensure development and overcome the challenge. Africans need to keep on safeguarding national interest and committed to policy direction amidst the change of leadership. Accordingly, Somalia's President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's recent visit to Eritrea is a testimony for the preservation of the alliance, the expert emphasized.

Security was one of the major areas of focus with the three countries comprehensive

plan to combat terrorism in the region. Accordingly, as part of a military cooperation and strengthening regional security, the government of Eritrea has trained 5,000 Special Forces (commandos) of the neighboring government of Somalia. It was three years of rigorous military training, as the Ministry of Information of Eritrea reported.

Eritrea's President Isaias Afwerki and his Somalia counterpart Hassan Sheikh Mohamud attended the graduation ceremony of the cadets. "Eritrea feels honored and proud to contribute in the training and in building the Somali national army," Eritrea's President Isaias Afwerki quoted as saying by the Ministry of Information.

The commander of Somalia's trainees explained that they have obtained sufficient

military training and lessons from the people of Eritrea on building one and united country and expressed readiness to discharge national obligation.

During the occasion, Somalia President Hassan Sheik Mohamud, who was in Eritrea for four-day official visit, congratulated the trainees for completing the rigorous program and underlined contributions they are expected to make in bolstering the Somalia's Army.

After the collapse of the central government of Somalia in 1991, its military and security apparatus has been weakening leading the nation to be exposed to extremist groups notably al-Shabaab, which has been using the country as its main base for the past many years.

EHRC hails...

gender based violence, displacement and destruction of property, targeting civilians, including women, children, older persons and persons with disability and carried out in extreme brutality and cruelty.

The Commission's monitoring and investigation work also showed that in the context of the war in Northern Ethiopia and conflicts in other parts of the country, armed groups, non-organized groups and individuals have carried out ethnic or religious motivated killings, physical injury, forced displacement and destruction or looting of property against civilians.

"It is a reminder that, since political disagreements/instability are at the root of the overall context of war, conflicts and widespread attacks against civilians that Ethiopia finds itself in at this time, political solutions are an inevitable part of sustainable solutions," he said on the report.

The report, which covers between June 2021 and June 2022 (Ethiopian fiscal year), was consisted of an overall assessment of the human rights situation in the country; key positive developments, main concerns, challenges and recommendations, it was learnt.

Opinion

Ramifications in global food politics, threats, opportunities for Ethiopia

BY SOLOMON DIBABA

Given the huge potential the country has in store, Ethiopia should have never faced any food shortage or famine but the reverse was always the case. In popular parlance it appears that there is no connection between politics and food but in reality, both in Ethiopia and across the globe, food politics had to a greater degree determined the global and regional foreign relations and diplomatic maneuvers between countries. The writer of this contribution is therefore mindful of the need to define some of the terms that are used in this brief article. We shall start with defining what food politics is.

Food politics is a term which encompasses not only food policy and legislation, but all aspects of the production, control, regulation, inspection, distribution and consumption of commercially grown and even sometimes home grown, food. The commercial aspects of food production are affected by ethical, cultural, and health concerns, as well as environmental concerns about farming and agricultural practices and retailing methods.

It would not even be foolish to define what food itself is. Food is any substance consumed to provide nutritional support for an organism. Food is usually of plant, animal, or fungal origin, and contains essential nutrients, such as carbohydrates, fats, proteins, vitamins, or minerals.

The term food democracy, the fulfillment of the human right to safe, nutritious food that's been justly produced describes food democracy. It means ordinary people getting together to establish rules that encourage safeguarding the soil, water and ecosystems that, in the end, we all depend on.

On the other hand, the concept of food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.

Moreover, Food Self-Sufficiency (FSS) is defined as the ability of a household or region to maintain its own food requirements, which can be measured at different levels.

Food security, as defined by the United Nations' Committee on World Food Security, means that all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life.

If we briefly look into the nature of food crisis in Africa over several years from now, we notice that Devastating crop losses, Parched land, Millions of dead and dying cattle, goats and camels, Starving and severely malnourished children, Rising

global grain prices that force families to go hungry. An estimated 346 million people in Africa are affected by the food crisis, according to recent reports by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the African Union (AU).

An estimated 1.5 million livestock perished, and the remaining animals have become emaciated and weak. Crop production is between 58 per cent and 70 per cent below average across the region.

Ukraine is a major supplier of wheat, corn and sunflower oil to African countries and, since Russia's invasion began in February, Africa has faced food and cooking oil shortages that have left an estimated 400 million people on the continent food insecure.

In his recent comment on the immediate consequences on the Russo-Ukraine war, Dr. Akinwuma Adesina, President of the AfDB stated that Africa lost more than 30 million MT of wheat in wheat trade due to the war.

Russia and Ukraine are among the top five global exporters of barley, sunflower, and maize, and account for about a third of the world's wheat exports. Nigeria, the world's fourth largest wheat importer, receives a fourth of its imports from Russia and Ukraine. Cameroon, Tanzania, Uganda, and Sudan source more than 40 percent of their wheat imports from Russia and Ukraine. The UN World Food Programme (WFP) buys half of the wheat it distributes around the world from Ukraine. With the war, supplies are squeezed, and prices rise, including for fuel, increasing the cost for transporting food in and to the region.

Acquisition of enough food for the population and the army has been an important factor in the history of Ethiopia. Shifts of Ethiopian capitals from Axum to Gondar, Sekota, Ankober, Addis Alem and then Addis Ababa have been attributed to the need for firewood and food that became scares in the northern part of the country.

Over the last 50 years, recurrent and cyclic drought that occurred in the country due to manmade causes and climate change has not only affected the pace of socioeconomic development of the country but also resulted in the death of millions.

Earlier in 1953, Ethiopia and the US signed Mutual Assistance and Development Program in which the US attempted to make Ethiopia the "Bread Basket of Africa" through capacity building program in the American Point IV Program by establishing various agricultural colleges across the country including the former Alemaya Agricultural College, Jimma, Ambo and Hawassa while various agricultural research institutes like Holeta and Bako were

established to help promote agricultural productivity in the country. Moreover, the imperial government established various agricultural showcase centers like Chilalo Agricultural Development Unit which was later converted into ARDU, Wolayita Agricultural Development Unit and several other centers during the Third Five Year Plan. The Ministry of Agriculture commissioned Extension and Project Implementation Department which was tasked with agricultural modernization. All these efforts failed to make Ethiopia the bread basket of Africa.

The Derge regime introduced the Green Revolutionary Campaign in which focus was made on the formation of huge state farms, agricultural cooperative units and the villagization program which was conducted with support from 14 socialist countries. Regrettably enough this did not work out again. Huge structural changes were introduced in the Ministry of Agriculture which was administered by 4 deputy agricultural ministers but Ethiopia remained a major food recipient country to date.

As part of the national reform program and the Ten Year Prospective Plan (2021-2030), the Federal Government launched a three year program on producing a lowland wheat production program in 2011.

In 2022-23 periods Ethiopia will produce 5.7 million MT of wheat on 405,000 ha. Procured 400,000 MT of wheat in 2022. The country intends to stop importing wheat by 2023 recovering annual import price of more than 250 USD.

According to the Ethiopian Research institute, by planting one million hectares of land with wheat Ethiopia will not only recover the cost of wheat but will also start exporting quality wheat by next year transforming the country from what importer to exporter for the first time in the nation's history.

In its attempt to destroy Ethiopia and build what it called Greater Tigray, Terrorist TPLF and its cronies attacked the bases of the nation's food production and storage areas and looted millions of tons of food in Amhara, Afar and Oromia regions to feed its barbaric fighters. It displaced millions of citizens in the three regions in an attempt to disrupt the farming season in the regions. Moreover it has recruited and continues to recruit hundreds of thousands of citizens in Tigray to deploy them to the attack that it attempts of wage on the people of Ethiopia this rainy season.

Moreover, it is now proved that Terrorist TPLF is using relief food aid transported to the region for the needy. It confiscated more than 1400 heavy duty WFP to provide logistics support for its fighters.

Before he concludes this contribution, the writer would attempt to outline some of the advantages that Ethiopia could obtain from import substitution and agricultural export programs intended over the next several years.

By declaring self-sufficiency in wheat, maize, oil and other agricultural products, Ethiopia can successfully hold up to the multiple sanctions the US and other western countries have imposed on Ethiopia. Gradual curtailing of food aid from abroad will allow Ethiopia to ease the current political pressure the country is being forced to face, thus strengthening the nation's political independence and decision making on local and international relations and diplomacy.

By and large, Ethiopia will be able to successfully meet item 2 of the SDG which prescribes "sustainable solutions to end hunger in all its forms by 2030 and to achieve food security. The aim is to ensure that everyone everywhere has enough good-quality food to lead a healthy life. Achieving this Goal will require better access to food and the widespread promotion of sustainable agriculture."

Agricultural modernization in Ethiopia is a critical strategy not only for ensuring food security but it will also be instrumental in markedly reducing the alarming level of unemployment among the youth in the country as hundreds and thousands of youth in urban and rural settings of the country will be able to be self-employed.

Ethiopia's national export program is expected to be diversified including various agro-industrial products to be processed in the country's burgeoning agro-industrial parks.

Ethiopia's food politics is not expected to be conducted free of challenges. The increased frequency of climate change triggered drought, landslides, flood are still lingering on the country. Besides, the skyrocketing of prices of chemical fertilizers, lack of modern agricultural technologies relevant to small holder farming, proliferation of ethnic based conflicts and massacres by terrorist groups like *Shene* and other terrorist groups in the regions are the most outstanding bottlenecks to be addressed both on short and long term political strategies.

In spite of all these challenges, Ethiopia will certainly emerge victorious in its socio-economic development over a couple of years. The main issue is Ethiopia must attain victory in looming global food crisis by feeding its population and exporting diversified agricultural products to gain the necessary and badly needed foreign exchange earnings.

Editor's Note: The views entertained in this article do not necessarily reflect the stance of The Ethiopian Herald

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General Manager

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Department

email: etpresspromotion@gmail.com
Tel. 011-156-98-73/011-811-13-15

Editor-in-Chief: Worku Belachew
email- workubelachew@press.et
Address- Nifas Silk Lafto Sub-city
Woreda - 05, House No---
Tel- +251 111 26 41 98

Managing Editor: Wakuman Kudama
Email: wakuma220@gmail.com

Deputy Editors-in-Chief:

Alem Hailu

Elizabeth Mengistu

Zekarias Woldemariam

Desta Geberehiwot

Daniel Beyene

Website: www.press.et

email: ethiopianherald@press.et

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Editorial

Peace deal has to be two-way initiative

So the golden saying by Albert Einstein goes, "Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding," the Ethiopian government has opened all possible leeway to pull the T-TPLF towards a peaceful path in order to resolve the northern conflict no matter how the cost may be.

The government has also called on the rebel group to peacefully settle all sorts of disagreements and recommends methods of adjustment or terms of incongruity settlement. Taking such an indispensable step into account, the Ethiopian government has all the time been capitalizing on all lucrative options to peacefully resolve the skirmish. However, the T-TPLF belligerence rises and the group has left no stone unturned to meet its ill-intended mission by force and violence. To the surprise of everyone, the group has attempted to use the case happened at the Sudan border as a good opportunity to attack Ethiopia.

Obviously, there are a number of ways to arrive at peace deal if both parties have genuinely entertained and translated words into practical actions as well as comprehend the role and importance of peace agreements towards settling internal conflict. The stubborn T-TPLF has to use the golden opportunity with which it has been provided if it has really thought of its people since a wholehearted agreement will result in durable peace over delays, setbacks and collapse of the amity process. Thus the stringent requirements for lasting peace have to be met following precision of wording, technical feasibility, international legitimacy, detailed implementation timetable and the likes. Undeniably, peace agreements are good examples of thinking of the governed and the nation or the state ruled.

As the government of Ethiopia has prioritized peace talks for soothing tension and conflicts, promoting nation-wide political and security discourses, the other party should take all these options as

important steps to be trekked for a meaningful difference. It is only this time the effort of the government for lasting peace bears fruits. Otherwise a single handed effort leads nowhere.

Though the Ethiopian government has expressed commitment to maintain peace and stability, problems still remain trying at T-TPLF all the time beats war drums, which benefits no one. In making peaceful efforts to solve problems, it is necessary to carefully consider the most appropriate approach benefiting both parties. At the same time, in this hectic environment, it is equally important to promote nation-wide political and security dialogues to enhance the sense of mutual reassurance in Ethiopia on issues of common concern—peace and stability.

So long as single-handed peace ingenuity doesn't bear fruits, both warring parties in Ethiopia have to comply with peace options and all ways towards making the country well serene.

Comprehending conditions out of the box and sieving actions accordingly, the international community should be concerned about the long term implications of the Ethiopian government legitimacy, peace-loving shrug and responsible move towards creating calm Horn. Besides, the government has shown keen interest to utilize the more immediate opportunities to advance peace and mitigate the dire human call for peace and tranquility. This is really a promising move to come up with a peaceful nation in particular and restful Horn in general.

Therefore, the call for humanitarian truce on the side of the government has to be given value by the other side as warmongering move and hostility would unequivocally leave a wrong mark.

Opinion

The multifaceted benefits of the Green Legacy Initiative

BY SOLOMON DIBBABA

It is also important to note that the Ethiopian greening program is a new cultural revolution in which a collective spirit is being developed to reconcile the negative relations between human beings and nature in the context of maintaining the natural ecosystem in the country. The campaigns in the greening programs would help to introduce a new type of nationalism in ascertaining green Ethiopia which is to be successfully transferred to the coming generation.

Moreover, the positive impact of Ethiopia's National Green Legacy Initiative is not limited only to Ethiopia but also transcends to the African region and the entire world as well. The initiative has far more greater global implication in the sense that it is an important contribution to the international effort for reducing the level of carbon in the atmosphere and global warming.

In addition to other advantages that are mentioned above, the NGLI has already proved to be a major sources of income generation for the youth and female headed families across the country. It is instrumental in fighting to reduce unemployment among the youth in particular.

It is important to consider here that the NGLI is not an isolated development program or a standalone initiative. It is part of the most critical components of the Ten Year Perspective Development

Plan (2021-2030). The Plan focuses on national watershed management, reducing the level of carbon in the atmosphere, further promoting the forestry program of the country, further developing renewable energy resources of the country, introducing fuel efficient technologies.

Among other things, the successes to be achieved in the NGLI will further help to maintain the balance of nature in the country by increasing the wild life resources of the country as their former habitat will be restored.

The greening program of the country creates and excellent ground for further development of eco-tourism in the country which is still at its infant stage. Already promising results have been seen in the infrastructure development for Wonchi, Gorgora, Koyisha projects while Unity Park, Sheger and Entoto Projects have been completed.

Nonetheless, the national greening program sets the stage for the development of more than 7000 plants in the country that can be used for developing traditional herbal medicines for treating various diseases in the country.

All areas in which the national greening programs are conducted could serve as venues for short excursions out of towns and social events like wedding ceremonies and programs for school day outs.

The forests that are established through

the National Green Legacy Initiative are excellent locations for researchers in plant science, botany and other spheres of research related to forests.

Most of Ethiopians grew up by eating natural wide fruits particularly during the rainy season. The Green Legacy Initiative will help to rejuvenate these wild fruits that have a greater potential for being used as part of the regular food intake particularly in rural Ethiopia.

In conjunction to the Green Legacy Initiative, Prime Minister Abiy has been encouraging citizens both in rural and urban parts of the country to engaged in backyard gardening to supplement the food consumed at family level and also to create a healthy living environment for citizens. Backyard gardening will help families to at least tackle the skyrocketing of food prices at a limited level.

Here is would be necessary to mention two important factors that are necessary to ensure the impact of the national greening initiative. The first is the question of ownership, protection and care for the planted trees. The second is coordination and strengthening of a database to monitor trees planted across different ecosystems in the country. Community and institutional ownership of planted trees is key to the sustainable utilization of the trees over years. Coordination implies creating a national coordination and reporting on the progress registered at all levels.

We all need to know that the National Green Legacy Initiative is a huge investment program on the development and conservation of the natural resources of the country. Springs, brooks and smaller rivers that have long dried up are reviving again.

This year as in the past, billions of agro-forestry trees including various types of fruit trees are expected to be planted on various agro-ecological terrains across the country. Getachew Gizaw, Deputy Chairman of the National Green Legacy Initiative and Senior Expert on water and energy noted that the National Green Legacy Initiative is a unique type of investment in which huge amount of fund tree is expended to raise seedlings in various nurseries across the country. He said the minimum cost for a single seedling is about Birr 25-30 and fruit tree seedlings could cost about Birr 100 or even more for special fruit seedlings. How much does 6 billion trees seedlings cost? Just try to figure it out.

The National Green Legacy Initiative is strictly Ethiopian but must be replicated extensively into other African countries. This is not politics but a major issue of survival.

Editor's Note: The views entertained in this article do not necessarily reflect the stance of The Ethiopian Herald

Business & Economy

Industry aroused from perception modus operandi to rescue economy

BY LAKACHEW ATINAFU

For over two decades, Ethiopia's foreign policy has been centered on economic diplomacy, at the core of which is attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). Diplomats have been tasked to promote investment opportunities, incentives, laws, rules, and regulations and recruit investors in the priority sectors identified by the Government like tourism. Therefore, as part of its annual plan, each diplomatic Mission takes the assignment of recruiting a specific number of investors, based on which the annual performance of the Mission and the individual diplomats is evaluated.

Ethiopia's remarkable economic growth has partly been attributed to the economic-centered foreign policy and diplomacy that the country has fittingly designed and aggressively implemented. While the foreign policy has, for decades, been directed towards attracting FDI as a key priority, the coming into power of Prime Minister Abiy has enabled a new chapter where the legal and institutional framework, as well as administrative procedures pertaining to investment in general and FDI in particular, have been significantly reformed towards a more liberal, early and favorable system.

With the Government's introduction of the Home-Grown Economic Reform, the primary focus of the Foreign Policy has been promoting and implementing this reform. While implementing the reform requires more aggressive diplomacy, the reform has eased the diplomatic work by introducing inherently attractive and liberal initiatives.

As a clairvoyant leader adhered to sensuous beauty, environment stewardship the administration of Abiy Ahmed has shown changing devil to its originality. This cannot be denied as one can see shabby places and slums in the down town and amid light.

The initiative to make Ethiopia the hub of tourism and diversified botanic garden of tourism and investment will continue to bloom if nations walk hand in hand.

The government of Ethiopia has clearly spotted that the economic diplomacy formulation and implementation of sound policy and strategy to step up tourism and consolidate robust economic diplomacy among strategic partners.

The Director General of the Tourism Training Institute, Dr. Desalegn Ambaw at a policy discussion forum held in Semera recently said that the development of the tourism sector should focus on increasing numbers of foreign visitors and passerby to solve the foreign exchange shortage that the country is facing.

Commonly called the "smokeless industry" the tourism industry is an alternative economic base for many countries the Director General said. Ethiopia's potential in terms of tourism resources is untapped for various reasons; he said it could not use it as it should have been.



Ethiopia is rich in tourism destinations: Semien Mountains – Pinterest Explore

"Our man-made and natural resources as a country are diverse and magnificent that the world mesmerized at. It will withstand a great deal of adverse conditions. By generating foreign exchange and ensuring the growth of national production it can be the basis of the economy." He added: "This is a dream come true as there are other things that need to be done primarily clear sector policy formulation and related enforcement strategies or those strategies play the lion's share."

So as to step up the country's tourism sector, all stakeholders are needed to make the appropriate contribution noting that it requires coordination.

Relevant design and implementation of policies and strategies, reassuring peace and security, modernize infrastructure and services and convenience situation for visitors is primarily expected of the government, he said.

The private sector also plays a significant role in this regard. In addition, researches are conducted in the field of tourism diplomacy and other related issues that could boost the tourism sector. There is also of great importance to involve personal figures along with the formulation and mere ratification of policy and strategy.

In the discussion organized by the Institute of Foreign Relations Forum on the Economic Diplomacy for the Development of the Tourism Sector's Role and Strategy of Ethiopian Tourism Diplomacy a study focusing on directions, implementation and challenges. Articles were presented and discussed by experts in the field.

In the forum, officials of Federal and state governments, University Teachers and Researchers, Tourism Sector experts and other invited guests were detected.

The International Community has wasted several opportunities that could have been effectively seized to change course in Ethiopia. Now there is a risk that the recently declared indefinite humanitarian truce and the national dialogue initiatives

may face a similar fate.

If so, the future will be worse than the past. Maximum caution is required. There is a need to leave emotions and the arrogance aside and constructively engage to make sure that these promising initiatives are not wasted once again.

For those trained in the hotel and tourism sector, the lack of opportunities for professionals is what the country gets from the sector incurring foreign currency by hiring foreign experts.

According to explanation of Deputy Director General of Tourism Training Institute and Hotel Management Researcher and consultant Yitaseb Seyoum, Ethiopia has decorated professionals with ample experience of managing star rated hotels. However, the sector is frequently awarded to foreigners who forced the country to lose foreign currencies in greater amount. He also commented that it was appropriate if Ethiopia pays special attention to the tourism sector.

Hence, it is highly advisable to leave the sector's steer for domestic professionals and trained fellow citizens in order to reach the helm of success.

To happen this, the government of Ethiopia has formulated curriculum and train academicians in the tourism sector in 15 state Universities.

According to the expert, most large Hotels with international fame denying opportunities to local professionals and frequently obsessed in hiring foreign citizens though there are plenty of trained men power in Ethiopia. For example, five out of five foreign experts earn hundred folds of domestic workers at no compression of competence.

He recalled that the institute conducted a study three years ago. According to the finding of the study, the number of professionals trained in hotel and tourism institutions did not exceed 26 percent. As a result, most of the work has been run by people who are not trained in the field

and who are not involved in the field, he explained. If the quality of service is to be improved by the trained human resource, experts in the sector should be called for leadership and the tourism sector could focus on the country's economic growth. Doing so, he pointed out that the sector can make a big contribution. According to the Deputy Director General, domestic and foreign colleges and Universities are working to produce professionals of the tourism sector.

He further said that the institute is paying special attention to the issue and will continue to do so in the future. While explaining the issue, expert on the state of Ethiopia's tourism sector said that the country has potential in the tourism sector. He also emphasized the importance of coordination.

To promote the country's potential and better effective promotional techniques and to achieve sounding results, concerned parties need to work together.

He also explained that doing so is a matter of time. He added that so far, most of the work caused wasting of time and money because they used to work separately.

Tourism is among the economic and social sectors that are registering rapid growth in the world, and nowadays, it has been found to be making its contribution in supporting and accelerating national development.

Tourism makes a tremendous contribution serving as a source of foreign exchange, promoting micro and small-scale enterprises, creating employment opportunities, and ensuring sustainable development.

Because of the absence of a clear policy for long that would lay the direction for the cooperation and coordination that should exist among the government, the private sector, the community at tourist attraction sites, the general public and other stakeholders; it has not been possible for the country to derive full benefits from the sector and development has remained uncoordinated and unsustainable.

The government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, therefore, realizing the problems of the sector and giving special attention to the matter, and recognizing the necessity of creating a strong government organ to lead the sector, has established the Ministry of Culture and Tourism under Proclamation Number 471/2005, now Ministry of Tourism, enacted to redefine the powers and duties of the organs of the Federal Government.

In order to consolidate the fragmented activities and ensure coordination of efforts being made by government, the private sector, communities at the tourism destinations and civic organizations, and to create conducive environment for these entities to be able to discharge their respective responsibilities appropriately, it has become necessary to issue such an enabling policy and strategy.

Society

Reducing maternal malnutrition, child wasting and stunting

BY STAFF REPORTER

Stunting is one of public health burdens worldwide that cause death and huge economic loss especially in most developing countries.

According to the report by UNICEF 2015, every year, stunting causes the death of one million children around the world.

Stunting is a manifestation of severe, irreversible physical, physiological and cognitive damage caused by chronic malnutrition during a child's first 1,000 days or from the beginning of pregnancy until the age of two years. And stunted children are too short for their age; and for the children who survive it in infancy and early childhood causes long term effects, including poor cognition and educational performance, diminished physical development, poor health, lost productivity and low adult wages, the report underscored.

Low-income and lower-middle-income countries account for almost all (91 percent) stunted children worldwide whereas more than one in three exists in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Even if the prevalence of stunting is decreasing across the globe; the challenge remains a major health burden in Africa, including Ethiopia. To this end, Ethiopia, is working untiringly by joining hands with partners and devising various strategies.

Recently, the Government of Ethiopia, in collaboration with partners launched a 30 million USD multi-sectoral nutrition program with the aim to reduce maternal malnutrition, child wasting and stunting.

Speaking at the forum organized by Ministry of Health to discuss the implementation



Photo: MoH

process of the program along with partners and stakeholders, Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition Director with the Ministry Dr. Meseret Zelalem said that, the program would be implemented in the coming 10 years in selected woredas across the country.

The program aligns with the Ethiopian government's commitment to reducing stunting and ending child malnutrition in the East African country.

Over the past two decades, Ethiopia has shown remarkable reduction in the prevalence of stunting. It was enabled to reduce the burden from 58 percent in 2000 to 37 percent in 2020. However, according to a mid-term population and health survey conducted two years ago, 5.8 million children under the age of five are still suffering from stunting; and more than 1.2 million children are affected by wasting. As the study shows, the magnitude of the burden compared with other developing countries is

severe, she added.

The government, understanding the scope and depth of the burden, and to address the country's food and nutrition security challenges is implementing various activities through adopting the Food and Nutrition Policy Strategy in 2019; and by mobilizing stakeholders and partners.

The Strategy is vital to improve the nutritional status of pregnant and lactating mothers, ensure their health thereby to help them be healthy during pregnancy and childbirth, as well as to generate a citizen who can play role in nation's economic growth and prosperity by preventing children from acute malnutrition, stunting and wasting.

"The Government of Ethiopia has strong commitment to accelerate the reduction of stunting and ending child malnutrition by 2030 as a key strategy for human capital development

and inclusive economic development," the Director remarked.

"Improving maternal nutrition is important to ensure women's health and achieve better pregnancy and birth outcomes. Equally, the prevention of wasting and stunting will promote optimal growth for children to thrive in a productive workforce. UNICEF is hereby committed to support the Government of Ethiopia and mobilize the required funding for this program," said Kitka Goyol, OIC, and UNICEF Deputy Representative, said in a Joint Press Release issued last Friday.

Over the five years, the program will reach at least one million pregnant women and three million children with vital health and nutrition services. It is also expected to promote long-term improvements to the population's nutrition as well as socio-economic indicators by making Ethiopia's health and food systems more resilient and encouraging healthier, more productive communities, she added.

The initiative is also expected to promote long-term improvements to the populations' nutrition as well as socio-economic indicators by making Ethiopia's health and food systems more resilient and encouraging healthier, more productive communities.

The newly launched program entitled, 'Addressing Maternal Malnutrition, Child Wasting and Stunting in Ethiopia' and funded by the Power of Nutrition, Eleanor Crook Foundation, The END Fund and the Rotary International, will be implemented through a partnership agreement between the Ministry of Health, UNICEF and Action Against Hunger, it was learnt.



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Need to expand SBS for education quality enhancement

BY DIRRIBA TESHOME

The Ethiopian government is planning to create a system of up to 50 elite boarding schools that will initially supply existing universities with well-educated students aged 18 and above. It has developed a program to build these schools in the next five years across the country. The goal would be to gather and educate outstanding students, aiming to develop future leaders in various sectors in decades to come.

As a result, Ministry of Education has called on all regional states throughout the nation to expand special boarding schools with a view to achieving the overall goal of education quality set at the national level. Its initial goal is to deliver quality candidates for Higher Learning Institutions in order to reverse the decline in student quality witnessed in recent years.

"So far, the first plan is relating to secondary educational institutions. But it's also imperative to think of tertiary educational institutions where these gifted students can continue their studies. For now, the focus is on one educational sector but, moving forward, there will be work that will be done (relating to tertiary educational systems)," Yohannes Wagaso, an official with the Ministry of Education told earlier in this May.

The Boarding Schools compete with the existing schools. The ministry says it will supplement existing schools, without imposing additional pressures on them. Officials were currently working on details such as how and to which universities elite students would be assigned to after finishing their secondary education studies and what kind of human resources and expertise the country needs from these students, he indicated.

To the achievement of the national education



quality enhancement plan and expansion of Boarding schools, Secondary Special Boarding School built with an outlay of over 275 million Birr was inaugurated in Ambo town, Oromia State on Sunday at the presence of higher federal and regional government officials.

It was indicated during the occasion that currently seven Special Boarding Schools have become operational in Oromia, out of the nine under construction with the cost of about 2 billion Birr.

The schools began instruction in 2021/2022 Ethiopian fiscal year by enrolling over 1,500 students with the highest grade in their previous schools.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony, State Minister of Education, Samuel Kifle said

expansion of Special Boarding Schools in Oromia State will provide an opportunity to achieve the overall goal of quality education in the short term.

"The expansion of boarding schools is underway in line with the Ministry of Education's plan to build special boarding schools in all parts of the country. Such projects cannot be done by one region and the Ministry of Education alone. It needs the concerted efforts of all actors. The Ministry of Education strongly urges all regions of the country to have such schools," he said.

Only a well-educated generation can live together in peace and love, he furthered stressing the need to work for the future generations. "If we want our country to be successful tomorrow, we must work hard to provide a better education

for our generation,"

Similarly, of Oromia State President Shimellis Abdisa said that the State is working to produce a generation who is scientifically and technologically advanced with innovative mind to resolve the problems of the country and beyond. In less than a year, it has completed the construction of 100 secondary schools and 7 Ifa Boru Special Boarding Schools.

If the existing initiatives are strengthened and attention is paid to the sector, the Special Boarding Schools will not only be places where the best students are selected and taught, but also where they compete which is vital to enhance education quality, Shimelis noted stressing: "We must work harder and change the lives of our people through education."

Global Affairs

Reaffirming commitment to regional peace, stability

BY YOHANES JEMANEH

A comparative peace has been achieved in Ethiopia since the announcement of the unilateral humanitarian truce by the federal government aimed at facilitating humanitarian support and rehabilitation efforts in northern parts of the country.

Accordingly, unfettered humanitarian support is reaching to people in need, and restoration efforts are also underway. This peace initiative from the government side has bought wide appreciation from various international partners and regional blocs of which the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) is one of them.

The regional bloc has appreciated the government for its maximum effort to reach peace. In a communique published following the conclusion of the 39th Extraordinary Assembly of IGAD Heads of State and Government that was held on fifth July 2022 in Kenya, IGAD has appreciated the positive steps taken by the government of Ethiopia toward humanitarian access and the peaceful resolution of the conflict affecting the northern part of Ethiopia and the national all-inclusive national dialogue. In this regard, IGAD expressed its readiness to support ongoing efforts.

IGAD also commended peace initiatives in Sudan and South Sudan. And it has underscored the need to collaboratively address and diplomatically tackle national political and security related issues that bear greater ramifications on the IGAD region.

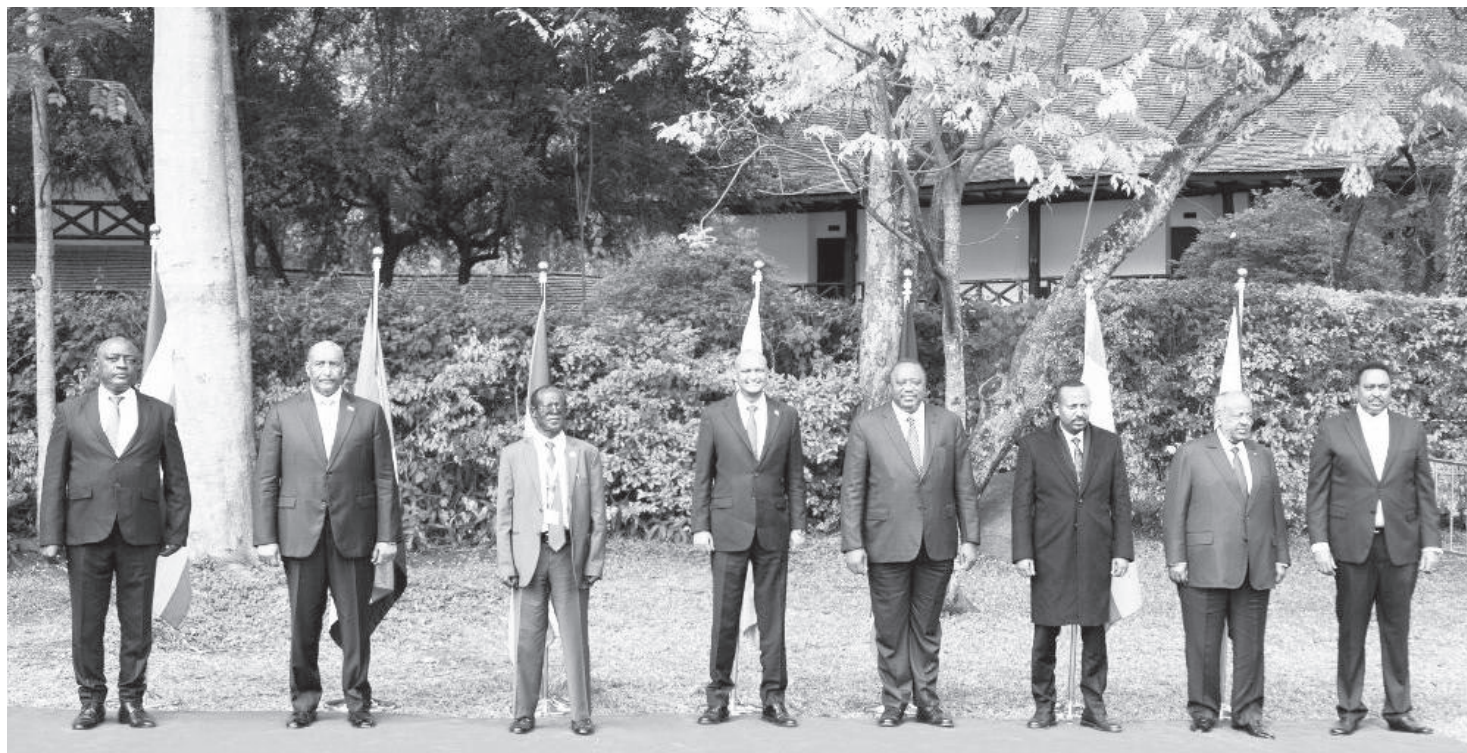
The bloc also emphasized on the need to reaffirm commitment of member states to realize enduring peace and economic development. In his official remark during the summit, IGAD Executive Secretary Workneh Gebeyehu (PhD) underscored on the responsibilities of member states towards ensuring the shared aspirations of peace, prosperity and regional integration.

He said that the summit was a clear demonstration of the commitment of leaders of IGAD member countries to multilateralism in addressing common challenges and taking advantage of opportunities available. The peace and security situation in the region and the drought scourge need concerted efforts.

Mentioning the significance of the 39th extraordinary summit, the executive secretary said, “now we come together to address the challenges that are bigger than each of us individually, as well as grasp the opportunities that are of mutual benefit to us all.”

The summit is a sign of solidarity between member states which helps improve the standing of the bloc. It also sends a clear message to the region and international community that leadership is seized of the pressing matters in the region, he believed.

Workneh also expressed confidence that the gathering of leaders of IGAD member states is an opportunity for the region to benefit immensely from their wisdom during the discussion on matters of common concern



“We work together to consolidate political transitions, to address the scourge of terrorism and violent extremism, and to ensure collective security remains our overriding goal”

to the people in the region.

“The bold steps that you have all taken to always bring us together have won the confidence of the international community and mobilized extraordinary levels of political and material support from our international partners,” Workneh said.

At the summit, IGAD appreciated and recognized Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta for his advocacy of the IGAD vision of a peaceful, prosperous and integrated region throughout his term of

office.

Receiving the reward, Uhuru Kenyatta noted that a stable region was beneficial to all IGAD member states, adding that no progress would be realized without peace and security.

“As leaders, it is incumbent upon us to work together boldly and creatively to navigate the multiple crises we face, seize opportunities as they emerge and define a path of peace and sustainable economic development,” Kenyatta said. President Kenyatta also assured his country’s commitment to continue to invest in regional efforts to secure peace and stability.

“Our discussions today are, therefore, of immense importance to Kenya because we recognize that our political and economic stability is dependent on the stability of the IGAD region. This is why we are invested in regional efforts to secure peace and stability,” he said.

According to the President, Kenya will not waiver in its commitment to collaborating with regional and international partners in strengthening conflict prevention and promoting sustainable peace and development.

Attending the Summit, African Union Commission representative Amb. Bankole Adeoye echoed Kenyatta’s call for IGAD member states to work together in bolstering regional peace and security as well as in addressing emerging issues such as violent extremism and climate change.

“The African Union Commission stands ready to scale up support for IGAD initiatives in all these areas. We work together to consolidate political transitions, to address the scourge of terrorism and violent extremism, and to ensure collective security remains our overriding goal,” he said.

During the summit, the bloc has recognized the impact of the ongoing humanitarian crisis and conflicts on vulnerable, mobile and displaced populations, and committed to sustaining the momentum of the IGAD

Support Platform in order to promote collective regional responses toward creating enabling conditions for durable solutions by addressing the protection, humanitarian development and peace-related needs of communities affected by forced displacement.

“We shall continue the tradition of originating amicable and effective solutions to the challenges affecting our region. It is with this solemn duty in mind that IGAD has embarked on establishing a leadership academy that will be hosted here in the Republic of Kenya and we are most grateful to Uhuru Kenyatta for accepting to serve as its patron,” Workneh said.

With the backing of its Member States, IGAD has benefited from the support of many partners across the world who are firm believers in multilateralism. In his closing, Workneh made an appeal to member states to contribute support to the bloc to make it effective in undertaking its role. He said IGAD is as strong as the support it gets from its Member States and vice versa.

In order to continue effectively serving the interests of the people in this region, the Secretariat has called on the Member States to tangibly demonstrate their political and material support for the organization. “Your support as our leaders is what we truly need to translate the decisions that shall be made here in this room, into achievable actions for the benefit of the region,” he said.

The IGAD which works on political, social and economic improvement in Ethiopia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda has concluded the 39th Extraordinary Summit last Tuesday publishing a joint communique that constitutes 17 resolutions.

IGAD leaders who attended the summit included Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD), President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya, President Ismail Omar Guelleh of Djibouti, Second Vice President Taban Deng Gai of South Sudan, Deputy Prime Minister Mahdi Mohammed Gulaid of Somalia and Defense Minister Vincent Ssempijja of Uganda.

International News

Oil prices begin cooling off but no relief yet for East Africa

Barely a fortnight after fuel prices in Uganda crossed the Ush6,000 (\$1.61) mark per litre for petrol or diesel, the government says it has no solutions for price cuts at the pump even as they spiral out of reach for motorists, on account of global dynamics in eastern Europe.

There are also fears that next month's Kenyan General Election could disrupt supplies.

"We go by what is prevailing on the world market," said Rev Frank Tukwasibwe, commissioner for petroleum supply in Uganda's Ministry of Energy. Even as the war between Russia and Ukraine that triggered a spike in global crude prices enters its fifth month, this week crude prices tumbled, giving some optimism that there could be a downstream ripple effect internationally.

But industry players remain cautious saying that while a dip in crude oil prices is good, motorists in East Africa will continue to feel the pinch of high prices at the pump until mid-August, should prices continue to fall.

"I am starting to see some good news regarding the price of crude oil," said Boniface Kipchirchir, head of operations at Stabex International Uganda. "We expect prices to come down and stabilise perhaps next month. But the Kenya elections might disrupt



supplies to Uganda, even when the prices have stabilised."

On July 5, Brent Crude traded below \$100 per barrel for the first time in three months but climbed back above \$100, while the West Texas Intermediate, the US benchmark, dropped to 98.53 on July 6.

Crisis levels

Motorists have borne the brunt of rising fuel prices for 12 months – the longest spell in the region – but in Uganda it reached crisis levels from January this year when a protest by truck drivers over a mandatory Covid-19 tests created a hold-up at the Kenya border, blocking petroleum supplies for weeks.

A few weeks later, geopolitical tensions that escalated into the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine resulted in prices soaring from below \$80 at the start of 2022 to over \$100 per barrel currently.

Oil marketing companies have responded with frequent fuel price increases at the pump, sometimes twice in one day. For instance on July 1, Azed Kakooza, a tour operator, fuelled his Toyota Hiace in Kampala at Ush6120 (\$1.64) for a morning trip to Iganga, eastern Uganda. On his return, he went to fill up for the next day's journey but found the price had jumped by Ush30 at the same station.

In Kenya, pump prices have been rising since the beginning of the year and are set to soar with the planned retraction of a fuel subsidy.

Since January, the prices of petrol and diesel have risen by over 22 percent and are currently at a record high, even with the fuel subsidy that has been catering for about Ksh30 (\$0.25) per litre.

Kenya's Treasury, however, said last month that starting July, it will gradually withdraw the subsidy.

"The cost of fuel subsidy could eventually surpass its allocation in the national budget thus potentially escalating public debt to unsustainable levels and disrupting the government's plans to reduce rate of debt accumulation," said Treasury Cabinet Secretary Ukur Yatani.

In April, Kenya faced a fuel shortage that almost paralysed commercial activity across the country and which was blamed on delayed remittance of due subsidies to oil marketers by the ministry.

It, however, later emerged that oil marketers had been deliberately hoarding supplies in anticipation of higher retail prices after a review by the Energy and Petroleum Authority (Epra), which indeed raised the official pump prices for the first time this year.

At the time, Epra raised fuel prices by Ksh9 (\$0.086) to Ksh144.62 (\$1.25) per litre of super petrol and Ksh125.5 (\$1.09) for diesel. It has continued to raise the retail prices in the two subsequent reviews in May and June.

Now, super petrol is retailing at Ksh159.12 (\$1.35) and diesel price is Ksh140 (\$1.19), and could rise further at the next review set for July 14.

Kenya and Uganda cry foul as reality of new taxes checks in

Just a week after the new East African Community common external tariff (CET) band came into force, businesses are already feeling the pinch and crying foul over the "unintended consequences" of the regime.

Kenya and Uganda have filed complaints to the East African Business Council (EABC), the regional lobby, over the law that raised import taxes on goods from non-EAC countries to 35 percent. They say that some basic commodities outside the band have also been affected.

The bloc's Trade and Finance ministers in May adopted 35 percent as the maximum rate for products classified under the 4th Band of the EAC common external tariff.

The CET, one of the key instruments of the Customs Union, is meant to foster regional integration through uniform treatment of goods imported from third parties. It also seeks to protect local manufacturers against competition from similar goods imported from outside the region.

According to experts, a 35 percent duty on imported finished products has the potential of growing intra-EAC trade by \$18.9 million. In addition, the region's industrial production will increase by 0.04 percent to \$12.1 million and tax revenues by 5.5 percent.

It also has the potential to create an additional 6,781 jobs.

Affected products

The new band took effect on July 1 but consumers seem to not have been prepared for the price increment. The band features dairy and meat products, cotton and textiles, iron and steel, edible oils, soaps and beverages and spirits imported from outside the EAC.

Other commodities covered are furniture, leather products, fresh cut flowers, fruits and nuts, sugar and confectionery, coffee, tea and spices, textiles and garments, headgear, ceramic products and paints.

But Kenya and Uganda now say the new tax has pushed up the cost of importation, spilling over onto basic commodities.

The EABC has, in the past week, received

letters from organizations raising concerns over the implementation of the common external tariff.

"Kenya is raising concerns over wood products while Uganda is concerned about industrial sugar. We are going to address the complaints after deliberations," said John Bosco Kalisa, EABC's chief executive.

Kenyan furniture manufacturer PG Bison Kenya Ltd says the increase of import duty on raw materials used to produce furniture products has forced it to increase prices of products.

"Due to these policy decisions, and along with the recent increases in fuel-related logistics and a rapidly depreciating local currency, our prices will change effective Friday, July 8, 2022. A revised price list will be issued and distributed accordingly," the company told its customers in a notice.

Price reviews

Raw materials such as particleboard, plywood and block-board now attract a 35 percent import duty, up from 25 percent.

"The differential in tariffs that existed to incentivize value addition of raw materials has been removed," said Amit Maru, the firm's operations manager.

"We would like to bring to your attention that our prices need to be reviewed upward with immediate effect in relation to increased import duty on raw materials. The duties on raw materials are now the same as the rate that applies on a finished furniture item. The tariff calculation also allows for a rate to be applied per metric tonne or cubic metre, which can equate to a tax payable amount that can exceed the 35 percent value calculation," he added.

"The two countries will have to retain their stay of application for sugar imports," said Kalisa.

He, however, noted that there should be no cause for alarm "as it is still too early to tell the full impact of the new import taxes."

"The issue is not the current CET; the issue is the classification and other new rates that are emerging that need clarity because

everything could be wrongly blamed on the CET. The CET is very clear: There is no new point in increasing the prices of goods that are available in the region," Kalisa said.

The 35 percent CET targets goods that are, available in the region and are produced in substantial volumes, including grains, potatoes, vegetables, maize and beans.

While the maximum tariff band at 35 percent was the most appropriate rate, it was noted that in its application, a welfare loss would be expected but would be cured from generated jobs from the switch to local production.

However, the rising cost of living due to global events such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, higher crude prices, Covid-19, inflation and dollar shortage have complicated implementation of the CET.

EAC states domesticated the new tax measures in the Finance Act 2022, which became operational on July 1.

The Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM) has cited the Act as one of the major causes of high cost of living.

"Some of the tax measures in the Finance Act 2022 are set to have an impact on the manufacturing sector," said Mucai Kunyihya, KAM chairman. "This is unlikely to spur growth in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors."

Regional tax variance could be the new stumbling block to lowering the cost of food.

Last week, Kenya waived import levies on maize. The move, meant to improve supply to millers and in turn lower the cost of maize flour, may, however, have little impact as the variance in taxes charged on commodities by EAC states and new taxes on imports combine to further raise the cost of food.

Kenya's main sources of maize imports are neighbors Tanzania and Uganda and Zambia further south.

In the past Nairobi has gone as far as importing maize from Mexico to alleviate shortages.

Shipments from countries that are not members of the EAC or the Common Market

for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) are usually subject to a 50 percent tariff. But Kenya waived import fees on white non-genetically modified maize of up to 540,000 tonnes until end of September as millers face an acute shortage of grain, but no vessel carrying maize is scheduled to dock at the Port of Mombasa soon.

A Kenya Ports Authority ship schedule seen by The EastAfrican shows no vessel carrying maize is expected to dock at the port before July 14.

The schedule indicates that Mombasa will handle majorly conventional cargo from July 4, with 16 vessels expected to call at the port. Five are oil tankers.

Major millers have had to stagger their operations while small ones have closed altogether.

"It is critical for EAC countries to support logistics for importation of maize from different countries to lower cost of flour. The cost of ferrying maize from Tanzania to Kenya has become expensive as the countries operate disparate tax laws," they said in a statement.

Last week in a webinar on domestic tax regimes and proposed measures for 2022/23 budgets for the partner states, EABC too urged for harmonized taxes in the region to improve intra-EAC trade.

The lobby's CEO said the EAC Treaty obliges partner states "to harmonize their tax policies to remove distortions and bring about more efficient allocation of resources within the bloc."

With harmonization of the CET, all member states are supposed to levy 35 percent on goods manufactured outside of the region that can be produced locally. It means countries that had a lower tariff have had to raise it, adding to the rise in price of goods such as fuel, which directly affects the cost of food as transporters pay more to transport commodities like maize.

Kenya has traditionally restricted purchases to cushion local maize growers but at a cost to consumers who are forced to pay a higher cost for the cereal.

Planet Earth

Youth run a business to rehabilitate Lake Abijata-Shalla

BY GIRMACHEW GASHAW

More recently, this piece writer had spent a few hours at Abijatta-Shalla National Park. The place was very exciting for tourists who want to feel uplifted by simply visiting natural scenery there. This rift valley lake has its own natural beauty. It is now serving as a tourist magnet. The various features of the lake are difficult to erase from ones memory.

The park sits in the southern part of Oromia State, around 200 kilometers south of Addis Ababa. It is known for its numerous hot springs and the abundance of steam gets to a point that sometimes the place looks like it's covered by fog.

A craggy path leads to the shores of Lake Shalla, a geezer strewn shoreline, where hot steam vents send mists of vapor piercing through the surface and into the air.

Revered traditionally for its medical uses, the hot springs provide visitors with a well-needed rest after wandering the forests that surround it.

Mohammed Buta, 70, is one of the beneficiaries of the lake. This writer met Mohammed when he comes out of the lake. Asked why he came to the lake, he replied that "I feel ill due to the draft and I am treating myself with hot spring water." Mohammed who had been there for three consecutive days witnessed that his health condition was good as he was washing in the hot water in the morning and night time.

Mohammed has got such medical treatment free of charge because he resides around the park.

Colder early morning visits to the lake are particularly rewarding, with the constantly spewing hot springs mixing with the cold air, sending an ethereal thick mist out onto the lake.

Across from Lake Shalla, lies Abijatta, a shallow lake surrounded in mystery. At about 14 meters deep through most of the year, the constantly fluctuating water level puzzles scientists to this day. Freshwater flows into it through the small Horakello stream, mixing with the hot water found in the lake, causing the clouds of steam that linger on its surface.

The mouth of the river is a source of relatively fresh water, frequented by water birds for drinking and bathing. The Lake is surrounded by gentle, grass-covered slopes and acacia woodlands, home to a range of endemic wildlife.

The two lakes take up over half of the 887 square kilometers of the park.

Towering over lakes stands the highest peak in the park, Fike. Tracks to and around the park are constantly being developed, however at present four interchanging,



winding paths bring visitors through the evergreen trees and into the heart of the national park.

Approaching from the capital you first reach the Horakello entrance, where the small Horakello stream flows between lakes Langano and Abijatta

Great White Pelicans, Storks, neon pink Flamingos, Egrets and Herons are often found in the park. You will also see Ostrich in the forests en route to the lakes.

Swinging in the trees a range of endemic monkeys can be found, such as the friendly Colobus monkey, although these are seldom spotted. Most of the wildlife at Abijatta-Shalla is of the bird variety!

Most people visit Abijatta-Shalla while passing through the Rift Valley, either en route to the Bale Mountains, the Omo Valley, or heading back up to Addis Ababa. The local community has been contributing their share through protecting their culture, protecting nature and by involving in many tourism related activities. Contribution of Local Community for Ecotourism Development in and around Abijatta-Shalla Lakes National Park.

Gita Eirbo is the park's scout leader; there was conflict with the community residing around the park. He recalled that the conflict flares up due to the ever increasing population and the rise of unemployed youths.

As a result, the youth have been clearing the surrounding forest. As the area of desert, they have no other options than cutting the trees so as to generate income. Through time, the youth are changing their mind set attending the awareness raising training that was given to them. Now, the youth are getting benefit from the park organizing themselves in different associations.

"Sustainable Environment Development Action (SEDA) offers training for the youth and organizes them in different associations. Now, the youth are cooperative with us so as to protect the park and its environs" Gita said.

Previously, the park and the community had no common ground. The approach between them is as cats and mouse, more likely to ignore or avoid each other than engage. Later on, it is possible to create common ground when the people are getting benefit out of the park following the intervention of SEDA. However, there is no road that connects the park with the main road.

Kellil Weyesso, is a member of OA Abajiba Entertainment Association established by the youth residing in the area. Together with other youths, he has a vision of getting benefit from the park. Indicating that he has got training in hotel and reception, Kellil hopes to get income when the scenery of the park attracts the eye of visitors. Unknowingly,

he was the one who cut trees so as to gain something out of it. Now at this time, let alone cutting trees, he thinks about how the park developed and increased tourist flow and their stay.

Now Kellil works day and night to compensate for what he did even if he has not gotten a penny from the associations he belongs to. Through developing ourselves, we will contribute some for our countries to be altered. The association which has 228 members does not think for gain they have received for the time being.

Abdul Safo, 25, is another member of the association organized to benefit from the park. He together with other youths gained boat safety courses so as to assist the tourists who are not able to boating.

Accessible via the Ziway-Shashamane highway, the national park does not have accommodation on site. Camping is allowed in certain areas on site for the more adventurous travelers.

The multifaceted stride of the community to upgrade the park is worth appreciation. In order to make their vision a reality, all stakeholders should support them. If potential investors engage in the area, the infrastructure would further be developed, the place would be a tourist destination for a number of visitors apart from protecting the environment that contributes some for the world that has been affected by climate change.

Law & Politics

T-TPLF's malicious acts of aggression, accusation

BY ADDISALEM MULAT

There is no denying the fact that the Terrorist TPLF group has been coming up with layers of conspiracies with a focus on rubbing salt in the wound of the Ethiopian people and moving the country into uncharted territory. As nothing makes the group happier than turning Ethiopia upside down, the criminal clique has been moving heaven and earth to dismantle the country over and over again.

It should be borne in mind that subsequent to suffering humiliating defeats at the hands of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces, the Terrorist TPLF group was pushed back to the Tigray regional state in the shortest possible time. However, over the passage of time, the ragtag group embarked on launching fresh attacks by invading the northern part of Ethiopia and giving a hard time to the people of Afar and Amhara on many occasions.

Aside from doubling down the stakes of its criminal behavior against noncombatants residing in the northern part of the country, the group was playing a part in turning the lives of civilians into a living hell and committing atrocities many a time and oft in Amhara and Afar states.

As always happens, the Terrorist TPLF group has been mystifying the worldwide community by emphasizing a double standard approach. To this point, the fraudulent group has long been widely known for perplexing the broader international community by saying it will do what it takes to get to the bottom of the predicament in an atmosphere of calm.

To the surprise of everyone, when the ragtag group suffers a huge blow, it as usual sets in motion pointing finger at the federal government under the pretense of multifarious lame reasons that do not reflect the existing reality on the ground.

Dejectedly, as if its past crimes are not enough, the Terrorist TPLF group has been pulling out all the stops to launch another round of war and turn the lives of the general public into a living hell and move the country into uncharted waters at all hours of the day and night.

On the subject of the evil deeds of the Terrorist TPLF group, quite a lot of scholars and journalists have been expressing a diverse range of ideas, feelings, and thoughts over and over again.

Once in an article titled Deception, Denial: The modus operandi of TPLF criminal enterprise Anteneh Melaku said, "The malicious doctrine of the draconian TPLF organization has long been acting both as an aggressor and accuser. The cacophonies orchestrated by the rogue clique sugarcoated with deceitful conspiracies have been meant to conceal its madness and play the victim card.

The former self-proclaimed liberators turned arch dictators have been both fusing the cards of humanity and brutality to commit their uncivilized actions against civilian



communities. The criminal enterprise that has gone as one of the cruelest elements in the history of the world has been engaged in savagery and denial since its infatuation stage.

The group turbocharged with hatred and enmity brought unimaginable pains to the Ethiopian people. Equally true, the disgruntled bunches of criminals have been nothing but a Frankenstein to the Tigray people. As the saying goes old habit dies hard, TPLF has continued its belligerent behavior even if it was reduced to nothing but a vigilante group. Kept at bay in Tigray, the clique has been posing a national security danger not only to its mother nation but also to the East African countries.

To this very day, one thing TPLF believes from the bottom of its heart is Hitler's notorious saying "If you tell a big enough lie and tell it frequently enough, it will be believed"! This tactic developed in the backroom dealing with foreign adversaries might have partly helped to window dressing the true nature of the group in the face of the international community, but in our country's case, it doesn't work because we know the now defunct more than they do themselves. The terrorist enterprise has brought nothing for the Tigray people except terror, pain, and grief.

Interestingly enough, the criminal enterprise which is as changeable as a chameleon has been hoodwinking the broader international community by playing the victim card and moving forward for its narrow self-interest.

Be that as it may sound, on the topic of the issue renowned journalist and writer Jeff Pearce called up on Ethiopians to unite more than ever, march together so as to determine their own future, maintain peace and true democracy without categories, ethnic labels and others.

People are killing each other, with sinister forces encouraging the bloodshed. What's particularly slimy besides their shameless alliance with TPLF advocates is that they do it in secret and then lie about it when caught. Above all the issue of Ethiopians concerns and belongs to Ethiopians, not any other foreign powers, he said.

The Ruling Prosperity Party (PP) has brought the voices of once voiceless states into parliament and the residents of Gambella, Somali, Afar, and elsewhere were properly heard, according to him There are elements at the federal and regional levels who are trying to sink Ethiopia's democratic process and it is important to develop something in the spirit of the Ethiopian people and their interconnected, collaborative history, he indicated.

"It is time for a new grass-roots movement to grow within Ethiopia, led by new young voices who want to live in a nation of tolerance, where each person is respected for who they are as individuals, not because of a label of ethnicity."

"I admire what the #NoMore movement does and the phenomenon was international, and it was an amazing achievement. The core idea was to say, "No More western interference, biased reporting." Rejecting reality on the ground western mainstream media doubled down to misrepresent and sink the campaign, he said.

Ethiopia needs that loyal opposition more than chants and slogans that seek tangible action and require a government response, whether it is change in policy, legislation, or others. In other words, democracy in Ethiopia stays alive, because the alternative is armed revolution, and you had enough of that with the Derg and then the TPLF.

"The TPLF are a Terrorist group that cannot

be trusted, I have seen their destruction myself and interviewed their victims. The TPLF's only goals are power and money, nothing else. It's not the interests of the people of Tigray."

As to him, any peace talks with the TPLF simply can't be with people under criminal investigation; those led a mission that massacred thousands. The backbone of democracy is rule of law, and that has to be respected and preserved.

"TPLF will go on playing the victim with the U.S., EU, and UN, bleeding the Ethiopian state dry as it cries, more aid and depriving some of their communities of aid to support their cry of famine. Even though the aid is reaching the region, TPLF leadership is hoarding aid and fuel and denying it from the most vulnerable people of Tigray."

For Jeff Pearce, negotiating with the TPLF means dooming thousands to continued poverty, potential starvation, and forced recruitment. "TPLF can't be trusted to take care of its own people, but skilled at blaming others for its crimes."

Humanitarian corridor needs to be opened up and carefully patrolled so that Tigrayans wishing to flee TPLF rule, he said adding that these are Ethiopians who have every right to live elsewhere if they want, not where a terrorist organization tells them to in order to exploit them.

Countries must solve its own affairs by itself and foreign actors seem determined to solve Ethiopia, whether Ethiopians want them or not. If sovereignty of a nation is to mean anything, it means a people's right to address their internal affairs according to their choices, not to outside influences. The only way Ethiopia can get that respect is to insist on its own autonomy, he noted.