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IGF Ethiopia 2022 gives impetus to nation's digital transformation

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

ADDIS ABABA- This year's Internet Governance Forum (IGF Ethiopia 2022) would give fresh impetus in realizing digital Ethiopia 2025 aspirations as the country has been paying due attention towards the extension of Internet infrastructure.

While sharing Ethiopia's experience on the

field, Ethiopian Innovation and Technology Minister Belete Molla made the above statement at the Economic Commission of Africa (ECA) yesterday.

At the partial opening of the 17th annual Internet Governance Forum (IGF Ethiopia 2022) which is held under the theme: 'Resilient Internet for a Shared Sustainable and Common Future', the Minister further

emphasized government's determination to ensuring access to the Internet for its citizens.

The Minister has also invited the international partners who are keen to work with the nation in the field.

At the occasion, United Nations Under-

See IGF Ethiopia ... page 3

Meticulous diplomacy centerpiece to reverse unwarranted pressure: Expert

BY HAILE DEMEKE

ADDIS ABABA- Ethiopian diplomats' strong partnership with relevant institutions in the respective countries is the centerpiece of reversing unwarranted pressures being exerted on the country and protecting its national interest, a noted political scientist said.

Speaking to the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) Professor of Political Science and International Relations at Addis Ababa University Yacob Arsano noted that the diplomat's role in reversing some interest groups' unwarranted attempt of meddling is so critical. Likewise, the diplomats are also expected to capitalize on international arenas to promote and defend Ethiopia's national interest and draw the support of global actors for the country's cause.

The academic further highlighted the

See Meticulous diplomacy ... page 3



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Gov't commitment to implementing CoHA limitless: Amb. Suleiman

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA- The level of the commitment of the government to

See Gov't commitment ... page 3

Speedy DDR implementation pivotal in AU-brokered peace deal

News

Electricity restoration in Afar well underway

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA- The restoration of electric lines that cover Alamata-Bisober to Yalo-Kelwan towns has been completed, Afar Sate Electric Utility said.

The State's Electric Utility Executive Officer Yasin Ali said the maintenance work

which has been carried out from Alamata-Bisober to Yalo- Kelwan towns and the transformer repair work has been completed. "Some electric lines which are covered by tree branches are being cleared and will be restored and get full service shortly."

The inspection work is undergoing to repair

the Mekelle -Wukro substation since the area gets electricity from the line that passes through Kilbeti District and the necessary materials are being prepared. Also, the service in Chifra, Awura and Ewa towns will be restored after the repair work in Woldia mobile electric substation is completed, the officer elaborated.



Children voice support for peace deal in Mekelle

BY TAMERU REGASA

ADDIS ABABA— Children in Mekelle city have voiced support for the peace deal signed between Government of Ethiopia and TPLF.

Participating in peace Carnival hosted in the city, children and youth expressed unreserved support for the deal in a bid to live in stabled environment.

The children further stated that as they have been out of school for two consecutive years because of the conflict. However, currently they are hoping to resume their education sooner than later.

Explaining their happiness towards the current situation following the peace deal, the children called on all stakeholders to launch teaching and learning process in the city in particular and Tigray state in general properly implementing currently initiated



peace deal as they have been eager to go to school.

The children said that before signing of peace agreement the children and their families had been suffering from the war.



They said that the two parties have to be well committed to make the deal a success.

They also urged the international community to support concerned agents to bring sustainable peace in the state in particular



and in the nation in general .

"Donors should provide us with supports of different educational materials and other things so as to enable us to sustain our education," they said.

Aid flowing into war -torn areas in North Ethiopia: Residents

• Praise gov't humanitarian efforts

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA—Residents in conflict affected areas have praised the Ethiopian government humanitarian effort while calling up on international aid agencies to back efforts for lasting peace.

Mesaye Gebreselasie, Korem resident told *The Ethiopian Press Agency* (EPA) that they have been obtaining humanitarian assistance though they need additional support from humanitarian partners as the town was severely damaged.

Another Korem town resident, Belayenesh Kebede on her part said that though the effort of the government in providing humanitarian access is worth appreciating, a lot remains to be done on humanitarian access from international actors and private donors to reduce problems such as shortage of edible oil.

"Many people including civil servants in Korem town have been exposed to difficulties during the past two years. Following the cessation of hostility agreement, the people have alive in relief and obtain humanitarian support. In addition to humanitarian access, they need to obtain cloths and other equipment," the resident added.

Town's Logistic Coordinator, Mekonene Zegeye on his part said that the government

has continued providing people with humanitarian support. Concerned bodies have in turn should give serious attention to the government effort as the area was highly damaged by the conflict. So far, there is no international aid agent in the area, but the government of Ethiopia has been attempting to open the bank service and provide destitute with food items to stabilize the market.

In the meantime, residents in Adwa town told local media that the government should be thanked for reaching the humanitarian provision when the people are in hunger and difficult situation. Particularly, the absence of a grain mill, electricity, and other related issues made their life more complicated and problematic in the area.

Musetefa Abasimal told local media representing National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC) that as the aid provision is very little compared to the needy, the sole effort of the government towards dealing with the issue has to be backed though it is really commendable.

He further said, "We have obtained 11 vehicles carrying wheat and another one vehicle is nutrition. This is very little amount compared with the number of the needy in the area. However, if the transportation is safe, we have full hope to reduce the challenge within the shortest time possible."

Some western media deliberately skip covering CoHA

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA-During the war in Ethiopia, there were articles after articles about the country in the western media in the biased way; however, the peace deal (CoHA) has not been received coverage at all, said a commentator on international affairs.

During his stay with international media , the commentator Alexander Mercouris said a number of British media were full of articles about what was going in this war all of them by the way heavily slanted. And now that there has been this peace agreement, it has been no coverage at all.

He said:"I haven't seen a single article in the British media that even alludes to this fairy."

He, moreover, said some foreign powers are antagonistic towards Ethiopia why, because Ethiopia has big and very long history. It was never fully occupied by the European powers. It always managed to secure its independence from the European powers.

"And also there is always obsessive geopolitical chess game these powers play; they see Africa now as another part of the world where the game is being played out principally against the Chinese, Russia.



Ethiopia potentially is a rich country before the war. It had a very high economic growth rate for example so it's potentially a rich country. So they wanted to keep Ethiopia either on their side or if they couldn't, they wanted to basically break it up at weakening. Therefore a major African country that was tilting towards the Eastern the Eurasian blocks and well they failed," he noted.

Alexander added that Tigray agreed to peace proposal on the 2nd of November which effectively concedes. They seem to be accepting that Federal authorities to be re-established into Tigray that the Tigray forces are to disarm.

News

Speedy DDR implementation pivotal in AU –brokered peace deal

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

ADDIS ABABA- The speedy disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of TPLF armed combatants is the kernel for the successful implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA), according to a veteran politician.

Lauding the government's commitment for the implementation of the truce, the politician Neamin Zeleke told local media that the former should work to end the public suffering and humanitarian crisis in Tigray

and other parts of the country.

The only guarantee for the government and the people of Ethiopia to lasting peace is continuing the effort of disarming the armed group according to the peace accord. Unless ending the potential insurgency efficiently with the active participation of the public, the situation would cause further human loss and property damage.

“By doing so, the government would thwart the security threat that would be imposed by an armed group and sustain the peace of the country. As guaranteed in the CoHA,

the existence of parallel forces in Ethiopia is impossible.”

As to him, there are some groups that consider the trilateral cooperation among Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somalia as a threat to their greedy interest in the strategic Horn of Africa and have made every effort to ruin the alliance.

Noting the ill-conceived attempts of those groups would have a negative impact for the implementation of the peace accord, Neamin stressed that the Ethiopian National Defense Force has the capability to foil any destructive attempts that transcend the CoHA.



Neamin Zeleke

Special Economic Zones to encourage FDI : Experts, Private Sector Actors

ADDIS ABABA (ENA) - The establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZ) in Ethiopia will encourage foreign investment vital for the economic development of the country, private sector actors and experts said.

The government of Ethiopia is working to strengthen international trade connectivity by establishing Special Economic Zones.

In a bid to realizing this government is set to modify the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) Proclamation.

The proclamation aimed at strengthening the country's drive to attract foreign direct investment, create jobs, enhance trade and productive sectors, integrate into global value chains, and generate sustainable growth.

Members of the private sector actors and experts have lauded governments' commitment to the establishment of Special Economic Zones which is believed to play a vital role in improving the export system of the country, increase Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and create wide employment opportunities.

GIZ Key Expert to E-governance, Elie Sawaya, said the establishment of SEZ will undoubtedly make Ethiopia a regional hub for manufacturing and service provision for neighboring countries.

It is a good step where special economic zone allow improving service delivery and economic growth.

According to him, SEZ will be a tool for the government in order to improve the services delivered by different branches of administration.

China had applied this model back in the 70s, he said, adding SEZ's has allowed rapid economic expansion in China. The country has grown from being a closed economy with little interaction beyond its borders, he said.

It enabled it to spread economic development across different verticals, Sawaya said.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries have also used the SEZ model in order to develop their economy, industry and their regional economic machines, he added.

Mesfin Tafesse & Associates, Managing

Director, Mesfin Tadesse, who provides legal assistance to companies in industrial parks, said, we in Ethiopia have been forming industrial parks in the past many years.

The proposed proclamation drafted with the objective to expedite the development of SEZ in Ethiopia will enable the country to expand and cover industrial parks that are primarily aimed at manufacturers, especially export oriented ones.

“SEZ's includes other sectors, for example, services; it enables broader intervention to improve better efficiency and effectiveness as a development endeavor.” he said adding ‘by bringing together different areas of activities and providing very targeted services to this organization, the business entities would be able to be more efficient in their services, in the treatment of their taxation status, in various ways to bring a better prospect for businesses operating in these zones.’

The Ethiopian Netherlands Business Association in Ethiopia (ENLBA) Coordinator, Betelehem Fikre, on her part said that the planned SEZ modification

will have a lot of benefits for businesses to flourish in Ethiopia. Among the first one is a less bureaucracy and greatly improve doing business process.

According to her, since the Netherlands is the 10th largest investor in Ethiopia and the largest in the European Union, the establishment of SEZ's will be very beneficial to Dutch businesses as well.

If done well, SEZs are a great vehicle for international trade and foreign direct investment (FDI) to drive economic development, Betelehem stated.

Until 2021, some 93 Dutch businesses have already invested over a billion USD in Ethiopia.

It is to be recalled that Ethiopia had opened its first Free Trade Zone in Dire Dawa last August.

The establishment of free trade zone, one of the initiatives set in the 10-year perspective development plan of Ethiopia, is aligned with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) as well as realizing regional integration.

Meticulous diplomacy...

importance of public diplomacy that the public at large contribute to in informing Ethiopia's objective reality to the outside world and thwarting the destructive attempts of some groups that wish to see a weak and fragile Ethiopia.

Prof. Yacob, who is also a member of the negotiating team on the construction of the Abay Dam, further stated that higher learning institutions are working to mobilize the young generation's avid participation in their country's national interest. Also, the activity that the Ministry of Water and Energy is doing in collaboration with the Ethiopian Diaspora is something worth admiration.

“Apart from the Abay Dam, the role of experts in supporting Ethiopia's national development plan is so vital and universities are expected to conduct adequate problem solving research so as to support both the community and mega projects.”

Noting Ethiopia has registered success in the diplomatic arena over years, he mentioned that the frequent negotiation on the construction of the Abay Dam showcases the achievement. “Diplomacy should be supported by skill and knowledge and Ethiopian diplomats need to prioritize the protection of national interest, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country in the global arena.”

Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Li Junhua said that investment and basic internet infrastructure must be secured to ensure sustainable and effective internet accessibility.

He further stressed that all-embracing policy frameworks must be put in place especially in developing countries to ensure accessibility. Similarly, he indicated the need to support the sector with long term investment and capacity building activities.

Ethiopian Communications Authority

IGF Ethiopia 2022 ...

Director-General Balcha Reba on his part mentioned that by giving DUE emphasis to the sector, accessibility, quality, affordability and availability of services and essential infrastructures can be ensured.

Given the nation advancement in telecom services, initiatives in the Artificial Intelligence as well as in homegrown economic endeavors, the role of inclusive internet infrastructure and connectivity should never go unnoticed, he stressed.

Meanwhile, internet access was said to

be one of the issues that accelerated the world's economic growth and people's daily activities. Moreover, the issue of “good practices and recommendations for inclusive digital infrastructure” was discussed during the opening session.

While the key discussion topics are expected to be on internet delivery, data administration, internet security and safety issues, among others, the main opening of the 17th annual Internet Governance Forum (IGF Ethiopia 2022) will be commenced today.

Gov't commitment to implementing...

implement the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) is limitless owing to its desire to lift the people from crises that are created by the war, an Ethiopian diplomat said.

Speaking to international media, Ethiopian Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Suleiman Dedefo stated that the government's desire to avoid war and end the public suffering from conflicts is so firm. The speedy implementation of the CoHA is also in the best interest of the people of Ethiopia and not meant to please third

parties.

“The government is expecting the same from the other end and until now we are watching that even though it is not speedy, the implementation of the CoHA (by TPLF) is going on, but expect that the implementation process will be as per the agreements in Pretoria and Nairobi. We are very hopeful that the agreement will be implemented as it is.”

He continued: “The government is doing its level best to execute the CoHA because

this unnecessary and meaningless war is imposed on it.”

Ambassador Suleiman further noted that it is the responsibility of the Ethiopian government to secure and protect the Tigray State and no one can be concerned more than the former about the safety and security of the people of Tigray. “This should be left to the Ethiopian government as per the agreement that clearly stipulated that once it takes over Tigray, the government is entitled to ensure peace and order in the area.”

Opinion

Guarding society from destructive effect of fake news

BY GETACHEW MINAS

Fake news, misinformation and propaganda have the capacity to divide public opinion, to aggravate violent extremism and hate speech. It undermines democracies and reduces trust in democracy. It is vital for the government to protect the society, in particular students, with a solid education on media and information literacy. Responsible persons, including teachers, must be well-trained in the subject to empower students with the necessary competences. These would help to critically understand and evaluate information provided by all types of media. In this respect, partnership with national and local media authorities and agencies is to be encouraged. Studies on fake news revealed that about two thirds of Europeans come across fake news at least once a week. They see fake news both as a critical issue for their country and for democracy while the youth needed critical thinking and information skills to combat fake news and extremism.

It is very useful to have clarity on the meaning of fake news, propaganda and misinformation. These terms often overlap in meaning. However, they are used to refer to a range of means for sharing information that create impairment, deliberately or unintentionally for promoting a particular political motive. In this regard, it is possible, according to Wardle and H. Derakhshan, to identify different purposes of information which are mis-information, dis-information, and mal-information. The first is false information shared with no intention of causing harm; the second is shared intentionally to cause harm; the last is true information shared intentionally new, they have taken on new significance recently with the widespread availability of sophisticated forms of information and communication technology as observed in Ethiopia. The sharing of text, images, videos, or links online, for example, allows information to go viral within hours.

Fake news, propaganda and misinformation are important items for teaching at schools. Since information and communication technology is so critical to their lives nowadays, the youth are particularly vulnerable to propaganda, misinformation and fake news. The Ethiopian youth spend too much of their time watching television, playing online games, chatting, blogging, listening to music, posting photos of themselves and searching for other people with whom to communicate online. They rely heavily on information circulated online for their knowledge of the world and how they perceive reality. Many parents do not have sufficient technical competence to keep up with their children's online activity, or educate them about the risks they might be facing. Schools, therefore, have a duty to provide the youth with information skills which they cannot access easily in their homes.

According to Wardle and H. Derakhshan, the significant rise of fake news as propaganda in recent years makes it critical that students have the skills they need to identify truth and discern bias. The ability to respond critically to online propaganda, misinformation and fake news is more than a protective tool. However, it is also an important democratic exercise in preventing fake information. Analytical and critical thinking, and knowledge and understanding of the world, including the role of language and communication lie at the heart of the democratic culture. Critical thinking begins in schools where it is absolutely crucial to train future citizens to understand, to criticize and to create information. It is in schools that the digital citizen must begin and maintain constant critical thinking in order to attain meaningful participation in the communities.

The ability to handle propaganda, misinformation and fake news is also a key skill in a number of school subjects such as history, social studies, science, religious studies and art. Young people may study the use of nationalistic and patriotic slogans or art forms designed to support particular objectives. Another area in which information and communication technology is becoming an issue for schools is through "adverse" comments made about teachers and schools on social media. Schools are finding that parents and others increasingly turn to social media when they have a dispute or disagreement with their school over rules, policies, or staff behavior. How to handle online defamatory comments or campaigns of this sort has become a matter of concern for managers in some schools.

There are a number of challenges facing schools wishing to take propaganda, misinformation and fake news seriously as an educational or social issue. Studies indicate that one challenge is teachers' online activity and area of experience is often quite "limited" and frequently lags behind that of their students. This can make them restrained to take teaching and learning without commitment to professional development. The speed with which technology and young peoples' online activity changes makes it difficult for teachers to keep up-to-date with recent developments. Even professional development programs can go rapidly out-of-date. It can be difficult finding a timetable in which issues relating to the creation and sharing of information can be taught. Issues may be raised in a number of subjects, but it can be a problem finding a full curriculum where these issues can be dealt with.

Professionals think that the issue of "fake" news does not mean there is such a category as "true" news. Students have to know that all news is a selection and it is written to suit a particular audience for a particular purpose. Providing sophisticated skills of analysis can be a challenge for some

schools, especially in terms of teacher competence and training. The Ministry of Education should take measures to promote media and digital literacy as part of the regular school curriculum. In this endeavor the civil society and other stakeholders should be engaged to raise awareness about these issues. Providing training for teachers on media and information literacy is the key to raising the profile of the issue in schools. It can alert the teaching staff on the importance of this area of learning for their students. The more the teachers see the importance of the area, the more they will feel the need to continuously up-grade their skills themselves.

It can be more effective in the long run to start by appointing an individual teacher, or a small team to lead the media and information literacy in the school. The team can be charged with keeping the staff up to date with new developments in information and communication technology. It is important to train them in strategies for handling propaganda, misinformation and fake news. It helps them to integrate issues into the curriculum of different subjects. This should lead to school-policy development and action planning in this area. In addition to these sorts of developments, there are a number of other initiatives a school can take to meet the challenges of the rapidly changing world of online propaganda, misinformation and fake news. These include special days or events in school on the subject of propaganda, misinformation or fake news as a way of overcoming the problems of an over-crowded formal curriculum.

It is important to engage in peer education initiatives in which older students instruct and counsel younger students in the safe handling of information they access in the media. It is also useful to create partnerships with outside professionals or companies with expertise in the area of journalism, IT companies, and universities. Virtual links with schools in other regions or countries enables students to get a different perspective on news and current affairs. Parents with expertise in information and communication technology may be recruited to help with school policy development or work alongside teaching staff to enrich student learning.

Teachers, parents and communities should work together to reduce the impact of fake news on students. Students have to be aware of the fact that fake news is inaccurate information that is intentionally disseminated for a specific purpose. If allowed to spread, fake news can "harm" the political and social spheres in a country such as Ethiopia where ethnic, tribal and clans that share the same languages, customs and beliefs do lived together for centuries in peace. However, ethnic and tribal politicians used multimedia social networks to advance their divisive missions within in the Ethiopian society. The victims

of this mission are mainly students simply because they are easily accessible as groups within schools.

Students have become easy victims of such missions that inculcated deep hatred, intense dislike, feeling of aversion, sense of revulsion, and hostility towards friends. They shudder at friends, recoil and shrink from participation in recreational facilities in schools. They become intolerant of classmates and even teachers. They do not have any apparent reason for dissociating themselves from classmates belonging to different ethnic or tribal groups except the evil guidance from politicians, who are merchants of politics and death. They preach students of the same clan to regroup and identify with ethnic political cells within schools and later on in communities. These students become heavily politicized and tend to forgo their studies. They become functionaries that take orders from their political boss that provide "fake news" and analysis along party lines.

Fake news is transmitted in a manner that provokes students and party functionaries of an ethnic or tribal party. Online and multimedia social networks provide fake news using communication and technological skills that appeal to the youth. These innovations severely impact the social and political aspects of life in the society. Apart from modern technologies, rumor is one means of fabricating and propagating fake news in a secret manner. The level of secrecy gives it weight and acceptance by social and political groups. Those parties that operate in secrecy are victims of fake news that travel underground from one cell to another. Students are also instruments of secret operations as they are ready to take risks.

Party apparatchiks entice the youth, particularly the unemployed ones, for their political objectives, programs and activities. Politicizing the youth is a means by which ethnic and tribal parties fulfill their missions of destabilizing the state and government of a developing country such as Ethiopia. They fabricate stories and create fake news for convincing the youth to engage in anarchic activities. The mass media is also a cheap means of communicating fake news of the underground parties to the youth in schools, communities and workplaces. The main objective of these parties is to grab power by hook or crook at any cost. The lives of the youth could be expended in the struggle for political power. Those who hate to work engage in political activities as a short-cut to amassing a nation's wealth. That is the reason for having hundreds of political parties with fake news in Ethiopia today. The number of real parties should not be greater than ten by law if the country is to curtail wastage of resources.

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

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Editorial

Time for swift peace deal implementation

As sticking to the agreement is both lucrative and well pays off, the federal government has been running activities as per what is stipulated in the accord. In principle, both parties should work for its proper implementation via being abide by the agreed phrases and live up to promises.

Swiftly implementing the peace deal and without any precondition is a call for urgency as many innocents are waiting for its being translated into practical actions.

It is not exaggerating to say that Ethiopia is taking the right track to be triumphant over poverty and aid dependency prioritizing peace as a source of all proper and healthy undertakings. Cognizant of the fact that the value of peace is equaled by none, the Ethiopian government has shown limitless allegiance to properly implement the peace deal.

However, there are negative energies adding fuel to fire and attempting to make the war prolonged without feeling the pain the direct victims of the conflict are incurring.

Making pseudo argument and putting in place preconditions, as some of the elements from the other side are doing would serve no purposes other than prolonging the suffering of the people affected by the war. No preconditions are to be put hereafter as it is only those who have garnered gains out of conflict but not the entire society who are beating war drums.

These elements have to look into themselves and put themselves under the shoes of the destitute opening their eyes wide. Without a shadow of doubt, every deal has to be well dealt with for the sake of the general public as Tigrayan Ethiopians need to live harmoniously with their fellow citizens in very corner of the country particularly with those reside in neighboring states like Amhara and Afar and even beyond, in Eritrea.

Conflict entrepreneur internal actors and foreign elements with a hidden agenda have to refrain from their irresponsible moves.

The defense force must be given chance to entirely control Tigray state with a view to safeguarding the sovereignty of the nation and ensuring the wellbeing of citizens in general. Yes, it is a matter of urgency to help Ethiopians in general and Tigray state people in particular breathe a sigh of relief forever breaking the congested box in which especially the latter have been confined following a two year bloody war. The war must be permanently relinquished and sufferings have to be prettily overcome as heartily deal and close talk is a true and only means for the realization of lasting peace.

As it is only wholeheartedly exercised peace accord would potentially help bear fruits, the agreeing parties have to firmly obey the oath they sworn to perform so.

Needless to state, everyone should become positively disposed to the real peace trek on which the government is voyaging since prolonging conflict would bear no benefit except getting the lives of many innocents claimed in vain.

Here, the TPLF has to underline the stringent requirements of the provisions of the agreement meeting precision of wording, technical feasibility as well as detailed implementation of the deal as per the set timetable instead of coupling fictitious preconditions leading to missing track.

The international community particularly the AU should thus continue to be the guardians of the integrity of the agreement as they played an observatory role and push the two parties especially TPLF to comply faithfully with its pledges. However, amalgamating ambiguities, lacunae as well as orchestrating wrongs would by no means acceptable therein for Ethiopia has been determined than ever before to rescue its citizens from the negative upshots of war.

Opinion

Supporting developing countries internet infrastructure for shared, common future

BY DARGIE KAHSAY

Ethiopia starts hosting the 17th Internet Governance Forum (IGF) today here in Addis Ababa with the theme "Resilient Internet for a Shared Sustainable and Common Future." The IGF, one of the largest international gatherings, will take place from 28 November to 2 December 2022 in Addis Abba with over 2,500 participants to attend from all corners of the world.

As the theme of the 17th IGF mentioned, building resilient internet access for all is vital for shared sustainable and common future as the world is becoming dependent on internet. The forum selects appropriate theme, but it needs practical action in building resilient internet infrastructure especially in the developing countries. In poor countries, still internet access is seen as luxury though it becomes a vital sector to accelerate economic, social and political development. But, due to economical limitations to develop the internet infrastructure, the developing countries are continuing to face troubles in internet accessibility for all their population.

Despite its 30 million plus internet users and dramatic increase the users from time to time, Ethiopia is still striving to expand the internet infrastructure and transforming its services to E-service, though as a developing country not exception in

facing limitations in the sector. The sector especially during the past three to four years shows significant progress in expanding the access, the speed and beneficiaries increment. Internet is a promising sector in Ethiopia as the country's services are transforming to E-service.

The Information Communication Technology (ICT) sector in Ethiopia especially following the 2018 reform gets new attention and the internet access and speed is expanding following the reformist government's attention for the sector. Government services are digitalizing and E-commerce is increasingly developing. The finance sector is also speedily digitalizing. Digital banking is sprouting along with the rapid expansion of internet access in various corners of the country. Tele-birr and EthSwich services are becoming significant service providers in the Ethiopian finance industry.

The government is also streamlining its services delivery through applying internet technology supported platforms. Among such endeavors include issuance of trade license, investment licenses, tax payment, passport services and services in the tourism sector ,among others.

In addition, Ethiopia is using internet in the education sector and in other public services. Especially in the higher education sector, online education is becoming a new and preferable fashion and silence

is starting to colleges and universities to provide online education.

With limited capacity and economic shortages, Ethiopia is investing its maximum efforts to accelerate the internet access and its speed as beneficiaries are mounting. With over 110 million population and fast growing economy, Ethiopia needs more infrastructural investment in the internet sector. To realize and accelerate the developing countries efforts, like Ethiopia, in the internet sector, it is important to support the country's efforts of developing the infrastructure.

As I mentioned earlier, for people who have not met their basic needs, internet may be a luxury and governments' priority may also be focus to fulfill the basic needs of their peoples especially in Africa. But, this time, internet access is not a luxury, but an accelerator of socio-economic and political developments. Hence, it is critically important to support the developing countries efforts to accelerate the internet infrastructure so as to build a sustainable shared future of the world population.

In addition to the internet infrastructure to expand the access for all citizens and to increase the speed of the internet, cyber security is also a major threat especially for the developing countries. With limited knowledge and experts in the sector, the cyber security is a major threat for developing countries to transform their

services to E-service. In this regard, capacity building of experts of developing countries in the sector needs support from the developing countries.

Parallel to the development of online services and transactions internet hacking is growing more complicating. The sector needs more educated human resource and developing countries are facing troubles in this regard and are exposed more to cyber security threats.

Hence, the developed world has to support in capacity building and infrastructural networking of developing countries in the internet industry. Countries in the developed that are promoting expansion of the internet access, must translate their words into practical support to help the overall efforts of the developing countries. In this regard, the IGF should play important role for the development of internet access and capacity building of experts in the developing countries. As the world is becoming more and more a single village due to the ICT technology, development of internet access in the developing countries directly and indirectly would facilitate world's economic development and financial transactions.

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

Business & Economy

Reevaluating the home grown economic reform

BY ABEBE WOLDEGIORGIS

The Ethiopian economy faces various challenges. The macro economy instability has taken the lion share in this regard. The government took various measures to redress the problems but the outcome is below the expectation. The economic crises occurred all over the world and domestic unfavorable situations due to conflicts affected the government measures not to meet the targets. Tewodros Mekonnen is an economist who works in various international organizations.

As to him, three years ago the government took measures to address the macro-economic imbalance. One of the implementation of the objectives of the home grown economic reform was to repair the economic anomalies witnessed for decades. He further said that, he taught that key points put in the economic reform documents could have address the problems step by step.

The economy is dominantly run by the government and some of the root causes of the problems are structural and multi-dimensional. In the recent past the good performance visible in the construction was encouraging but its finance source did not show its sustainability which intern created anomalies in the macro economy.

In addition, the commercial bank of Ethiopia transferred 60 percent of deposited money to the government. This indicated that most of the money available in the country goes to the government to cover its expenditure cost.

The burgeoning infrastructure attributed to the government fund. The public money is allocated to the Ethiopian Electric Power, to the rail transport, sugar projects and others. But though some of the projects are accomplished, some money was wasted and corruption also was pervasive. In order to save the money from corruption and mismanagement there needs to take strong action. When huge amount of money goes to the government projects, it makes private sector finance sources to be dried up.

As to Tewodros, when he was working in the commercial bank of Ethiopia in 2004 EC, he remembers that banks where borrowed money each other. There was no shortage of hard currency. Later the government began to implement expensive projects which need huge amount of hard currency and later posed shortage of hard currency. That time the construction center was booming and needs more hard currency to import machinery and other spare parts. Hence the economic growth witnessed in the past was at the cost of weakening the currency reserves in the banks.

To fill the gap between demands and supply of hard currency, the government introduced

some solutions in the home grown economic reform scheme. The efforts that has been undergoing to introduce capital market can be seen as part of it.

The borrowing of money by the government from the local banks brought repercussion by aggravating inflation. To reverse the situation the home grown economic reform suggested that government better to reduce its borrowing.

As to Tewodros, some of the reform measures have been brought tangible results. For example, pension institutions were forcefully ordered to purchase the government store document by simply assuming that they have sufficient money. Now that is changed and banks began to compete for purchasing government store document by paying huge amount of money. Because of this, the National Bank of Ethiopia instead of printing paper money which aggravated inflation resorted to obtain money from the government store documents. In the last 4 years, the government could obtain 200 billion birr from the government store bid documents.

It gave up to somehow printing paper money which creates havocs on the economy.

However, right after the introduction of the home grown economic growth reform introduced, things went in dis array. Within a year in 2019, COVOD 19 broke out and the implementation of the reform was disrupted and government again began to borrow money from local banks. It predicted that money which comes from abroad will be dwindled due to various reasons and began to repeat the past practices. This again put pressure on some activities carried out by the reform plan.

The out brake of COVID 19 directly affected money channeled here from outside sources. When countries are hit by corona virus, Ethiopian diaspora reduced sending money here to their parents in the form of remittance. Reduction also witnessed in some export commodities such as textile and coffee. But no sector was affected by COVID 19 than the tourism sector. The sector lost its 77 percent of hard currency income. This incurred heavy damage on the nation revenue which intern put drawback on the reform program.

As to Tewodros, had the projected that been implemented completed on time, overcoming the crises would have been possible. For instance, had the sugar projects been completed, exporting sugar products and earning hard currency would have been realized. Repaying the debt spent for the construction of the sugar factories would have been realized. Had electric power dams been completed, earning hard currency through exporting energy would have been possible. Industry Parks also would have been flourished by

manufacturers and boost export. But it was impractical. Due to the absence of sufficient scrutinizing of projects on the part of the government projects, money was plundered and delayed. Corruption is also rampant. Not only projects are delayed but also their quality is compromised. When this happen the projects would never realized what was planned. Industries failed to produce better quality products and earn hard currency from export. The malpractices that have been rampant on project accomplishment criticized by the economists but the government did not hear their plea.

The home grown economic reform put the mechanism in how to tackle chronic problems existed in project accomplishment and among the majors is not to start new project without finishing the existing one.

Studying the problems that delayed the GERD and fore warding solution by the government was exemplary. Great efforts were exerted to resume the GERD project but still it is delayed than the intended time for the accomplishment. But this does not mean that corruption is eradicated or there is no problem.

In addition to the out brake of COVID 19, the war ignited in the northern part of the country further aggravates the anomalies created on the economy. The war critically crippled the hard currency that had been drawn from foreign sources in the form of loan and aid. While the nation was struggling to overcome COVID19, the war in the northern part broke out and hit the nation debt repayment balance. The out brake of war between Russia and Ukraine also again posed inflation in the international market. It also decreased many countries income including Ethiopia. These all aggravated the endemic economic crises and crippled the government reform work.

As to him, based on the reform, the Dollar-birr exchange rate was going up which was a tool for adjusting the anomalies witnessed in the macro economy. In fact many economists dis agree in such measure but as to Tewodros, it was correct.

He further said that, many banks showed a positive nod for the devaluation of the birr against the Dollar because it helps to stabilize the economy. NBE depreciated the value of birr. To make the effort successful, it took various measures. Because hampering the value of hard currency shy away and punish people not to bring hard currency here. Unnecessarily, restricting the Dollar value does not make sense harms exporters. Because when the value is restricted, they transfer the pain to farmers. This mean at the expense of farmers the nation unfairly earns hard currency. Selling the product worth of 50 or 80 birr with 20 birr to the government or shroud trader harms farmers.

The home grown economic reform put the mechanism in how to tackle chronic problems existed in project accomplishment and among the majors is not to start new project without finishing the existing one

In the Sphere of Diplomacy



Climate diplomacy: An impelling challenge to meet

BY MADHAV SHRESTHA

Climate diplomacy will not be limited to 2050. So a well built-in mechanism infused by hard-earned knowledge, expertise and exposure needs to be put in place, so that Nepal can marshal climate diplomacy in a well-mannered way to gain both sympathy and support from the global community to rid itself from climate change-induced sufferings

If there is any development detrimental to global humanity, it is the recurring climate change, which threatens to derail and destroy the global ecosystem. Evidently, climate change has brought over rain, floods, landslides, forest-fires, disasters, hurricanes and cyclones sometimes, and at other times, aridity and drought causing massive snow meltdown.

Without a doubt, climate change is caused by rapid industrialisation and ever growing use of fossil fuels, first in the highly industrialised West and then in Asia, especially in its east.

Climate change is, no doubt, man-made, propelled by both state and non-state actors. Unfortunately, man has not yet been able to tackle this grave issue despite it being the handiwork of man himself.

It is evident that the developed world has adequately enjoyed the windfalls.

People of the victimised countries have been punished for no fault of their own. Irreparable loss has been incurred with no conscientious judgment for climate justice.

Everyone is aware that justice delayed is justice denied. Hence, the quicker action is taken, the better it will be for humanity.

Humanitarian consideration must be up

for those who have suffered, not for their doings.

For example, Nepal's negative contribution is too tiny. It is only around 0.027 percent of total global emissions. But Nepal is now ranked fourth in terms of vulnerability to climate change, whereas big countries like China, the US and India rank 1st, 2nd and 3rd in negative contribution.

Certainly, Nepal is locked by climate change pollutants.

This serious concern has to be addressed by the leadership of the great polluters at international conferences and other events with a softer heart for those who deserve justice with the required help and cooperation extended. That will not be just a consideration but an obligation.

Nepal reformulated its climate policy in 2019, after repealing the older one in order to make it more compatible to the changing context. Actions needed to update Naturally Determined Contributions (NDCs) were taken and submitted in 2016 as a Party to the Paris Agreement and acceptance of the Doha Agreement to the Kyoto Protocol.

The world knows it well that Nepal is wedged into a corner due to the impact of climate change, which it cannot tackle with its own efforts. It lacks financial resources and has no access to strategic technologies to combat threats posed by climate change.

Technical knowledge and experience are also not sufficiently at its disposal.

The bureaucracy is not quite adept at handling the issue. Efficient management is in a murkier situation.

Energy is also lacking to meet the challenges facing the country.

With all those deficiencies, how Nepal can

implement various necessary terms and conditions. Nepal will lag far behind in attaining the Agenda 20 related to poverty reduction, food security, health, education and a host of others.

Crucially concerned is the case of Goal No.13 of Agenda 30, which aims to "take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact; integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning; and improve education, awareness-raising, and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning."

Climate change is not a home product of Nepal. It is a global concern, which could only be tackled by the common efforts of all the big powers working in tandem. Lopsided attempts will hardly meet the challenge.

To realise all efforts, there is an urgent need for effective diplomatic application to attain anything real and serviceable. Knowledgeable people better understand that diplomacy has normally been taken as a reactive discipline of the state action. While trouble shooting, crisis management will always be a major function of diplomatic practice. Hence, climate diplomacy must be creative and proactive if it is to succeed.

Climate diplomacy requires institutional reforms and more investment in resources and skills to navigate in the complex situation tossed by climate change. In the meantime, climate diplomacy needs more ownership across governments to render it into a concerted effort.

The application of diplomacy to climate change is crucial in embedding climate change in the decision-making process to shape and reframe the core national interest at home and influence deliberations

abroad. Diplomacy should use all the tools at its disposal to bridge unjustified divide between national and international interests.

It should stimulate both strategic and tactical actions with diplomatic acumen infused by experience and exposure.

It is understandable that all countries suffer from capacity constraints.

However, they could be reduced through higher and better domestic investment, stronger alliances and with international support as well.

People in Nepal feel the absence of an effective structural initiative in applying climate diplomacy while the time to deal has come up. Make-shift attempts are made as the application of climate diplomacy approaches. That will not serve any long-term objective. In the absence of an established mechanism to apply climate diplomacy efficiently, Nepal's participation in the COP-26 to be hosted by the United Kingdom in partnership with Italy in Glasgow of Scotland from October 31 to November 12 could be an interesting event to watch.

Climate diplomacy will not be limited to 2050, but will continue to proceed forward for ever. A well built-in mechanism infused by hard-earned knowledge, expertise and exposure needs to be put in place, so that Nepal can marshal climate diplomacy in a well-mannered way to get for Nepal both sympathy and support from the global community to rid itself from climate change-induced sufferings.

Creative initiative is all that is required to fight back its darker sides.

Source: *The Himalayan Times.*

Law & Politics

Better humanitarian situation in Tigray state ascribable to incumbent's resolve

BY ADDISALEM MULAT

It becomes evident that the federal government has been expediting the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Tigray State more than ever before right after the peace deal was signed in Pretoria, South Africa. There are no two ways about it; the humanitarian situation in Tigray is witnessing a leapfrog improvement. But contrary to the good news, as things stand at present, a lot of efforts have been made by rumormongers aimed at taking the shine off and casting a shadow over the improving condition in the aforementioned state.

In the immediate aftermath of the signing of the agreement on cessation of hostilities, the desperately needed medical and food items are reaching Tigray communities in contradiction to Ethiopia's arch-foes hoax stories which are meant to putting a damper on the constructive role of the incumbent and misleading the attention of the wider international community.

It is a matter of common sense that pertinent bodies in the present circumstances have been making an effort to oil the wheels of humanitarian assistance and non-food items in the northern part of the country.

Though the truth is as clear as daylight, some entities working around the clock with entrepreneurs of war and discredited international media outlets have been distorting facts to lay the blames on the doorsteps of the federal government and possibly thwart the peace accord.

There is a consensus that the abovementioned fact is not a new phenomenon on the grounds that since the onset of the war, the media outlets have been engaged in playing down the efforts of the incumbent including sully the reputation of the successful delivery of humanitarian assistance.

However, amid all these fictitious stories, the country has been sealing a victory pertaining to the delivery of humanitarian aid provided that the much-needed food deliveries have been entering the Tigray State via road and air successfully. It is true that the federal government has been determined from day one to help war-ridden communities in Tigray state by declaring a series of humanitarian truces and increasing humanitarian corridors.

And, now the incumbent sticking to its resolve, has doubled down its efforts in providing aid and allowing unrestricted access to relief agencies following the Pretoria peace deal. In fact, the deal has created a favorable environment to reach out to the people of Tigray easily and better.

Given the current circumstances, humanitarian agencies have been delivering humanitarian assistance in the face of challenges posed by some groups to distract its flow. In other respects, one confidently says that the incumbent has made every possible effort to end hostilities and ensure a lasting peace which in the fullness of time metamorphosed into yielding results.

Following the promising endeavors to fast-track, the flow of humanitarian assistance working in close association with aid organizations, everything in connection with



humanitarian aid is realizing the desired destination.

Notwithstanding that authorized bodies sustained smoothing the path of humanitarian assistance putting effective strategies into effect, scaremongers have continued brushing aside the constructive steps being taken with regard to the free flow of food delivery and engaging themselves in saber-rattling activities.

Though rumormongers know everything going on under Ethiopia's skies more than anybody does, they hate to death acknowledging the truth except taking part in the slanderous attack and back-fence talk. They do not want to give credit where credit is due. In the aftermath of the incumbent's constructive measures particularly after the signing of the peace accords, the dire humanitarian situation is being reversed.

Besides allowing the free flow of humanitarian aid, the federal government has been engaged in restoring social infrastructure in the northern part of the country with flying colors.

The fact in relation to the provision of aid is well corroborated by the international relief agencies.

In its latest information, World Food Program (WFP) stated that it has accelerated humanitarian operations in north Ethiopia.

According to the WFP report, the organization has delivered over 2,400 metric tons of food sufficient for feeding around 170,000 people, as well as 100,000 liters of fuel, medical, nutrition, and other lifesaving supplies to Ethiopia's Tigray state.

The aid has been delivered to Tigray since 15th November when WFP resumed operations using all four reopened road corridors.

The news release stated that the WFP-led Logistics Cluster has facilitated the transportation of 250 metric tons of humanitarian cargo into Tigray from Gondar, Kombolcha, and Semera for eight cooperating partners, including medical items via air.

WFP has already delivered food to over 100,000 people in Mai Tsebri in the northwestern zone

and Alamata in the southern zone since roads into Tigray reopened. WFP also reached 540,000 people in Mekelle in early November. Since the start of November, WFP has reached 29 % of its caseload of 2.1 million people with food assistance in the Tigray state.

However, deliveries of assistance within Tigray are not matching the needs and WFP and its cooperating partners urgently need access to all parts of the state to deliver food and nutrition assistance to 2.3 million vulnerable people. In North Ethiopia, two years of conflict have left more than 13.6 million people in need of humanitarian food assistance, WFP indicated.

The Ethiopian government's steps to bring humanitarian aid to the Tigray State and rebuild the destroyed infrastructure manifested the fact that it is walking the talk of the peace agreement, the National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC) said.

Speaking to local media, NDRMC Commissioner Shiferaw Teklemariam (Ph.D.) noted that the aid is flowing to Tigray in an unfettered way and the issue of ensuring unfettered access is no more a concern. The Ethiopian government and international aid organizations have intensified the transportation of humanitarian aid including food, medicine, and others to the needy people of Tigray.

The commissioner further highlighted that six trucks of the International Committee of the Red Cross loaded with food and additional medical supplies have arrived in Mekelle. Also, 67 vehicles that are carrying humanitarian aid including food, medicine, and fuel entered Tigray.

Humanitarian aid is being sent without limits in Tigray and after the agreement, humanitarian aid from the Ethiopian government as well as aid agencies are being transported by four inland routes and permitted air flights, Shiferaw remarked.

Meanwhile, the Ethiopian government and humanitarian partners delivered over 17, 000 MT of relief food to Tigray during the last nine days, as disclosed by the UN Office for

the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Ethiopia.

OCHA Ethiopia further noted that various humanitarian assistance deliveries were conducted from 15 to 24 November 2022. Some 11 partners have moved supplies during the stated period.

Efforts are ongoing to reach more conflict-affected people across the northern parts of the country, a report said. As reported, 435 trucks carrying humanitarian assistance reached Tigray. 170,080 tons of food arrived, 19 trucks transported 699 MT of non-food items and 81MT is medical supply, and agricultural supply (seed/fertilizer) reached Tigray.

Some 21,314,144 Birr as well as 100,159 liters of fuel transported to the region. It further stated that 629 trucks requested a support letter as of the reporting date. 438 of them received the support letter. 454 of them reached Tigray during the reporting period.

Over 17,000MT of relief food was delivered to Tigray over the last nine days by the government and humanitarian partners, it underscored. Moreover, 3.3 billion USD required to respond to humanitarian needs or to reach 20 million people requiring assistance in 2022. As of the beginning of November, 46.9 percent of it is funded including the government of Ethiopia. Needs continue to outpace available funding, it indicated.

By the same token, the UNHCR announced that its convoys have arrived in Mekelle since August carrying life-saving humanitarian aid including medicines and shelter kits to treat the sick and repair destroyed homes. "More is on the way as the commission scales up delivery of protection and solutions in Northern Ethiopia."

It was learned that the first delivery of UNICEF humanitarian aid arrived in Tigray and the European Union (EU), through its partnership with UNICEF, has granted 31.5 million Euros to restore and strengthen health services and systems to improve the lives of women and children living in conflict-impacted areas.

Society

Joining hands to support people facing hardships

BY LEULSEGED WORKU

Following the peace agreement reached between the Federal Government and TPLF, things in the war-affected areas are returning to normal. Residents who live in the conflict areas are expressing their feeling and benefiting from the humanitarian assistance delivered by the government.

Korem, which was among the victim towns of the war, is now benefiting the humanitarian assistance from the government. As it was indicated by the residents of the town, the dedication the government is showing to the people in the area is encouraging and, it should be backed by all. They have also requested international humanitarian organizations; partners and individuals to stretch their hands and support the effort of the government.

Mesay Gebreselase, is a resident in Korem Town. According to him, Korem Town had gone through hard times over the last two years. Because of the war, the town is now in need of humanitarian assistance. Beside the support from the government, other humanitarian organizations should contribute their part to save more lives. "So far, all the humanitarian assistance provided by the government is distributed fairly and all the people are getting the necessary support."

In an exclusive interview with The Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), he said, absence of banking service in the town is still a problem.



In this regard, he has asked concerned bodies to resume the service.

Belaynesh Kebede is the other resident of Korem Town. Seconding the view of Messay, she said that the government is delivering wheat and nutritious foods to town's residents. "The commitment of the government to address the humanitarian needs of the people deserves appreciation. However, its effort must be backed by other international humanitarian organizations, NGOs, donor community and individuals. Edible oil and other food items are still problem."

Gizaw Tadesse, on his part said that humanitarian relief is being arrived to the town of Korem, however, it does not match with the number of people in need of help. "The aid is insufficient to cover the needs of all recipients. Thus, international

humanitarian organizations have to support the government and supply aid items.

For the last two year, Korem was part of the war zone. For this reason, everyone is in need of assistance-including civil servants. Therefore, in addition to wheat, other food items should be included in the assistance. In comparison to the wartime moments where having a meal once in a day was a blessing or not having at all, the humanitarian support the government is now providing beams ray of hope. In addition to food aid, other humanitarian supports: such as clothes, mattresses and others must be provided to the people."

It is an encouraging effort to see humanitarian assistance distributed fairly to the people of Korem. It has given as a glimpse of hope to residents. Furthermore, it must be sustainable,

said Tigest Berhe. "Areas that were not affected by the war and NGOs should support those war-torn areas in a sustainable manner, said Tigst. The people of Korem are happy now because of the peace agreement.

However, we need humanitarian assistance. Government has rescued to the people of Korem. We need more assistance and service delivery institutions must resume providing basic services"

Korem Town Logistic Coordinator, Mekonnen Zegeye on his part said that when the town became free, the government has assisted to the needy. However, the number of people in need of support is so high that other humanitarian organizations should contribute their part because solving the problem solely by government's efforts is challenging.

"There are a number of people who are in need of humanitarian assistance in Korem Town. However, there is no any international humanitarian organization in the place. The wheat delivered by the government is being distributed impartially. Humanitarian assistance from Federal Government and Amhara State is being distributed in Korem Town."

According to him, the government is taking actions to reopen banks. Likewise, food items and other marketable items are bringing into the market; this would stabilize the market, he said.



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Lesson from EU's 33 mil Euros bequest to war torn education services

BY DIRRIBA TESHOME

The European Union (EU), through its partnership with UNICEF and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), has recently granted €33 million (1.8 billion Ethiopian Birr) to restore education services and implement school feeding programmes so children living in conflict-affected areas in Ethiopia can get back to learning.

EU Delegation Head to Ethiopia, Ambassador Roland Kobia signed the grant contract agreement with UNICEF Representative in Ethiopia Gianfranco Rotigliano and WFP Ethiopia Country Director and Representative Claude Libidar on November 21.

During the signing event, EU Delegation Head to Ethiopia, Ambassador Roland Kobia said: "Children are the innocent victims in any war and often suffer the most. Their lives are disrupted, and their education is interrupted. Overall, nearly two million children are out of school due to conflict across the country. As we begin to build the pathway to peace, the EU is committed to getting children back into the classroom, where they belong.

This funding will strengthen the education system in an integrated manner through the provision of education, health, protection, school feeding, WASH and the reconstruction and rehabilitation of schools. Children's safe access to quality education is critical to the



Photo from EU

future of the country."

The contract signed between the EU and UN bodies will benefit Ethiopia's education system in an integrated manner and essentially benefit the children in conflict-affected areas of the country, he noted adding: "This contract is at a level of 1.8 billion Birr, so it is about 33 million Euros to restore the essential education services in conflict-affected areas for the children. It is to benefit the education system in an integrated manner. We are going to provide not only education but health, protection, school feeding, water and sanitation, reconstruction and rehabilitation of infrastructure and so on and so forth."

Children's safe access to quality education is serious to the future of the country, he added.

UNICEF Representative in Ethiopia,

Gianfranco Rotigliano for his part said that the education component implemented by UNICEF, will include the rehabilitation of schools, reduce rates of school dropouts and also scale-up the 'My Home-Bete' approach.

"We are deeply grateful for this generous contribution from the EU," he said, adding that the 'My Home-Bete' program combines accelerated learning, child protection and life skills training in schools.

Providing services to children, especially girls, to recover from the trauma they have endured due to conflict and also teach life skills so that they can become future doctors, teachers and leaders, he detailed.

"This is very welcome not only because with this fund we can restore and rehabilitate

some of the schools but also we can put the children back into schools with the aid of WFP because when in schools there is a meal for children. Children come to school much more happily and they keep coming because (there is a reason) beyond the fact that they learn and they become (educated) citizens, there is also the good reason that they eat."

The funding will also support WFP to provide nutritious school meals to 50,000 children across Northern Ethiopia.

WFP's school meals will ensure that conflict-affected school-age girls and boys (including IDPs) continue to receive access to food, and this will attract children to enroll in school and continue their education.

WFP Ethiopia Country Director and Representative, Claude Libidar on his part said "I welcome the EU's timely contribution to WFP's school meals to keep children, especially girls, in school, who have been affected by the conflict in Northern Ethiopia."

Overall, this support will benefit nearly 80,000 children and 60 schools will be reconstructed or rehabilitated.

Therefore, what are the other development partners of Ethiopia waiting for to restore the war ravaged schools across the nation? Investing in children today is the wisest and true friendship justification for a nation in need.

International News

NCBA eyes deals for M-Shwari entry into DRC, Ethiopia

NCBA Group is set to launch its mobile phone banking services M-Shwari in Ghana, Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) through partnerships in efforts to grow further into a regional bank.

The Kenyan lender, which also operates in Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda, is in talks for partnerships with banks and telecoms operators in the three countries for mobile phone banking services.

This signals that the Kenyan bank will seek to earn commissions from the deals over setting up brick-and-mortar operations in Ghana, Ethiopia and DRC.

Kenyan commercial banks are looking beyond their borders for acquisitions and partnerships, seeking to tap opportunities outside East Africa, which are driven by rapid economic growth and trade integration.

NCBA has reaped huge rewards from pioneering mobile phone-based lending in Kenya after teaming up with telecoms operator Safaricom in 2012 to launch the dominant service, M-Shwari.

It wants to replicate this model outside East Africa, in particular virgin markets of Ethiopia and DRC—which have huge populations and a banking sector mainly focused on serving big companies, making them appealing to ambitious lenders in regional states in search of retail lenders and small traders for growth.

“In new markets the model will be to work with local banking and mobile partners to deliver our products,” NCBA Group chief executive John Gachora said in an interview.

“The countries of interest for now remain Ghana, Ethiopia and DRC - these added to our current five would make it eight countries.”

He did not disclose the banks and telcos that NCBA is seeking in the three markets. Telecoms operators have expanded mobile financial services across Africa after the idea was pioneered by Safaricom with its M-Pesa service in 2007.

Kenyan lenders have been turning to technology in response to the competition from mobile phone-based financial services.

NCBA has partnerships in the regions with other telecoms operators, including M-Pawa in Tanzania with Vodacom, Mokash in Uganda and Momokash (Cote d’Ivoire) with MTN.

The bank says the partnerships will be a key plank in expansion of its digital lending business in the continent.

“As NCBA, we are looking to start seeing digital financial services as an export product beyond Kenya and into the region,” NCBA director of digital business Erick Muriuki said.

“The objective here, of course, is to ensure that we can diversify our revenues from beyond Kenya and be able to see that we are generating significantly more revenues from the digital business outside East Africa.”

Ethiopia’s State-owned mobile operator, Ethio Telecom, last May launched the mobile phone-based financial service, Telebirr.

It allows users to send and receive money, deposit or take out cash at appointed agents, pay bills to various merchants and receive cash sent from abroad. Safaricom was last month given the nod to launch M-Pesa in Ethiopia, the first time foreigners were allowed to offer the service and smooth the market for NCBA.

Ethiopia’s banking sector is still one of the



most tightly state-controlled in Africa and is not open to foreign ownership.

The sector is dominated by the two oldest and most profitable institutions, Awash Bank and Dashen out of the 19 commercial banks that Safaricom and NCBA must seek deals with to launch Ethiopia’s first mobile phone lending product.

DRC became the seventh member of the EAC this year, bringing the size of the bloc’s economy to over \$245 billion. The nation of about 90 million people is the world’s biggest cobalt producer and Africa’s top copper miner—whose retail banking and fintech market is tiny, and yet to go big on lending through mobile phones.

NCBA will have to do battle with Equity and KCB, which have entered or are seeking to enter the central African country through buyouts.

KCB in August entered an agreement to

acquire 85 percent stake of DRC’s Trust Merchant Bank (TMB) while Equity bought Banque Commerciale du Congo in 2020.

NCBA will spin out its financial technology (fintech) business, which includes M-Shwari, into a standalone company in the race to create more personalised and feature-rich digital banking services for its customers.

This comes in a period when banks are increasingly turning to imaginative combinations of software, hardware and data to create and deliver both new and traditional financial products and services.

It is part of a global trend that has seen financial giants like Goldman Sachs and JP Morgan Chase invest in fintech for asset and wealth management, card business as well as offer savings accounts and personal loans to retail customers.

Source: The East African

Climate hypocrisy as Western firms fund new fossil fuel projects in Africa

Even as delegates from around the world were meeting in Egypt at the UN Conference of Parties (COP27) to deliberate on the current global climate crisis, 200 companies were at the same time exploring or developing new oil and gas projects across Africa, one of the regions experiencing the worst effects of climate change.

On the side-lines of the conference, 37 African climate-focused NGOs – including Urgewald, Stop EACOP, Oilwatch Africa and Africa Coal Network – released a report exposing the hypocrisy of the West in the climate change debate.

The report fingered Western companies and investors as the biggest financiers of new oil and gas projects on the continent.

Out of the 23 top investors in Africa’s oil and gas projects, “14 are headquartered in the US, six in Europe, one in Canada, one in India, and one in South Africa,” says the report titled “Who is Financing Fossil Fuel Expansion in Africa?”

Largest institutional investor

With holdings of over \$12 billion, the report singles out American investment giant BlackRock as the largest institutional investor in fossil fuel expansion in Africa, followed by Vanguard at \$8.4 billion and

the Norwegian Government Pension Fund at \$3.7 billion.

Between January 2019 and July 2022, commercial banks also channelled over \$98 billion to new fossil project in Africa, with \$44 billion channelled through and \$54 billion through the underwriting of new share and bond issuances, the report says.

“The number one banker of fossil fuel developers in Africa is Citigroup (\$5.6 billion), followed by JPMorgan Chase (\$5.1 billion) and BNP Paribas (\$4.6 billion),” the report reads.

Growing investment

The new report indicates that the total capital expenditures for oil and gas exploration on the continent rose to \$5.1 billion in 2022, up from \$3.4 billion in 2020, and the bulk of exploration is carried out and financed by foreign companies.

“Every dollar spent on new oil and gas exploration goes against the 1.5°C roadmaps laid out by the International Energy Agency in 2021. Financial institutions need to drop clients that are still searching for new oil and gas resources we can’t afford to burn,” said Heffia Schuecking, director of Urgewald and a Goldman Environmental Prize winner.

The new report says 886,000 square kilometres have been licensed for new oil and gas projects in Africa since 2017, with 55 companies currently prospecting for new oil and gas fields in Egypt alone — ironically this year’s host of the UN climate summit.

French oil giant TotalEnergies is cited as the largest developer of new fossil fuel projects in Africa. Already sourcing 25 per cent of its hydrocarbon production from the continent, the new report says TotalEnergies is now aiming to add 2.27 billion barrels of oil to its African portfolio.

At COP27, TotalEnergies’ and CNOOC’s East African Crude Oil Pipeline (Eacop), which will run from Uganda to the Tanzanian port of Tanga, is one of the projects that have been the target by green energy campaigners calling on the Ugandan and Tanzanian governments to halt it because of its potential harm to the environment. When complete, Eacop is expected to operate for 20 years.

Emissions

The report also cites Algerian state-owned company Sonatrach as the second-largest developer of fossil fuel projects in Africa with 1.75 billion barrels of oil. Italian oil major Eni comes third with 1.32 billion

barrels.

“All in all, oil and gas companies are preparing to add at least 15.8 billion barrels of oil equivalent to their production portfolios in Africa before 2030.

The extraction and combustion of these oil and gas resources would release eight gigatonnes of CO₂eq into the atmosphere – more than twice the amount the EU emits each year,” says the report.

The oil companies are currently pursuing fossil fuel expansion projects in 48 out of the 55 African countries, and 71 per cent of their financial support is coming from financial institutions that are members of the UN-convened Net Zero Banking Alliance, which brings together a global group of banks “committed to aligning their investments and lending “with net-zero emissions by 2025.”

“Making net-zero promises for tomorrow is meaningless if you are spending billions of dollars on fossil fuel expansion today. Financial institutions that claim to be lining up for 1.5°C need to stop supporting clients who are driving us towards 2.8°C,” Ms Schuecking said.

Source: The East African

Planet Earth

Yelemat Tirufat, ambitious plan to utilize nutrition resources

BY EPHREM ANDARAGCHEW

“*Yelemat Tirufat*” is a development campaign that focuses on nutritional opulence. The word “*Lemat*” refers to a traditional food container that denotes a relationship between farmers, pastoralists, and consumers. It is about getting adequate nutritional food. The main objective of the campaign is to accelerate efforts to achieve food self-sufficiency at the family and national levels in Ethiopia.

Reports and studies show that Africa spends about 45 billion USD annually on food imports and this might reach 110 billion USD in 2025 unless intervention measures are taken. Besides, food insecurity, poor maternal and child feeding practices, high incidence of infectious diseases, and limited access to quality nutrition services are among the nutrition problems that are usually observed in developing countries.

Besides, frequent droughts, complicating access to and consumption of nutritious foods is the main problem to food security across the country. Because children, in developing countries, consume the least diverse diets since household food consumption are dominated by cereals and pulses. The consumption of animal-source foods and fruits, and Vitamin A-rich vegetables is rare.

Taking food security and balanced diet problem into account, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has launched the national nutrition scheme called *Yelemat Tirufat*. The scheme, by drawing lessons and experiences from the best practices in the Green Legacy program, has the plan to ensure national food self-sufficiency. It also plays a vital role in implementing family nutrition by significantly improving milk, eggs, poultry, and honey production across the nation.

Ethiopian Minister of Agriculture Umar Hussain said that *Yelemat Tirufat* will be implemented in the coming four years and high-yield outcomes will be expected. It has a goal of increasing dairy production, ensuring food security, creating job opportunities, increasing export, and replacing imported animal products with domestic ones.

The program has now been started with milk, eggs, chicken meat, and honey, and will expand it to other products after the evaluation of their results. Besides, the program aims to increase chicken meat from 90 thousand tons to 296 thousand tons, milk production from 6.9 billion liters to 11.7 billion liters, egg production from 3.2 billion to 9.1 billion, and honey production from 147 thousand tons to 296



***Yelemat Tirufat* program is key not only to ensure food security, but also to realize a balanced food system, stabilize the price of food products, replace imports, and create job opportunities**

thousand tons, he explained.

Cognizant of this regional governments and city administrators have started implementing *Yelemat Tirufat* in their respective localities. Because increasing food production will help to diversify the menus and good access to markets. It also alleviates the malnutrition problems of the country.

Southern State Agriculture Bureau Head Mr. Usman Surur said that to make *Yelemat Tirufat* a reality, in addition to milk, chicken, meat, and honey production, it is imperative to work on vegetables, fruits, and crops. This will complete the efforts to ensure development.

The region is working to increase the average milk production from 14 to 38 liters by improving animal species. Besides, the region will use its abundant resources to increase chicken, meat, milk, honey, and fish products, he explained.

Gambella state president Mr. Umod Ujulu noted that the region is endowed with perennial rivers, fertile land, and vast animal resources. Nevertheless, the people have not benefited from it because it was not cultivated at the desired level in the previous years. So, he urged the leaders of the region to ensure food security by integrating agricultural development with the new *Yelemat Tirufat* program.

Addis Ababa City Administration Head of Prosperity Party Office Mr. Melese Alemu

noted that *yelemat Turufat* program has a plan to enrich the food container of the city residence which could be important to create a mentally and physically competent citizen.

He recalled that the city has proven its potential in urban agricultural work that did last year. This year the city administration has planned to benefit the people from the *Yelemat Tirufat* program by combing the experience and success of green legacy and urban agricultural activities of last year, he explained.

Harari State president Mr. Ordin Badri said that the *Yelemat Tirufat* program is key not only to ensure food security, but also to realize a balanced food system, stabilize the price of food products, replace imports, and create job opportunities. Accordingly, the program will be implemented in urban and rural areas and emphasized that the program is the center of cooperation between the people and the government.

Indeed, the idea of *Yelemat Tirufat* is novel and timely to ensure food security and balanced diet issues across the country. It also requires genuine commitment not only from the leaders but also from the people at all levels to coordinate and continue the agricultural development activities of the country. Because *Yelemat Tirufat* ensures food self-sufficiency which is directly linked to national sovereignty and dignity.