



## Ethiopia's power export fosters regional integration: Ministry

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA - Ethiopia's power export to neighboring states manifested the country's desire to connect the East African region through electricity besides satisfying the local demand, the Ministry of Water and Energy said.

Speaking to the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) Water and Energy Minister Habtamu Itefa (PhD. Eng.) stated that Ethiopia believes in electricity interconnection will help to integrate and transform the economies of the East African countries. Ethiopia's interconnectivity with neighboring countries in electricity has many benefits for the former.

"Ethiopia cannot stand alone without making connections with its neighbors  
See Ethiopia's power ... Page 3



Habtamu Itefa (PhD. Eng.)

Photo: Ashenafi Gudeta

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Ousmane Dione

## WB commits up to rebuilding support in North Ethiopia

BY TAMERU REGASA

ADDIS ABABA - World Bank (WB) has renewed pledge to support Ethiopia's efforts in rebuilding the conflict-affected areas in North Ethiopia.

Speaking to local media, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan and South Sudan Country Director Ousmane Dione said that WB has been providing financial and technical supports for Ethiopia as a development partner to benefit Ethiopian people.

"Like in the previous years, the bank is  
See WB commits ... Page 3



## Andargachew recommends Ethiopia's homegrown approach for Africans

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## Commission calls on aid agencies to step up assistance

- Delivers 70,000 metric tons of food since CoHA

BY MENGESHA AMARE

ADDIS ABABA - International partners have delivered over 60,000 metric tons of grain and nutritious food to the needy in Tigray since the conclusion of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA), the National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC) said, calling for more support.

Approached by the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), NDRMC Commissioner Shiferaw Teklemariam (PhD) stated that more than 70,000 metric tons of humanitarian aid in the form of grain and nutritious food has been transferred to Tigray since the conclusion of the truce.

The contribution of humanitarian organizations working under the leadership of the government is extremely encouraging and while the government has provided 13.6 thousand metric tons of



Shiferaw Teklemariam (PhD)

grain and nutritious food in the reported period, the rest is covered by partner institutions.

Noting partner organizations that have been operating in Tigray continue to strengthen their capacity, Shiferaw indicated about 16 aid agencies have supported the government's humanitarian response to Tigray. The Catholic Relief

Service and the World Food Program (WFP) have taken the lead in the humanitarian response to Tigray.

"The support work started under the leadership of the government will continue," he said, adding that aid agencies and international partners should do what they can do, capitalizing on the peace that has been created in the area.

Along with this, the commissioner highlighted that it has been possible to transport more than 800 metric tons of medical drugs and equipment to Tigray. By the same token, fuel is the most necessary for the humanitarian operation and it was possible to transport more than 460,000 liters using the Abala-Shire route. "This shows that the work of making all kinds of support reach the user community without limits is being done."

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## Explicating Salomeja's Spring Toast



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# News



## EEU augmenting power restoration efforts in conflict-affected areas

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

**ADDIS ABABA** - Ethiopian Electric Utility (EEU) is stepping up power restoration efforts in some parts of North Ethiopia where normalcy have returned, so disclosed Shiferaw Telila.

The utility CEO Shiferaw Telila told local media that that Power has been fully restored in Kobo, Alamata, Waja, Tumuka, Lalibela and Sekota, Korem and their surrounding areas.

In Northern West areas like Humera, Wolkayit and Shire, he said maintenance and inspection works have been finalized. However, restoration has not been done due to the fact that the main power station is located in Tekeze power transmission.

Though the 230 Kilovolts power transmission line of Axum is being repaired, as to him.

By the same token, Tagele Degefa, within the EEU mentioned that during the three rounds of conflict, about 132 and 230 Kilovolts power transmission lines were highly damaged. Moreover, excluding the Tigray State, infrastructural damage that is worth of 2.8 billion Birr has incurred throughout the two rounds of conflict, he underlined.

He also said there are intentionally destroyed and stolen stations. The Woldiya substation which was entirely looted could be best example in this regard, according to him. He also said that the substation could not be replaced easily.

Moreover, power transmission towers as well as conductors are heavily destroyed.

Despite the effort that is being put to restore and reconstitute infrastructure in all areas where peace is secured, he indicated that over 83 million USD worth of damage has occurred.

Similarly, many areas in the Tigray State are not able to get power supply as the power transmission is located in single base. Thus, he stressed that the line from Alamata to Mekersa has to be repaired first. However, once EEU gain security clearance, restoration will be resumed in no time, he added.

## AAU plays vital role to modernize logistic sector: Academician

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

**ADDIS ABABA** - Addis Ababa University (AAU) has partnered with relevant stakeholders including the Ministry of Transport and Logistics to modernize the sector and enhance its performance, an academician said.

Associate Professor of Logistics at Addis Ababa University Matiwos Ensermu told *The Ethiopia Herald* that the university has carried out various reforms in the logistics sector to improve the service. Formulating the logistics policy reform, national logistics strategy and a 30-year transportation master plan, which opens the logistics sector to the private sector, are among the major activities of the university in this regard.

“We are doing our best to enable the logistic issue to be the agenda of the government and recommended that digitizing the track and transit evaluation is the instrument to enhance the performance of Ethiopia’s logistic sector.”

Matiwos further stated that AAU frequently approaches actors in the logistics sector and lecturers in the Logistics Department have created closer contact with the Ministry of Transport, the Marital Authority, and the



Ethiopian Shipping and Logistics Service Enterprise and others. The academicians have also served board members in the aforesaid institutions and established a logistics professional association and others.

The university has also nurtured skilled human power in the sector and designed the logistics curriculum.

Meanwhile, the university held a conference under the theme “Logistics in Practice: Empowering East Africa through Innovative Logistics Solution,” yesterday.

Speaking on the occasion, Benjamin Nitsche (PhD), Manager of Competence Center for International Logistics Networks

of TU Berlin said the conference aims to bring students in the industry closer. “We have industry participants and students here, and students from Germany to bring them together to create a network for them.”

As to Benjamin, the practical problem in university education is an emphasis on theoretical knowledge and lack of practice. “This is why the AAU together with us is trying to find several formats like case studies, conferences and co-working seminars to prove that.”

“We have regional value chains with partners all around, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and it’s on and it’s something that is definitely to look at in the future.”

## EEA underscores importance of insurance, agricultural finance for dev’t

BY MESERET BEHAILU

**ADDIS ABABA** - The Ethiopian Economics Association (EEA) stated that promoting agriculture financial and insurance service would help promote sustainable development of the country.

Speaking at event organized yesterday under the theme: “Policy Forum on Green Legacy Initiative and, Agricultural Finance and Insurance in Ethiopia,” the Association CEO, Prof. Mengistu Ketema said the Association has attempted to sort out country’s major agriculture and micro finance constraints via conducting researches thereby helping ensure sustainable development of country.

As to him, the forum is of paramount importance in singling out agriculture constraints through researches and discussing various issues well with a view to adding value to the Ethiopian economic development.

As to Mengistu, the finance and insurance sectors have not yet been adequately supporting the agriculture sector. Currently, it has providing micro finance and insurance though a lot remains to be done. To increase the agriculture financial and insurance service, serious measures have to be taken to raise societal awareness, financial sector linkage, improve policy, maintain ease of doing business, encourage



private sector, and construct infrastructure.

Representing Addis Ababa University Assistance Prof. Hailu Elias presented a paper entitled: “Agricultural Finance and Insurance In Ethiopia Challenges and Policy Option,” and underscored that the financial sector has been playing significant role in creating jobs for rural and urban citizens, fostering business activities, increasing saving thereby improving the livelihoods of the society and the likes.

He added that though the finance sector and private sector has been playing an indispensable role in reinvigorating the development of the country, a long journey is yet to be trekked for various reasons.

Among others inadequate physical infrastructure, lack of input market like land, financial service, skilled human

power, shortage of foreign exchange, and the likes are the main serious factors hindering the active participation of the private sector and the finance accessibility in Ethiopian economic development over the past many years, he said.

Presenting research paper titled: “Green Legacy Initiative for Sustainable Economic Development in Ethiopia,” another researcher Abebe Damtie (PhD) pinpointed that forests have been contributing a lot in the progress of Ethiopian economy.

As to him, forests have contributed 2.3 to Ethiopian GDP in 2015 while increased to 8.3 percent in 2020. According to UNEP 2016 report, the forest has contributed 13 percent to Ethiopian economy. Researches show that Ethiopia has lost an average of 92,000 hectares of forest per year over the past two decades.



# News



## Shire residents laud gov't uninterrupted humanitarian support

**ADDIS ABABA** - The uninterrupted humanitarian support from the Government of Ethiopia has rescued many lives and solved problems, Shire city residents told *ENA*.

Praising the encouraging and effective moves of the government to ensure lasting peace, they have called on the government to strengthen its efforts to resume basic services and reconstruction activities beyond providing humanitarian support.

It is to be noted that the government, in addition to providing uninterrupted humanitarian support and rehabilitation activities in all parts of Tigray region, has been exerting efforts to resume basic services.

According to the National Disaster and Risk Management Commission, 32,000 metric tons of food and non-food items have been delivered to the region, following the peace agreement.

More than 535,000 citizens in the area from Shiraro-to-Adwa alone have received humanitarian support, it was learned.

Residents of Shire city have told *ENA's* correspondent on the ground that the uninterrupted humanitarian support has rescued many lives.

The residents said that hadn't the government provided massive food, pharmaceuticals and medical equipment following the peace agreement, the lives of many people would

have been at big risk.

The determination of the government in providing sustained support is therefore appreciable, they added.

The residents further urged that the strengthening of efforts to resume basic services, alongside providing humanitarian support.

National Disaster and Risk Management Commission Secretariat Head, Zerihun Zewde affirmed on his part that humanitarian support has so far been provided for more than 535,000 citizens from Shiraro-to-Adwa.

He stressed that the effort of the government to provide humanitarian assistance will be consolidated.

## Commission...

The 70,000 metric tons of grain can easily feed more than five million people and this shows that there is immense capacity of the government from the beginning and later on, partner organizations that provide humanitarian support continue to strengthen their capacity. Currently, more than 1,100 large and heavy trailer trucks have entered Tigray and are delivering the support, he remarked.

After the agreement, the support is being delivered in four corridors namely the Semera-Abala Corridor on the Afar State to access Mekelle and in Woldia in North Wollo and goes through Alamata and Korem towns. The third line goes from Debarq in North Gondar to Addi Arkay, Mai Tsebri to Shire. The fourth line is the Gondar Humera route, which goes from Humera to Sheraro, Shire, Axum and Adwa towns.

## Andargachew recommends Ethiopia's homegrown approach for Africans

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

**ADDIS ABABA** - Ethiopia is a good example to African countries with regard to pursuing policies and strategies that are derived from homegrown ideologies and thoughts and free from the dictation of external actors, a veteran politician said.

The veteran politician Andargachew Tsege told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the policies and strategies of many African countries are still under the dominance of powerful global actors. Africans cannot achieve economic, social and political independence and ensure prosperity without formulating their own ideologies.

In this regard, the policies and strategies of Ethiopia are formulated by taking into consideration its objective reality and adapting the experiences of a few countries to sustainably resolve the problems of the

country.

"Homegrown social values should be a base to drive Ethiopia's and Africa's civilization," Andargachew stated, adding that the values could be the spring boards to sprint forward to facilitate the continent's development, independence and prosperity. Africans could also share Ethiopia's success in standing together in difficult fending off foreign aggressors by putting internal differences aside.

"We Ethiopians have not properly defined and promoted the Ethiopiansim ideology and more of a push in this regard is crucial cognizant of the fact that the continent without its own ideology cannot be independent from foreign dictations and realize development."

Noting Ethiopia believes in social justice, he indicated social justice should be the center

of everything. "Africans without having their own social, political and economic ideology or social justice cannot achieve prosperity and build a healthy community."

Countries that only strive to attain development based on homegrown approach and ideology and believe in social justice can simply achieve prosperity, independence and build strong institutions. The experiences of several countries including Japan, China and others asserted this reality.

Countries can achieve growth without denying their history, identity and they could achieve development by maintaining their own common ideology, history, culture, tradition and diversity. Also, national pride like Ethiopia's victory in the Battle of Adwa could be the center of Africa's ideology that may enshrine rapid economic progress whilst consolidating the people-to-people relations, the ex-politician emphasized.

## Ethiopia's power...

and we need to be connected by physical infrastructure including electricity for the benefit of our people and economies. In doing so, due attention has been given to the electricity export will not cause a significant harm in the domestic demand."

Ethiopia's export of electricity to neighboring states could boost its economy besides generating a sizable foreign currency and easing the forex crunch that the country has faced. The finance will also have a pivotal role in speeding up the

execution of ongoing projects, and fostering regional integration and investment as well as strengthening relationships.

As to the minister, Ethiopia's aspiration to electricity interconnectedness is a good example for the world and the experience can be expanded to other countries and will bring immense economic benefits. The move also nurtures Ethiopia's diplomatic ties with neighboring countries.

Meanwhile, Habtamu highlighted that the ministry's "Dam on my Yard" initiative has brought a commendable result helping

communities in drought-prone and low-rainfall areas.

An office is implementing such initiatives in selected areas of the Oromia State including Borena Zone and Gondar City in the Amhara State by retaining rainfall water in house roofs and water tankers that are used for drinking and washing purposes during dry season. The initiative is also expanding into other low-rainfall areas.

Currently, Ethiopia is exporting electricity to Djibouti, Kenya, and South Sudan and agreed to sell to Sudan.

## WB commits...

committed to support Ethiopia to withstand either man made or natural induced crises. To this end, the organization is ready to play a constructive role in rehabilitating citizens and reconstructing institutions damaged during the conflict and support the implement the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA)," he said.

The Bank said that the International Development Association (IDA) grant has a national geographic scope that initially prioritizes support to the Afar, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Oromia, and Tigray states that have been highly impacted by the recent conflict and host large numbers of internally displaced peoples (IDPs).

The project will also support efforts to address the immediate needs of communities, rehabilitate/recover infrastructure destroyed by conflict, and increase community resilience to the impacts of conflict in a sustainable manner.

The project's main focus is providing quick support to meet the urgent need of conflict-affected communities; it will also support Ethiopia to advance towards a sustainable recovery pathway by investing in institutions, communities, and policies, he said.

It is to be recalled that the bank has long approved 300 million USD grant for the Response-Recovery-Resilience for Conflict-Affected Communities in Ethiopia Project.



# Opinion

## November 29, 2022

# Peer Review

BY GETACHEW MINAS

There are a number of researches and debates conducted on peer review, a subject that has become a political and bureaucratic battlefield. There is a legacy of the peer review process, including performance appraisal process. However, the process is not fully participatory as the power still rests with the management that excludes workers. In enterprises where workers participate, the periodic performance review often becomes a “negotiation” around compensation and promotion rather than a true concern for enterprise development. This is common in public and private enterprises in Ethiopia where peer review is almost a taboo and unthinkable. If there is any such review, it will be for promotional purpose without offending anyone. In this situation peer review is a difficult exercise, unless conducted in secret.

The prospect and potential of performance review is especially pertinent and applicable to enterprises that adopt new ways of working. Modern enterprises are using responsive, alert, self-organizing and team-based structures. In these enterprises teams and small units may have both autonomy and accountability for results. In these enterprises, there may not be a formal manager conducting the process. So, the “traditional” performance management system may no longer be applicable for peer reviewing. Whether an enterprise is considering a team-based structure or not, it is assumed that there are ways to rethink and revise performance management. This makes it more relevant and less centralized. Decentralized and social based feedback system may be urgent in reviewing performance processes. This is critical in Ethiopian enterprises, particularly in the private sector, where people are working “remotely” and without the same level of daily interactions with owner managers.

Instead of a performance review created and discussed solely with managers periodically, the workers may receive a larger amount of feedback from colleagues. This feedback gathers the view on their performance and behavioral attitude from the clients the workers have been working with on a regular basis. Because the system generates a larger amount of feedback, each individual is “less” subject to the bias of a single person or the manager. Managers provide feedback to the worker on the performance evaluation process. But in this process, the manager is not the only person providing that feedback to the worker. The worker also gets it from colleagues, peers, and supervisors that offer timely input. In this respect, managers need to consider key issues, the first of which is the logical place to start with. Initially, review teams are formed to appraise and evaluate their work and offer feedback to each other. The teams provide performance analysis and development that can be shared

by more people.

Apart from these teams, there are individual networks that collaborate with frequently. According to Alessandro Di Fiore and Marcio Souza, they engage in “peer selection” practice from a list of colleagues that are close enough to the worker to provide substantive feedback. Managers select peers, senior managers, and more junior colleagues in order to capture several perspectives. All feedbacks have the “same” weight. They are analyzed and discussed by managers in regular meetings with the workers at the end of a given period. This practice is useful for career development and compensation decisions. In this process, feedback is generally open, direct, and transparent. If the culture of the enterprise is “not” mature enough to sustain an open system then feedback may come from any peer or collaborator. In this situation, people fear creating conflict or damaging relationships by delivering “negative” feedback. Such a feedback may not be effective or help people develop or cooperate.

In peer-performance feedback system, workers may engage in “anonymous” peer review. Such a review is consistent with the Ethiopian culture of avoiding confrontation with a colleague in the review process. In this case, only managers have access to see the peer reviews. Enterprises managers encourage workers to give direct, frank and honest feedback. When enterprises stopped formal and periodic performance reviews, they instituted anonymous peer reviews. They also made them fairly simple. Workers were asked to identify things that colleagues should stop, start, or continue. In the beginning enterprises used an anonymous system, but over time a few of them shifted to “direct” feedback, and workers held their face-to-face review with guidelines on how to use honesty, sincerity and frankness. However, there is no “one-size-fits-all” format on anonymity. If the enterprise culture is “not” ready for an honest and sincere exchange of feedback among colleagues, it may be better to opt for an anonymous system.

Timing is important when delivering feedback. There may be a need for “guides” on changing from the management driven performance review process. The first is the period in which requests for feedback should come in. This has to be specifically tailored to how an enterprise works. The next consideration is the volume of social feedback on a single worker. But this feedback needs to come from a wide range of colleagues and “not” from a focused, inner circle. A provoked system puts a scheme in place to ensure that managers obtain large volumes of feedback for each employee. Some enterprises issue requests for feedback at the end of each month with a target of certain amount of feedback for a single person in a year. This is aided by IT program which identifies the people with whom the

employee interacted most. The system sends automatic requests for feedback to those collaborators or colleagues.

In a team-based enterprise in which teams are self-administering and “hierarchy” is flat, logically all feedback would be equal. It does not matter if the feedback came from the line manager, other team members, or the enterprise manager. With equal weight and volume of feedback, this approach is moving to the “wisdom” of the masses of people, where inputs are combined to form a picture of performance. In other words, if workers provide a “consistent” negative feedback on one aspect of performance or behavior, such a feedback will most likely reflect the attitude of the overall enterprise. This reflects the “wisdom” of the crowd than the assessment of an individual, as demonstrated by social studies. Enterprises may adopt a social feedback system through an internal platform. Workers may request feedback from anyone with whom they have shared a job activity at any time. Peers can freely decide whether to evaluate the performance of their colleagues.

There are feedback categories that do not require a total departure from traditional systems. Usually some are on performance, while others focus on behaviors that reflect the goal, culture and values of an enterprise. Some enterprises use categories for performance, values and behaviors. Feedback providers do not need to offer input on all categories, but only on the ones observed directly during the period. Since truly social feedback generates a large number of feedbacks on any single team member, the feedbacks do “not” need to be simple and quick. In some enterprises, every single team member may be requested to provide some pieces of feedback at the end of a given period. Based on experience with traditional performance management systems, the manager may prepare and deliver a single review every time.

It is not feasible in a social feedback system targeting hundreds of feedbacks per person which becomes very complex. The “simplicity” of the feedback is more valuable for each relevant and observed category. The workers may use simple internal platform to provide feedbacks. Workers can choose each of the feedback categories they have observed and then make choices on a “simple” appreciation or opportunity for improvement. Simplicity is a notable trend in peer-feedback systems. The simplification not only reduced aggregate time spent on feedback, but it also improved the share of participants who perceived it as useful. The problem with such a system may be managers themselves. They tend to “dislike” it because they see their power to review direct reports to be partially stripped away. To mitigate such a problem, it is important to educate managers on how this can improve and evolve their development objectives.

Managers play a key role in integrating all the different feedback thereby distilling suggestions for improvement. Managers become “curators” or keepers of feedback data and personal development system for workers based not only on their assessment, but also on the “wisdom” of the workers. Enterprises need to design performance management systems for the future. A good first step is to identify an organizational unit or some teams to experiment with a new “social feedback” system. This may be conducted cyclically, which can be monthly or quarterly based on a spirit of work, depending on the operations. After a number of cycles, Ethiopian enterprises may have enough feedback data to evaluate whether such a system could move the enterprise for the rest of the time.

Collaborative peer review maximizes quality of work while ensuring the “rights” of workers for rigorous, constructive, and transparent review. Peer review is handled with the participation of active workers that are carefully selected for their excellence and productivity, accuracy and validity of performance. It is strongly believed that peer review must be centered on objective criteria for the validity and quality of the work evaluated. At the same time, it should be rigorous, fair, constructive, accountable, and transparent for everyone involved. Last, but not least, peer reviews in Ethiopia should be encouraged to be efficient as mentioned earlier. To achieve this, Ethiopian managers have to develop a collaborative review forum that satisfies both workers and reviewers. The managers should continuously innovate to provide effective tools and services for an efficient peer review.

There are strict quality standards for peer-review process using clear criteria and dedicated review teams. Workers that meet these criteria are accepted for reviewing work performance. The value and validity of work performance is evaluated using rigorous quality checks that empower peer review teams. However, reviewers can recommend rejection and acceptance decisions. The review teams may also recommend the screening of performance integrity in pre- and post-review process. They may reject work performance that does not meet acceptance criteria. These criteria may include compliance with all ethical standards and reviewer comments into consideration. Ethiopian peer reviewers **should be able to** evaluate quality of work using rigorous assessment tools that provide valid conclusions supported by sufficient evidence.

*Thank you.*

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

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## Editorial

### Incumbent always resolute to aids' provision in affected areas

'Aid is flowing like no other time', these are the coveted words of Redwan Hussien, National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister, who also signed the Pretoria peace deal with Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) representing the Ethiopian government. In fact, these are not mere claims; these are hard facts that mirror the current reality in relation to the humanitarian situation in Tigray State. The dire situation in the northern part of the country has already seen volte face in the wake of the signing of the peace deal.

Though the terms of the accord are clearly defined, the commitments of the federal government are not limited to respecting the deal. For obvious reasons, the incumbent has been resolute in the provision of desperately needed aid to people in affected areas. And, the government is seizing the opportunity that the deal created to double down its effort in allowing unfettered humanitarian access to relief agencies and expediting its provision of aid to the people of Tigray.

It should be borne in mind that the Ethiopian government has been consistent in its position to the protection of the rights of the Tigray people and delivery of aid before and after the peace deal. The incumbent is well aware that the people of Tigray deserve peace and tranquility and should receive the required support to overcome the mayhems they face due to the consequential war, yet the peace accord serves as an add-up in securing uninterrupted aid delivery.

For the government humanitarian issue is beyond a political

bargain. It is a moral and legal duty of governorship. In so doing, however, the government is also converting the terms of the peace deal into reality. Since the cessation of hostilities, aid is entering Tigray in folds and bundles. Almost all modes of transportation are becoming operational to ship humanitarian assistance. Basic services are being restored. In short, the federal government is walking its talks! This circumstance in turn creates a watershed moment for the full realization of the terms of the deal. So far, though sluggish in some issues, the implementation of the breakthrough accord is going in the right direction from the TPLF side as well. In this regard, both signatories should maintain the current status quo to avoid any chance of reversal. What is needed now is to capitalize on the progress and fix the shortfalls. In this regard, the African Union that brokered the eye-opening agreement should keep tabs on the effectuation of the deal by devising different mechanisms. The full implementation of the deal brooks no delay. And, the conflict-affected communities in Tigray, Amhara, and Afar states should have their livelihood return to normalcy. The realization of a peace agreement cannot be without its oddities, but if all parties to the agreement live up to their words, it will end up bringing the much-needed and noble goals at the earliest time possible. In this regard, the Ethiopian government has remained resolute in honoring the deal and discharging its governorship role roles without hesitations. If TPLF squarely reciprocates in good faith and continues in its resolve, the peace deal is destined to be a success for all the people of Ethiopia.

## Opinion

### The 48<sup>th</sup> IGAD Council of Ministers successfully concluded in Khartoum, Sudan

The 48<sup>th</sup> Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Council of Ministers session concluded successfully in Khartoum, in the Republic of Sudan on Wednesday 30 November 2022 under the chairmanship of His Excellency Ali Al-Sadiq, the Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sudan.

The meeting was attended by H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Djibouti; H.E. Demeke Mekonnen, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia; H.E. Dr. Alfred Mutua, Cabinet Secretary for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs of the Republic of Kenya; H.E. Abshir Omar Huruse, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Federal Republic of Somalia; H.E. Mayiik Ayii Deng, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of South Sudan; and H.E. Dr. Rashid Yahaya Ssemddu, Ambassador of the Republic of Uganda to the Republic of Sudan.

Also in attendance were H.E. Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, Executive Secretary of IGAD; H.E. Amb. Dr. Ismail Wais, the IGAD Special Envoy for South Sudan; H.E. Amb. Mohamed Ali Guyo, IGAD Special Envoy for the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Somalia; H.E. Maj. Gen. Charles Tai Gituai, Interim Chairperson of RJMEC; and H.E. Gen. Asrat Denero Amat, Chairperson of CTSAMVM. Also present were H.E. Annette Weber, the European Union Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa; H.E. Michelle Tomassi,

Ambassador of the Republic of Italy to the Republic of Sudan and co-chair of the IGAD Partners Forum; and H.E. Ambassador John T. Godfrey, U.S Ambassador to the Republic of Sudan.

The Executive Secretary of IGAD H.E. Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu briefed the Council on the prevailing peace and security situation, and the regional disaster, displacement and humanitarian situation. He also gave highlights of the IGAD performance of projects and programmes, institutional reforms, and update of finance and administration.

The Council welcomed the Permanent Cessation of Hostilities Agreement signed between the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Tigray People's Liberation Front in Pretoria, South Africa, on 2nd November 2022 and the subsequent Declaration of Senior Commanders on Modalities for the Implementation of the Agreement signed in Nairobi, Kenya, on 12th November 2022; Appreciated the instrumental role played by IGAD and in particular, the pivotal role played by H.E. Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, Executive Secretary of IGAD in close collaboration with the African Union, United Nations and the United States of America, and committed to continue working together in order to mobilise and avail support for the full implementation of the Agreement.

The Ministers were appraised of the political and security situation in Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan. They welcomed

the efforts of the Government of Somalia against terrorism and expressed solidarity with the government and the people of Somalia. They also encouraged the parties in Sudan to find a sustainable political solution to the current situation.

On the humanitarian and disaster situation, the Council commended the exemplary work done by IGAD Secretariat in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic that has reached more than 1.9 million people. 8.6 million sets of personal protective equipment, 36 medical support vehicles and 14 PCR mass-testing machines have been delivered to Member States including in high-risk cross border areas, 14 refugee camps and IDP settlements and 11 migrant reception centers. The Council lauded the leadership, health officials and workers in Uganda for the sacrifices and effort in trying to contain the Ebola situation, and committed to closely liaise and work with Ugandan authorities in arresting the spread of the virus and also provide support when needed;

On the progress of programmes and projects, the ministers appreciated the detailed report of the Executive Secretary on the work of the IGAD Secretariat and lauded the leadership and staff for the satisfactory progress made in the implementation of projects and programmes and undertaking the much-needed institutional reform, and expressed its full support to the Secretariat in completing the ongoing institutional reforms and implementing the revised

Resource Mobilisation Strategy.

The Ministers recognised that climate change, conflict and disaster-induced displacement continue to exacerbate the scale of disasters that the region experiences, and decided, as agreed in the recently concluded COP27 meeting, to establish a Regional Climate Security Coordination Mechanism that will build the capacity of IGAD Member States to anticipate, prevent and mitigate the outset of climate-induced conflict and displacement. The Ministers called upon the International Community and stakeholders to continue providing support to the IGAD support platform for IDPs, Refugees and host communities in Sudan and South Sudan.

Member States agreed the need for timely contribution of their annual financial commitments to the organisation in the spirit of ownership of programmes and projects.

The partners present (EU, US, IGAD Partners Forum) all lauded the central role of IGAD in preventive diplomacy, mediation, regional integration and disaster management and committed to continue to work with Secretariat and Member States of IGAD to complement their efforts in addressing national and regional challenges.

Source: IGAD, November 30, 2022  
(KHARTOUM, Sudan)

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



# Business & Economy

## Africa's digital market

COMPILED BY MENGISTEAB  
TESHOME

In the last five years, the share of Africans who choose to buy goods and services online has more than doubled; that's about 10 percent of the entire population on the continent. And while this shift has resulted mainly from the pandemic, it's becoming clear that even as economies return to a semblance of 'normal,' online sales are here to stay.

The market opportunity for African businesses here is significant. Online sales in Africa are growing at around 25 percent, year-on-year – one of the highest rates in the world – with more than 10 million people starting to buy online each year. Yet online sales in most organizations are only at the beginning of their growth trajectory.

While large organizations have transitioned their sales and operations digitally and have the necessary infrastructure to make this shift, only a small number of businesses have scaled digital sales as yet. We can see this in the numbers. In Europe, the digital sales landscape is so competitive that banks will pay, on average, about 25 percent of profit per client to attract a client. However, in Africa, competition still needs to be higher so that banks can attract clients, spending at most 10 percent of the profit on that client. However, this is unlikely to last.

As the window of opportunity continues to open for digital sales on the continent, we can expect competition for banks, retail, telecoms, logistics, and more, to intensify in the race to develop their digital business and move their service offerings online.

To pull ahead, here are five fundamental principles that African businesses could consider to develop a robust digital marketing function and claim their space at the vanguard of the digital sales frontier.

### Engage global expert knowledge

Global advertising and social media platforms such as Google, Bing, and WhatsApp are disproportionately dominant across Africa. Tapping into the expertise of international specialists working with these channels will be critical.

For example, in South Africa, the share of search queries on Google is 94%, followed by Bing at 5.12%. Google dominates the search market in Nigeria and Kenya, too, at 98.6% and 97.7%, respectively, according to Global Web Index (GWI) digital marketing research for African countries. Among social media platforms, WhatsApp is the most popular for networking at 93.2% in South Africa, 93% in Nigeria, 96.5% in Kenya, 83.9% in Ghana, and 73.7% in Morocco, usually followed by Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

Investing in developing proprietary teams of digital customer acquisition specialists that understand these channels is likely to be a critical competitive edge. Fortunately, as remote working formats have become more common following the pandemic, recruiting global talent has become easier for African organizations. Recruiting



AUC Commissioner for Economic Development, Trade, Tourism, Industry and Minerals, Ambassador Albert M. Muchanga, and the African Development Bank's Deputy Director General for the East Africa Region, Abul B. Kamara,

talented employees is essential, given that there can be a need for more specialist skilled workers in African countries.

Even though they are working mainly through global channels, African businesses ignore the local context at their peril, especially if they want to scale across the continent.

Each African market has subtle differences in consumption and channel behavior that must be considered when planning digital marketing campaigns.

For example, in South Africa, PCs and tablets register higher engagement than smartphones, and time spent daily with desktops, laptops, and tablets rose to a remarkable 5 hours and 25 minutes on average in 2021. South Africa also registers high laptop/desktop ownership (83.3% of the population) compared with most other African countries. This high concentration of internet and social media users, coupled with device penetration, makes it imperative to leverage paid and organic search, social, and display advertising as effective means to reach consumers.

By contrast, Nigeria boasts high smartphone penetration (99.2%) and the highest number of absolute internet users in Africa; 82.9 percent of internet users aged 16-64 said they used social media as the primary source when researching brands. WhatsApp and Facebook can be leveraged with chat support call-to-action functionality alongside Google search to deliver instant and more tailored messaging and one-to-one services to impact that context.

While global advertising platforms create unparalleled opportunities to grow the customer base, there is potential to promote local business growth by interacting with customers on owned channels. For example, businesses could consider using mobile apps, websites, email, and social media groups or messengers to deliver targeted information and improve conversion rates. The key to unlocking these channels could be growing relevant engagement with customers.

Digital marketing deals primarily with business mathematics, where it is necessary to calculate how much each user action costs: a click, an application, or a sale. Once

a business learns to measure key metrics, it becomes possible to manage channels and campaigns using these precise metrics efficiently.

To build reliable analytics, organizations could consider setting up effective data tracking and storage systems and ensuring regular reporting to give everyone involved a clear picture of digital sales status. It is equally vital to build cross-functional teams that include analysts so all participants can access data at any time and use this effectively to leverage customer insights to drive further sales.

The main principle of digital marketing is to regularly generate, test, and evaluate the efficiency of new ideas. These may relate to working with new channels, launching further communications and formats for creative solutions, and trying new audiences. The secret of success lies in the organization of a well-coordinated team and reliable processes allowing regular testing.

While there is a common misconception that only digital native organizations – such as neobanks – can be successful in this game. Our experience working with more traditional banking, telecoms, and retailers suggest that digital transformation is within the grasp of all businesses. And given the tremendous growth at stake, this is not something to sit on the fence about.

The main thing is to make going digital a strategic priority for your business and then work towards consistently building a digital function in the organization, characterized by advanced market competencies and flexible methods of operation. This method could allow you to attract a significant number of customers while achieving a good return on investment in marketing.

To ensure the aspired goal the African Development Bank (AfDB) has signed a \$9.73 million grant agreement with the African Union Commission (AUC) to implement Phase 1 of the Upstream Project for Digital Market Development in Africa, the Group confirmed through a press release.

The signing ceremony took place on November 17 at AUC Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The AUC Commissioner for Economic Development, Trade, Tourism, Industry and Minerals, Ambassador Albert M. Muchanga, and the African Development Bank's Deputy Director General for the East Africa Region, Abul B. Kamara, signed the agreement on behalf of their institutions.

The African Development Bank's board of directors approved the grant of 7 million Units of Account (USD 9.73 million) in September this year.

The project supports the AUC's implementation of digital economy projects to enhance a continental single digital market.

It also supports the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area and the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa.

The project is the backdrop of the COVID-19-induced recession that exposed several gaps in the African digital economy ecosystem. It addresses these gaps. Phase 1 runs from 2023 to 2026.

It will focus on three main components: digital enablers, digital trade and e-commerce adoption, and support actions. Specifically, the project will help strengthen the frameworks (strategic, policy, regulatory and conceptual) and cross-cutting (gender, climate change and resilience) dimensions for developing Africa's digital economy.

These frameworks are critical substrates for establishing a single digital market across the African continent by 2030.

The project will therefore contribute to implementing digital enablers—universal access to broadband infrastructure, sovereign African cloud, African digital market, etc.—e-commerce and digital trade promotion programs for medium, small and micro enterprises and start-ups.

It will also help to create a conducive ecosystem for digital trust, skills and African experts' networks.

Ambassador Muchanga expressed the AUC's gratitude to the African Development Bank for its support. He said: "The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of digital technologies and the digital economy as a whole, and in that regard, Africa should think big when it comes to digital development, digital economy and the grand opportunities on integration and economic growth."

Dr. Kamara said the project would support the implementation of the African Development Bank's High five priorities as accelerators to achieve Agenda 2063 targets and the continent's economic transformation to get The Africa We Want.

He added: "It is important to create employment opportunities for millions of young Africans, which is essential for the stability and prosperity of the continent. In addition, the digital transformation of economies offers new opportunities to increase intra-Africa trade and boost economic growth," as per Space in Africa.

# Art & Culture



## Explicating Salomeja's Spring Toast

BY ALEM HAILU G/KRISTOS

// Spring toast  
(BY SALOMEJA NERIS)  
Toasting the sun,  
See spring twirl  
Flower-cups in the air  
If I could wipe from your brow,  
World,  
The furrows of care! //

Happiness is said to be the best cosmetic. In this very musical nature lyric portraying a great economy of words, readers are shown a moment of felicitation the transition from autumn to spring warrants. The former is a public symbol of sadness, while the latter happiness. When assailed by anxieties, routine responsibilities of discharging respective duties and also bored by a prosaic life burrows and furrows find their way into the faces of people.

Just like the rings on an axe-shortened long tree tells on the age of a tree, the burrows and furrows people develop on their faces lay bare the hardships they weathered as well as their aging and drawing closer to their destruction.

This notwithstanding, people easily forget the dissatisfaction they harbor when celebrations are called for. They bubble up with satisfactions that defy description. The ensuing of a new season atones for their troubled spirit. In an indirect way the persona, via word pictures, conveys the aforementioned



the persona imparts on readers the message that the inanimate world like the animate one senses the moment for felicitation resulting from the change of a disagreeable season by the agreeable one. Observe also spring serves us a cultural symbol of jubilation in the seasonal life cycle.

The organ like effect the rhyming of air and care creates also pleases the experienced ear. Though almost all the images on the first stanza, show felicitation is called for the words Toasting, twirl, flower cups are relatively strong.

The thematic tension in this poem is spring, as a balm, in one hand and the travails nature has in store on the other hand. The contrasting imageries and word images furrows and care on one end of the scale and the toasting of the sun, flower cups and spring on the other end also create tension in imageries. The two tensions in unison buttress the unifying theme, spring is a balm for a worn out soul. Though this poetic gem is straightforward its aesthetic quality and terseness as well as suitability for studying by heart makes it unsurpassed. See the word images of sadness have permeated the second stanza wipe, brow, furrows and care. The synchronistic effect of the poetic devices the poet utilized accentuates the underlying theme that the moment is a time for jubilation and toasting for all humans and nature alike.

**Salomeja Neris is a Lithuanian poet.**  
(17 November 1904 – 7 July 1945)

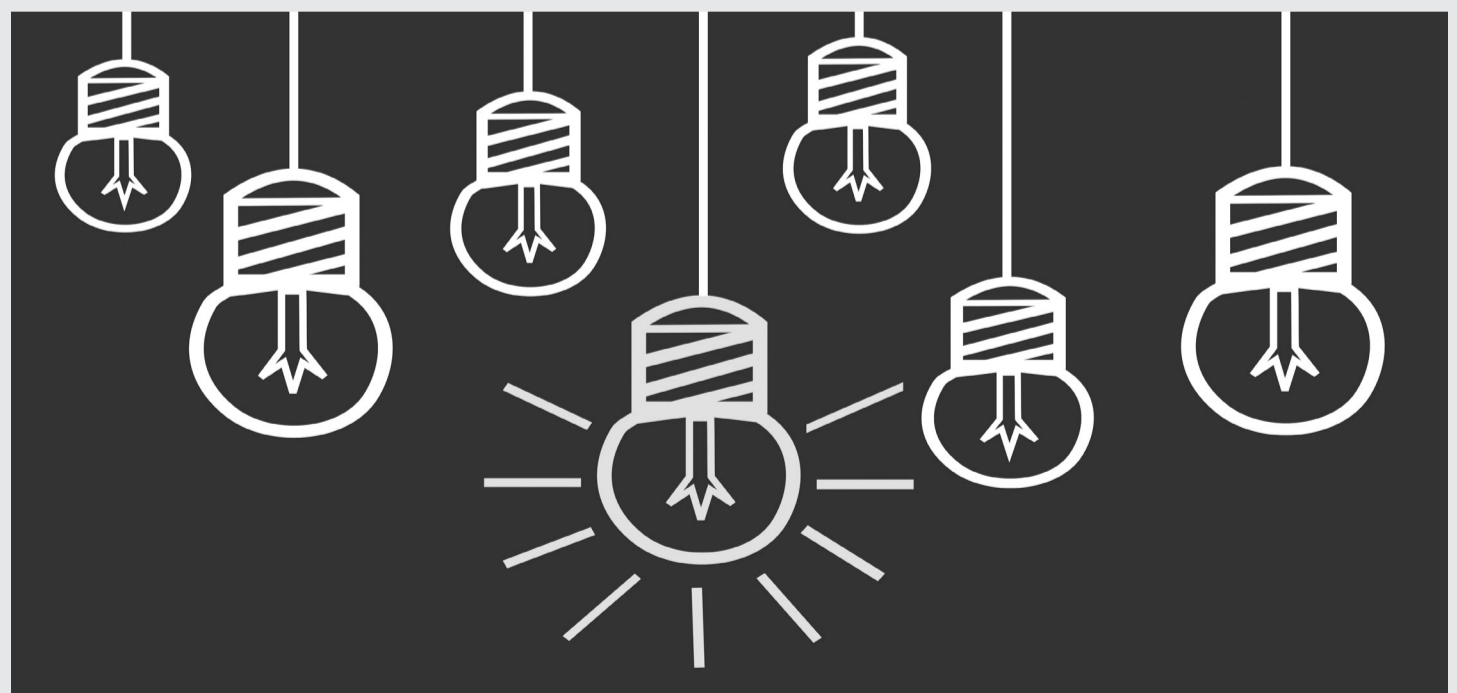
underlying thought. The persona shows even nature portrays a reciprocal positive response to the most welcomed season. Personifying the world and spring as well as creating a brilliant metaphor between a flower and a cup the persona proclaims an occasion for felicitation is due. Toasting the sun, see spring twirl flower cups in the air. The identification of such a wonderful analogy, between the objects compared, by itself shows how much imagination the poem has demanded to emerge so superb.

This picturesque similarity renders the poem savory and vivid. Personifying the world, lending it the power of feeling, harboring resentment and the tragedy of developing furrows on its brow and burrows on its facial elements

## Is intelligence bad?

BY SENAIT G/KRISTOS

*The world is meant to be heavenly  
For those whose mind is empty  
They don't worry or bother  
About things that don't matter  
They are conscious in the moment  
Never once do they go out of it  
For majority of us that isn't the case  
We try to find a needle in a maize  
Our intelligence demands definition  
To every little thought and action.*





# Science & Technology

## “Focus should be on trust, equity and security of cyberspace”

BY KFLEEYESUS ABEBE

The advent of internet and digitalization of world has dramatically changed our lives in terms of connectivity, business, exchange of ideas that ultimately impact on culture, society and governance. Tech Business News in its article “impact of the internet on modern society” said; “Today, the Internet connects people from all over the world and allows for a global conversation. It has altered society in many ways, from cultural exchange to social and economic development. It has rewritten many rules of engagement, and the Internet has enabled many new ways of thinking and connecting.” The digital technology is enabling millions to work, study and socialize safely online. The right to access internet hence considered as basic right as it is closely linked with freedom of expression and opinion, freedom of assembly and other fundamental rights including the right to development.

Despite it is agreed that internet is a basic right, many people aren’t yet accessing internet for many factors such as access, affordability, quality, and relevance. The UN’s Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development estimates that nearly 3.6 billion people remain totally unconnected to the Internet by any measure. This digital divide has also resulted other inequalities for example in access to health care, economic and educational opportunities among people in the world. The United Nations accordingly formed Internet Governance Forum (IGF) on 2006 to facilitate a common understanding of how to maximize Internet opportunities and address risks and challenges that arise.

While the digital divide remain worrisome, the technology has also a dark side if not governed or managed properly. The internet has been used to misinform, spread fake news and hate speech eventually creating chaos, violence, instability. It is also distressing to witness women getting abused, privacy of individuals overridden, bullied or threatened online. These incidences are real risks to international progress to development, democracy, protection of human rights and promotion of science. Governments, tech companies and social media platforms therefore are expected to take responsibility and prevent online bullying and deadly disinformation.

Internet Governance Forum (IGF) is tasked with convening relevant stakeholders to come up with rules and innovative ways to narrow digital divide and avoid unwanted consequence of the technology. It has been holding several discussions of public policy issues pertaining to the Internet. Its 17th round of discussion dubbed “Resilient Internet for a Shared Sustainable and Common Future” has been going on here in Ethiopia beginning from November



28. Opening the forum, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, indicating the opportunities and challenges of going digital, said it is essential to focus on Trust, equity and security of cyberspace.

“We need to have data strategies to strengthen privacy standards. We need to prevent feeding Artificial intelligence industrial development and surveillance capacity of third parties. Data governance should also aim at harmonizing rules in the digital ecosystem to spare economic growth while protecting individual rights. African countries should be able to influence standards in a way that it corresponds with our values and enables us to participate in Innovative emerging Technologies. This is why the focus should be on building trust equity and Security in cyberspace.”

The premier noted the 2022 IGF host Ethiopia is indeed successful in increasing digital practice in the country and in consequence gained social and economic benefits. He also said that Ethiopia’s ICT and digital transformation Journey has been marked by key progress Milestones aligned with the five sub teams of 17’s IGF. “Considering our large and growing population, improving connectivity and expanding accessibility been a priority with investments being made in infrastructure expansion, opening up the Telecom sector to private investors and building government digital infrastructure. Internet coverage shows an increase from 19 million users in 2017 to 13 million in 2022. Rolling out 4G network in popular towns and 5G Network in major cities is accelerating connectivity. Over 2, 300 high schools throughout the

country have internet access. “

The National digital strategy of Ethiopia has already seen ICT could catalyze country’s development progress. “We remain steadfast in our commitment to achieving full sovereignty increasing industrialization, boosting tourism maximizing gains from our mining sector and promoting a green and climate conscious culture all this are being supported through mainstreaming ICT of which the internet is key.”

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) brings together innovators, big tech executives, young people, ministers, and parliamentarians. It is a very good chance for Ethiopia to showcase its effort in expanding digital access and promoting science in general. The premier took the opportunity to invite participants to visiting the recently inaugurated Ethiopian Science museum.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has addressed the forum in a recorded message. In his message, the Secretary-General noted it’s in organization’s goal that governments agree on Global Digital Compact at the 2024 Summit of the Future. The UN chief said the Global Digital Compact insists activities for universal connectivity, guaranteeing of freedom of speech, right to online autonomy and privacy and fostering responsible use of data. He emphasized how critical it is to ensure safety, equity and protection of the digital space.

“We are seeing the growing use and abuse of data. Our data is being used to shape and manipulate our perceptions, without our ever realizing it. Governments can

exploit that data to control the behavior of their own citizens, violating human rights of individuals or groups. We need to keep working for a safe, equitable and open digital future that does not infringe on privacy or dignity.”

Improving Quality and ensuring sustainability of the service is also top on the agenda. Panelists pointed out cooperation among multi stakeholders and policy framework need to be put in place to ease internet fragmentation globally.

Internet Governance Expert, Policy Analyst and Consultant Wim Degezelle told *The Ethiopian Herald* at the sidelines of the forum that there is enough infrastructural capacity in the internet sector. The provision of quality infrastructure plays a paramount role in avoiding the internet fragmentation and blackout.

Degezelle further stated that cooperation among multi stakeholder is very important to avoid the existing problem and enhance connectivity. Another panelist Edmund Chen said for his part that the value of the internet is immense in connecting the global world and what causes the internet fragmentation is that the law and regulations of the country aims at protecting their sovereignty and national interest.

The forum is an initiation of governments and tech companies to commit themselves to narrow the digital divide, ensure quality and sustainability of internet and protect the internet from exploitation and misuse. It is also expected the participants to reach agreement on UN chief proposal of Global Digital Compact at the 2024 Summit.



# Society



Photo:- ENA

## When peace prevails!

BY LEULSEGED WORKU

Every year, hundreds of thousands of Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church pilgrims from all over the country and abroad flock to Axum, one of the holiest cities of Ethiopians, to celebrate the festival of Axum Zion Mariam which falls on November 30 or on Hidar, 21 in the Ethiopian calendar.

The day is observed with special fervor particularly in Axum Tsion where the Ark of the Covenant is kept safely. Whenever the day is marked, it will be attended by massive Christian pilgrimages from all over Ethiopia and also foreign visitors making it one of the most joyous annual pilgrimages in Axum. The day also marks the destruction of Dagon by the power of the Ark of God, as recorded in the Bible; and the return of the Ark to Israel after seven months of exile at the Dagon's house in Philistine. (1 Samuel 4; 6)

The history of the Hidar Axum Tsion Mariam (November St. Mary of Zion) Festival, as documents state, has an origin of the Old Testament and directly associated with the coming of the Ark of the Covenant to Ethiopia, and the presence of the Covenant in Axum Town at the church of St. Mary of Zion.

In fact, the annual anniversary of Hidar Mariam is celebrated among followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church all over the country warmly and colorfully. However, the festival in Axum Town, Tigray State, where the Ark of the Covenant is kept, is celebrated uniquely and magnificently with especial dedication. Last Wednesday, November 30, 2022, the



fiesta of Saint Mary Zion was celebrated in Axum Town peacefully and colorfully in the presence of large congregation.

In truth, during the past year, the faithful were not able to celebrate the day as usual due to security matters. However, this year the faithful have celebrated the event colorfully following the peace agreement reached between the Government of Ethiopia and TPLF.

According to participants of the festival, because of the peace and stability which prevails in the State following the peace agreement, they have celebrated the annual feast splendidly in the attendance of many pilgrims from different areas; in a manner maintaining its religious value.

Speaking to local media the participants said that this year's celebration is observed more colorfully unlike the preceding year for known reason. Expressing their happiness for celebrating the day peacefully, they expressed their hope to celebrate the festival in more splendid way in the future by ensuring lasting peace.

As it was indicated by participants, Zion Mary's festival was celebrated peacefully without any security threats. They are also seen while reflecting their joy to the local TV station that every minute was peaceful and, they have marked the day happily with

fellow Christians. The peace agreement between the government and the TPLF is the reason behind such peaceful environment. As they stated, with the exception of electric and banking service challenges, the peace and security issues are resolved. The peace agreement signed between the two parties should be realized wholly and accordingly to sustain lasting peace.

Subsequent to the peaceful conclusion of the festival, the Federal Police also extended its gratitude to residents of Axum, and the surrounding community for the contribution they made to the peaceful celebration of the annual feast day of Axum Mariam Tsion.

Axum and Adwa Sector Head of the Ethiopian Federal Police Commander, Getnet Kebede told local media that the police had held discussions with religious fathers and elders on ways of conducting the annual feast of St. Mary of Axum Tsion unworriedly.

Accordingly, the Federal Government and the community in the town have worked together for the peaceful conduct of the religious feast.

Besides the security forces, religious fathers, elders and the youth have exerted utmost efforts to celebrate the Axum Saint Mary Zion's feast peacefully, Commander Getnet added.

As a result, the faithful have celebrated the annual anniversary peacefully starting from early in the morning, according to the commander.

The commander has extended appreciation to residents of Axum and its environs for their contribution to the peaceful conduct of the feast.

The Church of St Mary of Zion was built during the reign of Ezana, King of Axum, in the 4th century AD.

The origin of the Ark goes back to Moses at Sinai. After the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, God gave them the tablet of the Ten Commandments (Tabote Tsion) through Mosses in the mount of Sanai so they use it as a sacred instrument to worship God. The Ark was carried by the Israelites during their 40 years of journey to the land of hope. Whenever they camped, the Ark was placed in a special and sacred tent called the Tabernacle

As studies revealed, the Ark of the Covenant described as the original container for the Ten Commandments and the central symbol of God's presence with the people of Israel is kept at St. Mary Church of Axum Zion in Axum Town.

Owing to this, every year, on 21 Hidar in the Ethiopian calendar or 30 November, more than 100,000 people come to Axum from all over Ethiopia to commemorate the founding of this church, with many pilgrims coming on foot, having walked for up to a month. There is a marvelous atmosphere in the town, and great spectacles for the visitor with processions of the clergy and deacons, with drumming, dancing and chanting.





# This is Ethiopia



## The best time to visit Ethiopia

BY KFLEYESUS ABEBE

Ethiopia is the largest country as it ranks 27<sup>th</sup> in terms of size (1,126,829 square kilometres) and 12<sup>th</sup> in terms of population currently having more than 120 millions of people. It has also contrasting landscape, multitude of cultures and unique history.

The country has also been selected as World's Best Tourism Destination and favorite cultural destination for 2015 by The European Council for Tourism and Trade (ECTT), based in Romania. The varieties of its attractions and other reasons, therefore, made Ethiopia an irresistible destination to tourists and compelled them to stay longer in Ethiopia.

Blogger and adventurer Nellie in her website <https://www.wildjunket.com> wrote her fascination and the reason why tourists must visit Ethiopia.

"One thing for sure, Ethiopia is truly unique culturally, historically and scenically. I have traveled to 20 countries in Africa and can safely say this country is unlike any other on the continent. Ethiopia is mountainous country and boasts highlands rather than the vast savannas that are associated with Africa. Plus, this country is so diverse that any Ethiopia itinerary will pack in myriad of experiences, from hiking adventures and visits to tribal villages to history lessons at ancient sites."

Given the multitudinous of tourist sites in Ethiopia, Nellie recommend tourists to have at least three weeks to get the glimpse of Ethiopia. "I would recommend a minimum of three weeks to travel to Ethiopia, and even longer if possible. Ethiopia is a truly spectacular country, every region has its own star attraction." She also indicated traveling to Ethiopia has become easy in

recent years due to the new visa system. Citizens of all nationalities can get an Ethiopia e-visa online.

In anytime or season Ethiopia is worth to be visited; but there are times you could get the best of it in a short time and unexpensive budget. As for travel blog 'Travel Media,' the dry season which runs from October through February could be the best time to visit Ethiopia. But it has put expectations. "There are exceptions to this rule, however—especially if you're interested in experiencing Ethiopia's cultural festivals, some of which are held during the rainy season. If you're on a budget, traveling during the low season is also a good way to save money."

The article outlined the climatic condition of tourist sites that would be suiting if visited this time. "Although Ethiopia's climate varies greatly depending on the region you are planning on visiting, the wet season generally lasts from June to September, with light rains beginning as early as March. June and July are the wettest months, particularly in the Northern Highlands. Weather wise, therefore, the best time to travel is from October to February, when the climate is both dry and sunny. At this time of year, night time temperatures can drop dramatically, so it is important to pack plenty of layers."

Danakil Depression, Omo Valley, Simien Mountains and Northern Highlands are the places Travel media listed best to be visited at this time. It has also provided what preparation visitors should make - what to wear, what to do and the amount of payments. In line with visiting natural sites, the blog also indicated festivals and events tourists would enjoy them at that particular time.

The dry season, from October to February, is the best time to plan a trip to the ancient rock-cut churches of Ethiopia's stunning Northern Highlands. However, even during the wet season, rains rarely last all day. If you are looking to save money, consider booking a trip in March or April, when the rains are light and prices for accommodation and tours are generally lower. Usually, it is best to avoid traveling in June and July, when the rains in this region are at their most extreme.

The Simien Mountains are a vast mountain range whose highest peak stands at 14,901 feet, making it one of the highest mountains in Africa. Trekking here is fantastic, not only because of the scenery, gorges, and streams but also because you get a chance to look at endemic wildlife like the Gelada Baboons and the Walia Ibex. The best time to trek is from September to November, when it is dry, green, and relatively dust-free. October, in particular, can be spectacular because this is when the mountain wildflowers are in full bloom.

With more than 50 tribes living in the Omo River region of southwestern Ethiopia, it is a fascinating destination for those interested in African culture. The remote location, which is barely accessible by four-wheel drive, means that traditional customs and beliefs are very much intact for most of these tribes. This region has two rainy seasons, with one lasting from March to June, and a shorter one in November. Access is often impossible during these times, so planning your trip for the dry season is essential.

Danakil is one of the hottest places on earth, with daytime temperatures easily reaching 122 degrees Fahrenheit. It is a fascinating destination where you can witness the age-

old tradition of salt caravans, experience Afar culture, and marvel at a myriad of active volcanoes. If you have ever felt the urge to visit another planet, you'll love the extraordinary landscapes of this region. To avoid feeling like you are boiling alive, however, make sure to visit during the cooler months of November to March.

Ethiopian festivals are certainly worth planning a trip around. Mostly religious festivals generally last several days. Orthodox Tewahido Christian festivals are the most prominent and visible in Ethiopia and are celebrated according to the Ethiopian calendar. For example, Ethiopian Christmas (known as *Genna*) is celebrated on January 7, rather than December 25. *Timket*, the Feast of Epiphany- commemoration of the Baptism of Jesus Christ by John the Baptist in the River Jordan- held on January 19.

*Timket* is Ethiopia's biggest festival. The festival lasts for three days, and includes a procession of the church's *Tabot*, or consecrated replica of the Arc of the Covenant; and ritual re-enactments of the baptism. When the more solemn aspects of the festival are over, participants enjoy feasting, music, and dancing. The best places to enjoy the festival are Gondar, Lalibela, and Addis Ababa. Attending the UNESCO registered *Timket* festival helps to open opportunities to get connected with locals maybe than anytime of the year.

All in all, tourists can see many things in this season without weather challenges or budget concerns. As many tourists flock to the country they could also make fellow tourists as tour partner or friends. It is also convenient for transportation but accommodation should be done in advance as the number of tourists takes high in some places.