



The Ethiopian Herald

Vol. LXXIX No 076 8 December 2022 - Hidar 29, 2015

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President underscores boosting food production to cherish pride

BY HAILE DEMEKE

ADDIS ABABA- Modernizing Ethiopia's agriculture and increasing productivity will ensure food self-sufficiency, which is the basic element to preserve the country's dignity and the pride of its people, President Sahlework Zewde said.

Speaking at the conference hosted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa with the theme of "Shaping Agriculture for Greater Impact" yesterday, President Sahlework stated that there is still a lot to do to ease Ethiopia's reliance on food aid.

"Although Ethiopia has 36 million hectares of arable land, only 13.4 million hectares have been cultivated so far. We have enough watersheds that can develop the land; however, we have been victims of not being able to feed ourselves."

She went on saying: "Since the support provided in the form of aid leads us to

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EEP deploys 200 experts in daily operation to restore electricity

• Mekelle power line connected to Nat'l grid

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA- The Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP) announced that maintenance work is being carried out in which an average of 200 experts participate every day.

EEP Communication Director Moges Mekonnen told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that, the repair work is becoming accessible in all areas where electricity has been cut. The maintenance experts at all areas are constantly participating and working on it with great diligence by withstanding the topographical problems of the area and other problems.

The repair work was started within a few days after the Ethiopian National Defense Force controlling the areas.



Mentioning the difficulty to get enough fuel for vehicles involving up to 200 employees, the director indicated the maintenance work

forced to use up the spare parts that were in stock. In all areas where electricity has been cut off, the work of repairing and making the high power transmission lines and distribution stations ready for service has been carried out in cooperation with relevant stakeholders.

Meanwhile, Moges said the connection of the Mekelle power line with the national power grid shows the commitment of the federal government to help the people of Tigray to resume daily life and normalize the situation.

"The government's commitment continues to be strengthened in all sectors, especially as an electricity provider, it is strengthening its ability to avail power in Tigray."

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Ethiopia to install automate river water gauge station

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA - A Telemeter Gauging Station that controls the volume of run off river water in one place base is about to be installed, the Ministry of Water and Energy (MoWE) disclosed.

MoWE Minister Habtamu Itefa (PhD Eng.) told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the technology is instrumental to manage flood risks, enhance flood management,

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A showcase of unity in diversity

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The war against the smooth criminals

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Joint efforts to ensure gender equality, women empowerment

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Photo: Ashengfi Gudeta



Gov't able to delivery aid for 95 percent of needy in North Ethiopia

BY TAMERU REGASA

ADDIS ABABA - The Federal government in collaboration with various humanitarian organizations has achieved 95 percent of the plan of delivering humanitarian supports in conflict-affected areas over the past month, National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC) announced.

Briefing journalists yesterday, NDRMC Commissioner Shiferaw Teklemariam (PhD) said that, over 134,948 metric tons of food supplies have been distributed to Tigray, Amhara and Afar states.

According to the commissioner, the number of people who need emergency food is about 8.3 million, of which some 7.9 million ones have received food aid in the aforementioned states of the country.

Explaining the commitment of Government of Ethiopia, the commissioner said that the government is very much concerned about citizens that require humanitarian aid and other services. Besides, he said the commission has been running activities as per what is stipulated in Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) with a view to rehabilitating victims and reconstructing the destroyed infrastructure in the conflict affected areas.

Likewise, some 3,239 metric tons of nutritious food was provided by the government and humanitarian partners to 71,978 vulnerable segments of the community within a month.

Concerning the effort of partner organizations he said that their efforts are very much encouraging at humanitarian activities.

He also stated that the combined and collaborative effort of all concerned to well foster the humanitarian support to reach out to all the needy.

MoU to operationalize women empowerment principles

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA—Enat Bank and Ashagari Consultancy Firm signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to operationalize women empowerment principles yesterday with a view to empowering women in workplace, marketplace and among the community.

Enat Bank Operational Vice President Tigist Abate told *The Ethiopian Herald* that, the issue of women has been received due attention at the global level.

Thus, she said that to ensure the women's universal benefits in all aspect, it needs collaboration and organized work.

“Women are vulnerable to gender violence because they are economically poor. Therefore Enat Bank is working to economically empower women working in collaboration with stakeholders like UN Women, Women and Social Affairs Ministry.”

The Bank is supporting women to come in the leadership position, financial loan, advise, and to empower them economically, and it would create jobs for women who are vulnerable to gender based violence in a bid to help them have psychological treatment, it was learnt.

The signing would help officials of the banks work on women affairs and it gives energy for future works related with women empowerment in all aspects. Currently, 60



percent of the Enat Bank stakeholders are women.

Adviser of the State Minister in the Women and Children Department at Ministry of Women and Social Affairs Zibider Bogal on her part said that, the ministry is working with the international institutions and private companies to provide women with economic, political, and social supports.

“In order to empower women economically

as expected we should work with all concerned body.”

Deputy Representative of UN Women Schadrack Dusabe said that, there are a number of works to operationalize women empowerment principles. The signature today is millstone beyond the agreement demanding firm commitment and collaboration to improve women rights in securing benefits via participating in political, economic and social aspects.

CoHA sparks hope across war-hit areas: Nat'l Dialogue Commissioner

BY YESUF ENDRIS

ADDIS ABABA- The peace deal between the government and TPLF has sparked hope across war-hit areas, said a National Dialogue Commissioner.

In interview with local media, the Commissioner, Yonas Adaye (PhD) said that, the peace deal gives huge boosts or impetus to have a reason for people to believe that peace pays back.

For instance, the price of food items in war-hit areas was so expensive than of the current as it recorded. So, it is clear to see peace dividend already. So, it offers impetus that how the peace deal is necessarily transformed the situation, he noted.

As to him, the National Dialogue Commission's objective is to make peace a culture in this country, and peace as a political culture.

So, it still paves the way and that must really underlined because it gives hope because it is to play a role of changing sort of paradigm shift in Ethiopia's political culture, he added.



“The violence has damaged and devastated the country's development.”

He further stated that the peace deal means that Africans beyond Ethiopia can resolve their own issue without external support.

“African solutions for Africa problems are not a slogan only. It is also an action. The Peace Deal paves the way to other African countries too.”

The National Dialogue Communion is also facilitating situations for the implementation of peace, he said.

Its overarching goal is to make Ethiopia peaceful country. We went to every states except Tigray. All of the people are telling how hungry they are for peace and how they fade up with the conflict. The people are tired of conflict, he remarked.

IGF 2022 inspirational to achieve Ethiopia's digital economy

BY HAILE DEMEKE

ADDIS ABABA—The 17th edition of annual Internet Governance Forum (IGF) hosted by Ethiopia is said to be inspirational in outlining policies and strategies that are helpful to implement Ethiopia's digital economy vision.

Ethiopia's Innovation and Technology State Minister Huria Ali said that Ethiopia has highly benefited from the forum and shares global experience in way to realize its vision of digital economy.

The forum goes alongside with the Ethiopia's vision of realizing digital economy in 2025 and there are policies and strategies which

need to be implemented for the realization of the country's development plan, she stated.

"As our daily live is interconnected with technology, the forum would give us huge experience in terms of technology transfer in this digital era. As we are interconnected with technologies, the data we store is increasing from time to time and it informs us how to govern the data in a way to protect privacy. Likewise, it gives us the highlight of international experience in how they protect personal information and privacy," she said.

There are threats of personal information in due course of using internet, and the forum

has helped make accountable those who try to violate personal information, broadcast misinformation, country's sovereignty, among others.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister, Demeke Mekonnen said that Ethiopia has been working to reduce poverty by persisting to build digital economy amid challenges and has never relented from fighting poverty.

"We are in the course of diligently implementing the peace deal and providing humanitarian emergency relief and service to the northern part of Ethiopia. Ethiopia has persisted in its drive for prosperity and building a digital economy."

Germany Internet Industry Association Former Chairman, Professor Mikel Rotart told local media that Ethiopia is different from Germany in terms of population and technology, and such kind of international forum is of significantly useful in connecting the society with individuals in the leadership position. Similarly, the forum creates opportunity among countries to share experience and work together for common benefits, he said.

Civil society has huge role in such kinds of activity and the forum creates colossal cooperation among the expertise in the sector, politician, civil society and others, he added.

President underscores...

various pressures, we absolutely need a modern production method that increases our productivity.

As time does not require traveling on yesterday's path, if we continue where we are, it will be a waste, so we need to modernize our agriculture. Agriculture is modernized in the world and we should follow that modern way"

For this agricultural modernization task, an unbreakable efficiency chain should be established between the relevant institutions, traders, producers and consumers as well as those who have knowledge and resources in the sector, the President stressed.

It was also learned that the improvement and modernization of agricultural work and productivity will have a paramount importance in changing the livelihood of the rural community, most importantly, the rural women.

For his part, Agriculture Minister Oumer Hussein said despite promising results, Ethiopia's agriculture is still not as efficient as it should be. Increasing the amount of financial support provided to small-scale farmers has a pivotal importance in bolstering the sector's performance.

"Apart from the financial support, everyone should focus on increasing the productivity and quality of the farmers by improving the

use of agricultural resources and adopting various modern production processes."

While commenting on the issue, Assistant Director General and Regional Representative for Africa at FAO Abebe Hailegebriel (PhD) congratulated the Ethiopian government for demonstrating a distinguishable commitment and leadership in changing the agricultural sector. The Green Legacy Initiative and winter wheat harvest are among the notable examples of the current government's aspiration to drive the agriculture sector to the next level.

"We see strong correlations of poverty and hunger are prevalent in rural areas where the majority of people are employed in agriculture. It only suggests that labour productivity in agriculture is very low resulting in low incomes which translate into widespread poverty because agriculture is the main source of livelihood and incomes for the majority of the people who have inherently suffered from hunger and malnutrition."

It is significant to note that Africa in general and Ethiopia in particular should replicate the success of the rest of the world that has moved towards transforming agricultural production and productivity at an accelerated pace propelled by the power of science, innovation and investment, the representative recommended.

CoHA significant departure in Ethiopia's history: Justice Minister

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

ADDIS ABABA- The conclusion of negotiated and permanent Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CoHA) is a significant departure in Ethiopia's long history, the Justice Minister said, adding that the signatories' commitment to resolve differences constitutionally is also a breakthrough.

In a zoom discussion held yesterday, the Minister Gedion Timotheos (PhD) stated that one cannot find any precedent for the CoHA where such conflicts have been settled through negotiation in Ethiopia's long history of statehood. There is a cause for optimism and a need for a more nuanced view with taking into account positive developments as well as challenges.

The commitment that both the government and TPLF demonstrated to resolve hostilities via dialogue and in peaceful manner breakthrough a new ground in Ethiopia's history. "I believe the significance of this commitment goes beyond this particular conflict. If we handle the situation properly and implement the agreement faithfully, we can pay the way for the decline and even the end of militancy in our politics and emergence of civil discourse as the norm in Ethiopia."

Gedion continued: "This offers us an enormous opportunity to revitalize and

deepen the political and institutional reform initiatives we have launched before the conflict. In particular, the national inclusive dialogue process we are about embarking on is an opportunity to renew social contract and build national conciseness, laying the foundation for enduring peace and a truly democratic Ethiopia."

It is crucial to ensure accountability, facilitate reconciliation as well as social and economic rehabilitation. With support of partners and friends Ethiopia can bring back full focus and energy to bear on its economic and political reform programs. Despite the conflict, the country tried to ensure that investment in the energy sector and other major infrastructure projects continued, including the Abay Dam. The country is also rationalizing public investment in a way that boosts efficiency and return on investment.

"If we manage to get these things, our trajectory would be more positive, we will move onwards and upwards with repeal effects that benefit the whole Horn of Africa."

Poverty, environmental degradation and wide spread youth unemployment coupled with revived built ethnic based identity have contributed to instability in Ethiopia. Accordingly, addressing economic and environmental challenges goes a long way in tackling insecurity, the minister emphasized.

Ethiopia to install...

forecasting and warning as well as boost emergency response and preparedness at local and national levels. The Gauging station is required to control runoff water, soil erosion and floods.

Mentioning Ethiopia has twelve basins, Habtamu indicated by applying telemeter gauging stations, the country easily knows rivers current status and volume of flow of water to keep from any flooding or drought disaster. "The technology tells us how much volume of water is leaving from Ethiopia and that is free from hand touch."

These telemetry systems provide real-time stage data, as well current information runoff water, drought, flooding phenomena at time in live video.

As to him, using such water volume or activity control mechanisms in latest technology helps adaptation to climate change, better dissemination of early



Photo: Ashenafi Gudeta

warning messages to communities and save lives and control flood disasters in states.

"The information of this river's volume would provide a good opportunity to Nile downstream countries such as Sudan and

Egypt and it will help to reduce human suffering and property damages that have been caused by flooding and other disasters. It is known that those countries have been impacted by heavy flooding during the summer season due to the overflow of the Nile River."

The minister further highlighted that introduction of the telemeter gauging station emanates from the ministry's desire to provide accurate information and create trust with Nile lower riparian countries. The telemeter gauging station will be installed in premises of our headquarters thus can show us the volume of rivers flows and water type (either clean or dirty) which is supported by the modern digital camera that shows video live in picture.

This installed telemeter device will have a sim card and show the water resource of Ethiopia in one place, it was learned.

EEP deploys...

"When we say Mekelle's power line is connected to the national power grid, it means that a way to get electricity from the national power control center or the main grid has been created," he noted, adding that the task enables the city to receive power in the same line.

It is known that the city of Mekelle, which has been disconnected from the national power grid for over a year due to the war in northern Ethiopia, has been connected to the National Power Control Center (grid).

Opinion

Solving the Ethio-Sudan border dispute is a matter for now than later

The world has always experienced crisis over shared borders as far as its existence. Even-though the cross-border interaction has intensified at its highest rate into the level of creating a world that relies on a wide spectrum of factors for engagement, the essence of it still remains unchanged. In addition to that, the deeply interwined global complexity poses a growing probability of the issue being raised in the near future.

The issue of border disagreement in its own unique dynamics is what we observe on the Horn of Africa today between Ethiopia and Sudan.

The horn encompasses states with a nationality of a cross border fusion, questionable political positions from a state failure to a regional hegemonic aspiration and ceaselessly exclusive policy engagement in between. Existence of an inter-wined complexity added to uncertain political variables shows that we are on the cross road where every move will affect the future of this globally strategic region.

Currently, the region happens to be faced with a growing refugee crisis, political positions steering towards a peaceful existence with a growing uncertainty, an unpredictably shifting hydro political conflict in between riparian states, enhanced political extremists and armed groups involved in heavily influencing balance of peace in the region in escalation and de-escalation of violent conflicts.

Amid all that, one of the regionally influential paradigms is the border crisis that holds the potential of being a fuel to almost every political dust-up, no matter how small or large it is. With a point in which the hope of peace is shed light on, its essentiality grows by the second.

The growing crisis

The Disputes over the Ethio-sudanese border area started when talk of settlement about demarcation started between Ethiopia and Sudan in 1993. Though it brought positive results over the course, major disagreement occurred when the deal reached the area of Al-fashaqa.

From the scope of their regional share, Ethiopia and Sudan happen to be the ones' with the lion share in terms of economy, land, demographics and military capability in the Horn of Africa. There is no doubt that

a political disagreement with the potential for an escalating tendency by every second will have an impact on the region and beyond. The continuation of tensions between them will only further exacerbate regional fragility.

Tensions between Ethiopia and Sudan have always existed including the land dispute but it also stood on a cooperative course while creating a technical committee as an oversight along the way. It has only achieved one milestone by developing a soft border policy. Though the development policy averted timely tensions for the communities on the ground for some time, it didn't bring a longstanding solution to the matter.

It is undeniable that over time, the spill-over effects of other regional policy disagreements have ended up triggering as well as being fueled back by the matter frequently.

The appearances of political Back and forth with a visible inexistence of a clear line of communication between the states often led to ending up in a volatile environment on the ground. Even though they were contained and readjusted, lately, the political escalations here and there also are growing to armed confrontations between the two.

The technical committee organized by the states and the soft border policy result can be taken as the farthest cooperative both parties have stood on, which still couldn't avoid the re-escalation of al-fashaqa into being a battleground.

Recently, reports suggest the political confrontations have grown into an armed assault by the Sudanese army and an ambush like advancements with the name of preventing border infiltration to and from Sudanese border, reaching a point of border closing and a diplomatic contention.

Dimensions ahead – The sooner the better

Taking a closer look at the military engagements gives us the opportunity to understand that the border dispute has only become an opportunistic political card that serves as a proxy ground of conflicts, making it a geopolitical pawn for every regional disagreement out there. While this matter grew to assimilate itself with other issues, the attempt of the Egyptian

counterparts has rather succeeded in using it as an arm twister in the GERD negotiations.

With the reminder of the two countries sharing a border span of around 1600 km long, Prolonging of any conflict has never served any party involved in the long run. In addition to the already existing continuous political mistrust fostered amongst administrative policy makers, it will be leaving a window of possibility towards a costly re-escalation between the two.

The democratic project experimentations in Ethiopian politics and the fragile peace in Sudan also presents itself as an additional stake in the overall significance of their relations. Let alone the effectiveness of regional stability and hydro-negotiations in the twist.

One of the trickiest parts in the middle of the prolonged ground advancements is that whoever occupies a disputed area, whether justifiable or else, will eventually have the bargaining leverage with the final negotiations. While all disputes reach a round table eventually, this particular path should be expected to affect the investigations made on the account of land claims.

The other influence it has grown to protract on is the GERD negotiations. Just as Sudan has had an unfortunate correlation with Egypt over the years on multiple matters, the current administration has chosen to align itself over that path too. Since the initiation of the 1959 bilateral agreement, Khartoum has had her stand set over her views on the use of the Abbay/Nile River. The initiation of negotiations has started to have another front as a follow-up of military attack over the disputed areas serving as the element of the political bargaining package.

Next on the list is the dependency of the political process being based upon the infamously known unstable senior leadership of the Sudanese government. The government has a globally known record for its support for trans-continental terror-group, failure to establish internal stability and acts of state-led wrongdoings against civilian protests. The widely raised suspicion over the leaderships' meddling in internal affairs only acts as a gasoline over the spreading fire with up keeping of

the recent agreement between TPLF and the central government are underway. The close geographical proximity of the two points of tension also points out to the general risk it poses.

Delicacy and carefulness in mind, diplomatic process to search for a solution is indeed important at the window of relative peace at hand. The mixture of unstable actors with a previous record of meddling in domestic affairs of neighboring countries is an additional factor to see into sooner than later. Keeping in mind how the policy dominos might exert matters to a very complicated position, with addition to the world's reshuffling in multiple fronts, a binding outcome for a stable future is in need for a globally contested region.

With African solutions being in need for African problems, the African union led demarcation process being initiated should be the first step that requires the commitment of all.

The peaceful coexistence of the two countries will influence regional issues and continental topics to rest in a place where we Africans can bring solutions for African problems. Whether we like it or not, our fates are tied together and committing to do the heavy lifting now with a non-confrontational approach to the matter will be crucial.

As far as utilizing what is at hand goes, the current regional stand offers a relatively stable window that can serve as an opportunity to cement a stable and long-lasting partnership that will allow the horn to combat its issues like drought, economic struggle, fragile political stand and geopolitical complexity together. And if done well, the region will have a chance to shift its overall focus towards cooperative projects that fast track peace and development for all.

Yosef Frew - Student of Political Science and International relations department in Addis Ababa University and Research Intern at the Blue Nile Water Institute with the interest on the Horn of Africa.

Source: ISS official site

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

Expansion of internet ...

Although agriculture is still the pacesetter of the Ethiopian economy, e- agriculture is not being adequately used in the country. Software that could be used for promoting the modernization of the agriculture sector and data systems is still not well developed to meet the needs of end users in the sector. Introduction of modern agricultural

systems and experience-sharing virtual programs tailored to the interest and educational levels of farmers in rural Ethiopia.

Moreover, although there is a potential to use e-learning in the education system of the country, the outback areas of the country do not have access to the internet.

In northern Ethiopia, the ICT system that was put in place was disrupted and destroyed by the war and may take some time before everything is properly fixed. The use of e-learning systems and software is instrumental in delivering quality education through the use of virtual classrooms and lectures.

The use of internet systems and outputs in Ethiopia is certainly expected to expand over time. It is important to use ICT for the overall socio-economic development of the country and for accelerating the pace of the progress in national reform programs to be conducted over several years. Feci tampro vis conem dit, vis, confex nonsus

The Ethiopian Herald

Established in 1943

Published daily except Mondays
By The Ethiopian Press Agency



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Tel. 011-126-42-22

Fax. 251-011-156-98-62

Advertisement and Dist.
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Editorial

Sudan, Ethiopia peace deals to augment regional stability

The government of Ethiopia has welcomed the agreement reached between Sudan's military and civil political forces. The agreement is a vital step towards durably stabilizing the nation as well as the entire region of east Africa. Therefore, Ethiopia and other members of the regional bloc, Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) as well as other concerned organizations should enhance their collaboration at this very moment to effectively bring turmoil rocked nation out of the cold and make it vibrant actor in ensuring regional peace.

Sudan is a large country and can play a big role in the socio-economic activity of the region. As is the norm everywhere one country alone cannot bring about peace and prosperity to the region. The collaboration and cohesion between the countries would rather lead to a collective outcome in the region.

To this end, Ethiopia has shown due commitment to peace in its territory as well as at the regional level. It is to be recalled that Ethiopia helped to reconcile the Sudanese factions.

However, the conflict that erupted in the northern part of the country and continued for two years had kept the country busy that it hardly was able to deal with the problems in the region. To contribute to regional peace, the government of Ethiopia has fully collaborated for the effective conclusion of the peace deal with TPLF in South Africa, Pretoria.

Now that the peaceful situation is on its way back to Ethiopia it is an opportune moment to enhance its role towards ensuring peace and stability in the region. As a way forward, Ethiopia and Sudan should

reaffirm their commitment to peace in the region by enhancing their collaboration further.

First and foremost they have to put the hard-won peace agreements on a solid foundation so that they would not return to the situation after a while. Accordingly as indicated in the statement, the agreement reached between the civil and military leaders of Sudan is hoped to lead to a peaceful and democratic election. If carried out in this respect it is also expected to durably address the political unrest that rocked the country for about 4 years now.

In the same way, Ethiopia is also undertaking measures properly discharge the permanent Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA) and speedup the normalization of Tigray State, as well as the nearby woredas of Amhara and Afar States.

By doing so Ethiopia and Sudan should focus on reviving their respective economies that were hard hit by the years of conflict. The resuscitation of their economies would enable them to preempt the possibility of their vulnerable population engaging in further incidents of conflict. On top of that, they can become more capable of fending off the possible foreign intervention that is one of the major factors behind the recurrent conflict in the region in general.

The restoration of peace and stability in the two important members of the region is of vital importance in further stabilizing the region. Hence, all concerned authorities must converge their efforts to provide earnest collaboration for the two countries to cement the peace initiatives they ventured so that it can lead to durable peace and stability in the entire region.

Opinion

Expansion of internet technology a pathway for Ethiopia's sustainable development

BY SOLOMON DIBABA

The use of ICT is relatively a recent phenomenon in Ethiopia but with the rapid growth of the sector, Ethiopia is speeding up to extensive use of these technologies in e-commerce, e-banking, and the use of mobile cell phones to promote financial transactions and payments of dues to companies and service delivering institutions and ministries across the country.

The technology of *woredanet* in government structures and the use of online court systems are gradually expanding across the country. Universities and institutes of higher learning in the country are doing their best to provide their students with access to technologies to improve the quality of higher education in the country. Although the level of automation and use of digital technologies is still low in all sector offices, these institutions are engaged in impressive progress to make up for what they have lost over the previous years. Access to telemedicine in the country is in its stage of infancy.

Modern ICT technologies were used by the NEBE during the 6th National Election and the office of the Board has already developed ICT Policy as a tool for regulating and controlling the use of ICT systems and outputs in the head office. This was a practical showcase for demonstrating that modern computer-aided data systems and data processing could help to further promote democracy in the country.

Ethiopian Telecom has now introduced the

5G level technology as one of its major steps to modernize the multiple aspects of data access, processing and storing. Efforts are already underway to introduce the system in regional states across the country to ensure easy and fast access to information.

Over the last two years, the war in the northern part of the country has been complicated by the misuse of social media in promoting misinformation, defamation, production of doctored fake video clippings, fanning hate speech, wrong profiling of the people and government of Ethiopia, misrepresentation as part of the propaganda war on the country both by local social media gladiators, major international media houses and communication sections of the UN systems and some spokespersons of the western countries.

There is a greater imbalance between the objectivity and truthfulness between mainstream media outlets and social media that were disseminating false and confusing information on the political and economic condition in the country. It now appears that the sensational news and reports from social media are outpacing the frequency of news reporting both at local and international levels.

Over the last two years, the country suffered from repeated cyber-attacks on computers across the country. On October 31, 2022, Ethiopia's Information Network Security agency reported more than 1600 cyber-attack attempts on the nation were thwarted in the quarter of the current 2022/23 Fiscal

Year.

The development of a modern ICT system in Ethiopia can be of vital importance in combating online and offline financial corruption and illicit financial transactions which is still a major national issue nation.

ICT can help bring about democratic governance in the country and promote anti-corruption reforms. The virtual teleconferences and the promotion of an online higher education system are all important not only for quality education but also for the exchange of development-oriented information without being inhibited by distance.

The introduction of modern digital technologies in the ICT in Ethiopia could be used to promote good governance and promotion of human rights in the country by using and updating available data on e-government and tackling the violations of human rights and abuses on women and girl children in the country.

Ethiopia has still a long way to travel before nationwide access to ICT systems is ensured. Government efforts to engage the private sector in the system are expected to further upscale outreach to ICT services not only locally but at the international level. The nation has also made some efforts in promoting GIS systems in land management, water development and environmental rehabilitation programs in the country.

Access to ICT sources would further help

to develop sector-oriented access to data to enhance research and documentation in the country. Several ministries, commissions and agencies do not use standardized documentation systems and in many cases do not even update their websites to share information with the public and concerned stakeholders.

The lack of a specific data management system has always been a major hurdle in quite a few government and private institutions. The public also needs to have a proper awareness of handling their passwords while accessing internet data sources. Breach of data by various spammers across the world had a devastating effect on handling financial transactions across the world.

Although there are thousands of organizations and clients that use the internet, their data systems have been vulnerable to cyber-attacks as many of the ICT officers in these organizations are not well trained in taking preventive measures in case of periodic cyber-attacks on millions of computers across the country. This shows that a nationwide capacity-building program must be launched to effectively curb upcoming cyber-attacks from any corner of the world.

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

Business & Economy

Hunting money launderers through coordinated efforts

BY ABEBE WOLDEGIORGIS

Presently, the financial sector has critically faced challenges it ever witnessed in its history. Criminality through digital technology has been growing from time to time. Some indicators in this regard are; providing illegal documents which shows money and property as if it is legal, illegal money order, using Franco valuta by hard currency obtained through illegal means. Money laundering through digital sport games highly hit the economy are some of the activities.

Yonas Mamo is working as a manager of the Finance Security Service and the Finance Criminal Research Team. As to him, at this time in this country, various criminal acts in relation to the finance are being committed. Illegal money transfer through money order is the major one. The second one is circulating foreign currency in the black market illegally.

Various countries' currencies such as Dollar, Pound, Euro and currencies of some Arab countries are being circulated in black market without cognizance of the National Bank of Ethiopia (NBC) instead of channeled through formal transition. The other one is rampant corruption and these three crimes have been a headache to the nation.

But the major source of the crimes is rooted to corruption. Illegal money transfer also is rampant in banks. Instead of being deposited in the banks, the hard currency earned through export finds its way to the mysterious channel which in turn hampers importers not to access the currency. Some corrupted bank staffs collaborate with money launderers serve the criminals' interest by obtaining commission from them and send the hard currency out of the bank channel illegally. The other thing is that sabotaging the inflow of hard currency not to reach the country.

As to Yonas, there are numerous actors involved in such criminal acts. The money obtained by illegal money order firstly finds its way to the importers.

Money launderers take the shortage of hard currency as good opportunity to commit crime. They illegally add the value of hard currency against the official exchange rate set by the NBE and channeled the Ethiopian diaspora money to their account in abroad which again barred the NBE not to obtain the currency.

After they amassed the currency in such tricky way, they send goods to Ethiopia by incurring additional price on the goods in which ultimately the consumers will take the burden.

In this illegal money laundering, importers have the lion's share. But despite some importers indulged in such illegal practices, there are also importers with professional integrity who respect and abided by the law. Illegal importers



have been threat to the legal importers who unfairly compete with them. Because of the shortage of hard currency in banks, the regular importers spend unnecessary time and wait up to six months to obtain the currency through letter of credit. The illegal importers, however, open letter of credit to obtain small amount of hard currency from banks and intentionally prolongs the legal importers' time to obtain the currency.

According to Yonas, the first intention of the government when permitting Franco valuta was to import goods with hard currency obtained in abroad. However, some entities enjoy the right to use the permission as a loophole to collect hard currency in abroad and import edible oil through illegal money order system. Therefore, the money that would have come to the country will be missed. Currently, though plenty amount of edible oil availed in the market; the price hike still continued with no deduction.

Because they purchased the product in abroad with high price, they transfer the added price to the local consumers which in turn aggravate the nation's socio-economic problem.

The other thing which is more worrisome is that brokers residing in abroad are involved in such illegal activities. These brokers engaged in collecting currency in abroad. They also involve in illegal human trafficking

Their collaborators residing inland distribute the commodities to the market. Commendably now, the government is working rigorously to contain their activities. Sadly, the hard currency which would be transferred here in the form of remittance would be contained there by the illegal brokers residing there through international money transfer companies. In turn, the brokers tell their local collaborators to provide the local currency to the people who have

relatives in abroad and contained the hard currency there. As a result, they ultimately make the nation miss the hard currency. Foreigners also are involved in such illegal money laundering. Some Ethiopians residing here also work to block the inflow of hard currency.

Some foreigners who come here as if they are investors involve in illegal money laundering but the government prioritized hunting local collaborators. In addition to this, local investors who play their role behind the curtain in money laundering also are targeted. While Ethiopian importers utilize the hard currency obtained in the black market, foreigners also engaged in capital flight activities.

The finance security service institute studies and detects the source of the money circulated illegally and will put the culprits in to accountable for their misdeed be it Ethiopian or foreigner.

It also charges institutions engaged in the illegal money order, importers and brokers with the cooperation of other stakeholders

As to Yonas, the shortage of hard currency in banks makes the economy to be vulnerable to illegal money launderers. The absence of coordination between law enforcing bodies opens the door for illegal actors to continue their criminal acts with impunity. Besides, the absence of the issuance of national identity card also created conducive environment to the criminals. Because of this, the criminals transfer money through utilizing illegal documents. Though banks introduce various new methods to contain illegal money transfer, their effectiveness is questionable. Some of the instructions have their own weakness and gaps so that vulnerable to be exploited by criminals.

For example, the diaspora account which enables to deposit hard currency in NBE has its own merit but some individuals use it for illegal money laundering. Some

Diasporas who opened bank account to deposit Dollar found committing crime by depositing Dollar obtained from black market. Dealing with such illegal activities is underway. Others also commit crimes in other way. When they come from abroad, they declare their hard currency which they bring from outside in the Ministry of Revenue. For instance, if they bring 2,000 Dollars, they show the correct amount but they deposit 20,000 Dollar by false documents through collecting it from black market.

Criminals exploit the weakness of the financial law and advance their devilish interest. They are chained with other criminals. Some engaged by hampering the inflow of hard currency here in the form of remittance. Importers also involve in the criminal acts. Others circulate hard currency in the black market. Most financial crimes are committed by cooperation.

The finance security institute not only targets criminals in the front line but also targets and hunts criminals who mastermind the crime behind the curtain. There are criminals reside in abroad who coordinate the crime. If one criminal is arrested they start money laundering with other individuals. Thus, to crack down the criminal activities, the financial security institute should exert its efforts with the collaboration of other stakeholders such as National Information Security, Artificial Intelligence, the Addis Ababa and Federal Police Commissioners, Ministry of Justice and National Bank of Ethiopia.

However, though the money laundering activities reached to its peak time, the coordinated efforts did not strengthen yet. In general factors that contribute to the rampant criminal activities among others, the loophole witnessed in the criminal law, the absence of national identification card and the poor coordination with stakeholders need to be applied to fight the crimes.

Art & Culture

A showcase of unity in diversity

BY STAFF REPORTER

Ethiopia is a country of citizens boasting a multitude of peculiar identities. It doesn't therefore come as a surprise for one heading in all direction of the country witnessing an amalgam of cultural values, a multitude of languages and different religions the sum total of which is accentuated by unity in diversity.

Addis Ababa too is a city that reflects a spectrum of ethnic hues and people that contributed bricks for its birth and ascension of fame it catapulted to. As the city comprises residents hailing from all ethnic groups of the country, Addis is entitled the nickname a model Ethiopia. Thus, it is the assignment of its residents to harness such wealth to irrigate its income.

The construction of nations and nationalities cultural centers has proceeded apace to spur the development of the aforementioned identities the city is entitled to, facilitate things so that residents get closer to know one another and let people relish a source of pride from nation's wealth. The birth of such centers afford an income-generating means to the city drawing the attention of foreigners who come for MICE tourism and who do not have a chance to visit the various touristic spots of Ethiopia. It serves as a peek into Ethiopia.

Aside from introducing Ethiopia more, this commendable initiative multiplies over the jewels on the city's crown thereby opening a floodgate of opportunities of popularizing the city and better building the image of the country. It will afford the city a magnetic pool.

One opportunity the ethnic and religious diversity of the nation affords it is the colorful celebration of cultural events, anniversaries and religious holidays. The finding of the *Meskel* (True cross), *Timket* (Epiphany), *Irecha* and *Ashenda* are but to mention a few of the anniversaries that bring together celebrants. The ebullient economic activities during these holidays foster cash inflows to business persons. Its role in magnetizing



foreigners is not insignificant. Developing and turning these virtues into the boons of the city rest on the shoulder of residents.

Addis Ababa's inhabitants are marked for, in concert, ensuring the peace and development of the city that showcases a broad array of ethnic and religious hues—a feast of the eyes. Inhabitants are expected to stand by the government's side in maintaining tranquility.

The participation of residents in the development endeavor is commendable. Considerate investors, deducting from their incomes, have injected into developmental thrusts that benefit citizens. The clicking in the reconstruction of dilapidated buildings, the construction of food centers and the bent

Developing and turning these virtues into the boons of the city rest on the shoulder of residents

of sharing diets portray the chemistry of the ethnic and religious mixes.

In the grip of the Covid-19 pandemic, residents had exhibited astounding harmony extending helping hands one to another and volunteering in tackling of needed tasks. This way they have circumvented bad days. Their active participation in the green legacy and in the campaign to reverse the existential threat is in consonance with the aforementioned chemistry.

Addis' unity in diversity should serve a warrant to its wealth, peace and influence wielding power. The opportunity should be created so that citizens tap into the perks the ethnic and religious diversities bring in their sway.

UNPREDICTABLE

BY SENAIT G/HIWOT

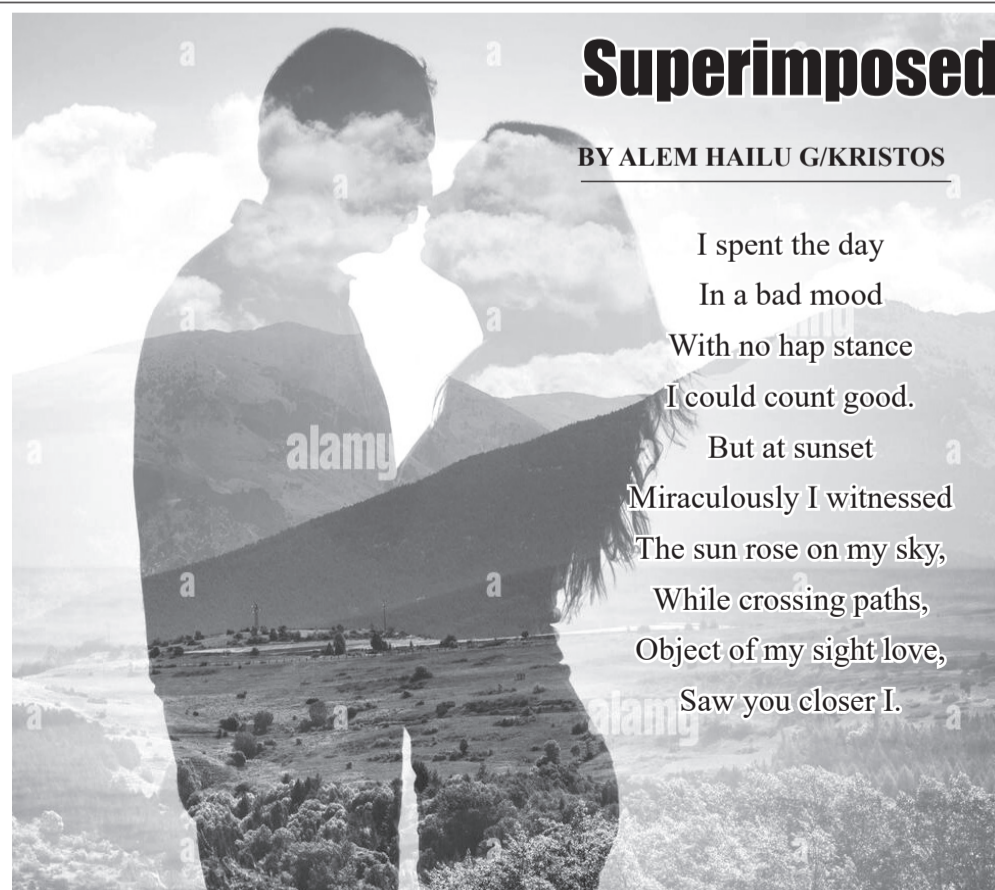
Life's too short and unpredictable
 Although people worry which is unreasonable
 God defines our ways in life
 It is not up to us on how we survive
 People try to control all things
 And they create messes
 It is not our mandate to govern laws of nature
 But it is up to us to nurture
 What is given to be of pleasure.



Superimposed

BY ALEM HAILU G/KRISTOS

I spent the day
 In a bad mood
 With no hap stance
 I could count good.
 But at sunset
 Miraculously I witnessed
 The sun rose on my sky,
 While crossing paths,
 Object of my sight love,
 Saw you closer I.



The war against the smooth criminals

BY SOLOMON WASSIHUN

They do not need guns, knives, AK- 47, or bombs. But they are accomplished robbers. They rob money from people's pockets and state coffers. Usually, they do it secretly, in a well-lubricated network. Few know what crime they are committing, let alone who is committing it. They make patriotic speeches in which portray themselves as men/women of the people, and swear to serve their people with honesty and integrity. But behind the curtain, they abandon their responsibilities and disregard the interests of the people and the country in pursuit of their insatiable greed for personal gains.

Their unjust decisions ultimately lead to a loss of millions of dollars in lost income to the state and a loss of lives that could have been avoided. Because of these people, citizens could not get justice and equal opportunities. They bend and break the law and regulations with impunity. These dangerous guys are the smooth criminals, the corrupt officials, and their associates.

The last two years were the hay day for corrupt officials. It was a critical period in which the nation was fully focused on the struggle to defend the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity against insurrections from every corner of the county. When the government has been preoccupied with this relentless task, the corrupt officials used the opportunity to diversify and intensify their criminal acts in a way unheard of before.

Apart from the irreplaceable loss of hundreds of thousands of lives, the war has brought huge setbacks to the country's economy. The destruction of infrastructures, the looting, and vandalism of public and private properties, the closure of factories, the diversion of the country's meager resources from developments activities to the war effect and the turning of productive workforces into armed forces are among the negative impacts of the two years war on the Ethiopian economy.

As if this was not enough, the corruption situation has worsened and gone rampant to a scale that cannot be handled business as usual. A few weeks after the tension of the northern Ethiopian conflict abated following the signing of the Pretoria peace deal, the Ethiopian government quickly turned its attention to the other war front.- the fight against smooth criminals that are posing national security to the nation by jeopardizing the economy and the justice system.

The Ethiopian government has recently set up anti-corruption committees membered by top government officials including the justice minister and the intelligence chief. No sooner had the establishment of the commission announced than a series of news on the detention of high government officials suspected of corruptions began

to inundate the media.

Among the big fishes that were caught by the latest anti-corruption net as suspects are the director- general of the Ethiopian Financial Security Services (EFSS), the governmental agency that coordinates various institutions involved in the fight against money laundering and the financing of terrorism. Other corruption suspects who have been working in high positions in federal and regional offices have also been apprehended.

The federal anti-corruption committee has identified priority sectors that require an urgent response. These include the land and public houses administration, the security and justice system, the finance system, the Revenue and customs system, and service provisions and public procurement sectors.

Initiated by the drastic actions taken by the federal government, regional administrations have already begun making moves to establish regional anti-corruption committees. The Somali regional administration has announced the establishment of regional anti-corruption committee.

The Oromia region, the largest region in the federal system, reported last week the war on corruption is well underway and has brought to the book more than 1300 suspects, who were later convicted of corruption charges at the court of law. The regional government has also notified its anti-corruption actions in the region have resulted in among others the return of misappropriated land amounting to over 230 thousand square meters and embezzled public money amounting to over 70 million birrs.

Without any doubt, the drastic measures being taken by the government are most welcomed by the public. Even most of the people in the street are saying it is long overdue. It is not a tactical agenda that suddenly surfaced to serve another purpose, as opinionated analysts preferred to see it. Had it not been for the unforeseen series of political and social turmoil like the corona pandemic, the rise of insurrectionist activities, the draught, and most of all ,the eruption of the war in northern Ethiopia, it was the priority agenda of the reformist government to launch a massive campaign and movement against corruption since it came to power.

During his inaugural address in 2018, Premier Abiy said: Corruption is one of the main reasons that have galvanized the grievances of our people in recent years. I politely ask all of us to do all we can to ensure that Ethiopia won't become a country where one works hard and the other simply snatch it away. In the new path that we just charted, we shall work tirelessly day in and day out to combat robbery, wastage of wealth, and fight organized corruption in a manner that

will enable all our people to participate." he said.

Even though it is not done with vigor and rigor as it is done this time, Abiy has previously launched several waves of corrective measures against the corruption practices since its ascent to power about five years ago. The resolute stance of the Abiy administration has been recognized even by the foreign press. In its edition of 18 April 2019, the Paris-based news Journal, The Africa- Report wrote: "Ethiopia has arrested nearly 60 government officials over allegations of corruption and economic sabotage. Purging corruption has been at the center of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's political and economic reform, as he seeks to stabilize the economy while transforming it into a market-led economy."

The public eagerly supports the anti-corruption committee by providing information and evidence-based tips on corrupt practices being perpetrated by public officials at every level of the administration from federal up to the woreda level. The public is giving tips to the anti-corruption in a secure manner without fear of reprisal.

"So far have got some 250 information, and cases that are fit to be investigated and level charges are identified." said the Justice Minister in a press briefing he gave last week.

Law experts and media analysts praised the latest firm and well-organized crackdown by the Ethiopian government on corruption. They believe the fight against corruption is among the top agenda that requires urgent action. "The anti-corruption struggle is a fight to save and protect our country from robbers. In that sense, it is another frontline of the struggle to ensure Ethiopia's national security. Therefore, joining the anti-corruption campaign is a patriotic duty of Ethiopians that tantamounts to saving the nation from an existential threat." says a law expert.

In addition to terrorism, religious fundamentalism, political extremism, and foreign intervention, corruption is a major threat to the Ethiopian state. Now, both the government and the general public are in the same boat when it comes to prioritizing the fight against corruption. The anti-corruption movement will soon intensify in every sector and at every level of administration with broad public participation. We expect more smooth criminals to be filtered out of the bureaucracy and political leadership at all levels of administration

We hope that the hemorrhaging economy, inefficient bureaucracy and gross failures in the judicial and security systems will soon improve massively as the anti-corruption movement continues and the smooth criminals are brought out of their clandestine, dirty and dangerous game.

The last two years were the hay day for corrupt officials. It was a critical period in which the nation was fully focused on the struggle to defend the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity against insurrections from every corner of the county

Law & Politics

Inclusive National Dialogue: Invaluable tool for finding common ground on major national issues

BY ADDISALEM MULAT

It has commonly been assumed that Ethiopia has been making all possible efforts to conduct inclusive national dialogue with a focus on putting the kibosh on the prevailing conflict for good and all. It is an undeniable fact that as national dialogue plays a huge role in establishing and finding a common ground within the shortest possible time, concerned authorities have been making an all-out effort to get to the bottom of the stockpiles of problems in a peaceful atmosphere.

It is common knowledge that the logjams of problems emanated from the divisive rhetoric and political conundrums of the previous regime for a very long time have been serious points of contention among the various Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples of Ethiopia. Notwithstanding the fact that a lot of efforts have been made to resolve the existing constraints through round table discussions, the planned destination has not been accomplished yet on account of backlogs of problems and some unforeseen circumstances.

In times gone by distinct groups had been sowing the seeds of animosity, hatred, and discord among Ethiopians along ethnic and religious lines by bringing into being multifarious imaginary and make-believe stories that do not reflect the current reality on the ground. However, with time, their malicious intention metamorphosed into giving birth to social, political, and economic quandaries that need a quick fix before the entire situation goes from the frying pan into the fire.

Albeit since the dawn of history Ethiopians have been living under the roof of Ethiopia with love and harmony, the dictation of some groups and foreign entities has posed a challenge to their togetherness and inseparable social bond. Added to that as Ethiopia's adversaries hate to see peaceful Ethiopia, they have sustained coming up with layers of monkey business and treacheries intending to move the country into uncharted waters.

In good truth, in the aftermath of their continuous treacheries and other evil deeds going behind closed curtains, the people of Ethiopia have ended up passing through peaks and troughs, rises and falls, elevations and depressions, and other things of a similar kind. Though Ethiopia's opponents at home and abroad have been deliberately making their best efforts in several situations to back the county into a corner by masterminding quite a lot of intrigues, all their efforts have gone for a burton at the earliest possible juncture.

In a similar vein, as national dialogue has a share in reinstating synchronization, reaching a common understanding,



maintaining territorial integrity, and ensuring peace and tranquility in every corner of the country, all stakeholders without a second thought should join hands for its realization. Needless to say, as the national dialogue comprising people from all sections of the population has been registering remarkable accomplishments, bringing about the yearned destination would be easy as rolling off a log and easy as shooting fish in a barrel.

In a similar vein, as it is expected that national dialogue plays a role in restoring peace and harmony in all corners of the country, all stakeholders should put their differences aside in furtherance of bringing the former glory of the country back at the earliest possible juncture. To be able to attain the aforesaid target, the population, in general, should cast aside hostilities that steam from quite a lot of socio-political issues.

In light of the current situation as the National Dialogue Commission since its inception has been discharging its accountabilities and responsibilities without a hitch, the population as a whole should continue standing by the side of the commission for accomplishing the anticipated goal.

It is an indisputable fact that national dialogue plays a valuable role in resolving the multidimensional obstacles of the nation since it consists of scholars, contending political parties, journalists, religious leaders, and other influential people. Though some entities have been persistently making an effort to interfere in the internal affairs of the country and twist Ethiopia's arm under the veil of some fictitious stories, the desired goal has not been accomplished yet.

In light of the current situation, with significant legal and technical arrangements concluded, the National Dialogue Commission has been discharging a undertakings in close association with appropriate authorities. As the Commission

has been smoothing the path of discharging across-the-board national dialogue to resolve standpoints and find consensus on major issues of national interest, all and sundry without batting an eyelid should stand by its side.

It is worth mentioning that the national dialogue plays a huge role in ensuring peace and tranquility, ensuring permanent solutions all over the country, and bringing common consensus among the population as a whole. It should be borne in mind that the Commission to this point had a conversation with quite a lot of bodies such as religious organizations, media Practitioners, opposition political parties, and whatnot.

Above and beyond, all stakeholders should put their best leg foremost on the grounds that the Commission beyond a shadow of a doubt serves as a stepping stone to building a democratic system in all regions of the country in addition to resolving differences. In the present circumstances, the commission has been going to the ends of the earth to incorporate Ethiopians Diasporas residing in various parts of the world.

Commission's Chairperson Prof. Mesfin Araya recently presented the performance report to members of the House of Peoples' Representatives (HoPR) at African Leadership Excellence Academy in Sululta town. To involve the Diaspora in the consultation, starting from the end of 2023, there will be an internet option and page-to-page communication.

The chairperson further stated that the commission has established a directorate to monitor the relations with the Diaspora and is working with the relevant institutions including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"The national consultation forums, which were expected by many people, will start in March 2023, and before the consultation, agenda gathering will be done from January to February 2023.

From February to March, the process of formulating an agenda will take place and then it will enter the consultation process."

The commission is working closely with government officials at all levels and prime attention has been given to garnering an agenda from the grassroots level and from the general public. The approach is instrumental to hearing the heartbeat of the society thereby formulating an agenda that would have profound importance to address contentious issues.

As to him, the door is widely open to all relevant stakeholders including rebel factions to take part in the National Dialogue. Also, necessary efforts will be made to ensure that the voices of conflict-impacted and displaced citizens are heard in a way that includes the elders, religious leaders, and all bodies related to peace-making.

The HoPR Speaker Tagesse Chafo sent a message to members of the council and the society at large to support the success of the National Dialogue, which is based not only on the interests of the elite but also on the basis of the needs of the general public.

In a previous interview with *The Ethiopian Herald* Anteneh Tsegaye (Ph.D.), Assistant Professor of Intercultural Communication at Addis Ababa University said, "In principle, national dialogue involves the public at all structural levels, formal or informal, and brings significant actors to the table, going beyond the elites, to deal with issues of discontents and misunderstanding in the course of the nation-building process. In its real sense, for example, civil society leaders, and even external actors, can initiate informal dialogues between key actors, even if they have lesser mandates than one initiated by the state,"

"These informal dialogues can entail trust-building meetings, negotiations, and consultations that lay the groundwork for formal national dialogue. In practice, however, it is often attempted after exclusive elite-based negotiation formats which have failed or are considered inadequate to prevent further instability as lessons learned from the failure of countries in the current conflict zones," he added.

"Ethiopia needs a highly inclusive and bottom-up approach to a national dialogue. Engaging the public and civil society should enforce the Ethiopian national dialogue as the country owns indigenous approaches to dealing with conflicts and reconciliation processes. As history informs, the elites of Ethiopia have been at the center of political fragmentation and agenda-setting for more than a century,"

Women in Focus

Joint efforts to ensure gender equality, women empowerment

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

The World Economic Forum's 2022 Global Gender Gap report ranked the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as a leading country in gender equality in the region. The achievement is said to come from the fundamental belief that women and men are equal partners in society.

Through a series of public and private sector initiatives, women are playing an increasingly stronger role in business, government and STEM fields, according to the official website of the UAE Embassy.

Demonstrating the UAE's progress in women's inclusion, justice and security, the UAE is also ranked 24th among 170 countries and the highest regionally in the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security's 2021 WPS Index, it stated.

With special recognition to the necessity of gender equality, enhancing women's representation and preventing all forms of discrimination against them, the UAE Embassy in Addis Ababa organized a webinar session under the theme "Gender equality & the empowerment of women" with perspectives from the UAE & Ethiopia.

Reflecting UAE's strong commitment towards the development of gender sensitive initiatives, exchanging knowledge and experiences on innovative tools and programs to empower women, and providing an effective platform for women to share their recommendations was said to be the major objectives of the event.

During his opening remark, Head of the Political, Economic and Media Affairs at the UAE Embassy, Talal Alazeezi said that UAE has always demonstrated a strong sense of commitment regarding empowering women and girls.

He said promoting their full and effective participation in all sectors of society including education, health, economy, law-making, environment, social domain, information, political participation and decision-making is also part of the government's commitment.

The Head further highlighted the different national initiatives and strategies that UAE put in place to ensure the empowerment of Emirati women in all areas of sustainable development.

"Gender equality is evident in the UAE Constitution, which guarantees equal rights to all its citizens in regard to legal status, access to education, and the right to inherit property."

In order to ensure the continued consideration of gender in national frameworks, he said changes were made to the country's laws, in 2020, which amended and introduced new and progressive laws on inheritance, divorce and crimes against women, based on the principle of equality which recognizes women as essential partners in the development process.

In the same context, the UAE has recognized the importance of education as a critical key to the socio-economic empowerment of women, and according to the World Economic Forum's report on gender for



2020; the UAE was one of the region's best-performing countries, closing the overall gender gap by 65.5 percent, as to him.

Furthermore, the UAE plays an active role in humanitarian relief and development work, with the aim of supporting countries suffering from natural disasters, conflicts and wars, with particular attention to women, recognizing the critical role of women in the international relief efforts.

To further stress this commitment, he added that the UAE has dedicated 322 million USD for humanitarian initiatives focused on women and girls, as of session.

In line with UAE's foreign aid policy and to ensure the empowerment of women both regionally and internationally, the government developed a "100 percent Women" policy to be integrated into all the country's funded humanitarian programs and projects implemented in humanitarian crises, with the objective of enhancing the UAE's efforts in protecting the rights of women and girls.

The achievements of the UAE with regard to women's empowerment demonstrate that the government recognizes the important role of women in sustainable development and growth, and the need to continue to advance their rights and empower them in all fields, he emphasized.

Speaking with special focus on the economic and social empowerment of women at the grass root level as well as the experience of Women in Self Employment Organization (WISE) in advancing gender equality in Ethiopia, Tsigie Haile, Director of WISE stressed the great impact of a collective action of women in protecting the environment and promoting the sustainable use of natural resources.

She shared the various initiatives and strategies of WISE, including organizing women into credit cooperatives so that they can access financial services, as well as the provision of knowledge, skills training and opportunities, and creating spaces for women to engage in the economic sphere.

In terms of the biggest obstacles while working on the ground with respect to advancing gender equality in Ethiopia, she highlighted the negative gender norms, traditions and mindsets ingrained in the society, as well as the low level of literacy.

Thus, she recommended that ensuring the holistic empowerment of women, and said a strategic entry, is working on the immediate needs of women and their interests.

changes were made to the country's laws, in 2020, which amended and introduced new and progressive laws on inheritance, divorce and crimes against women, based on the principle of equality which recognizes women as essential partners in the development process

Noting that merely economic empowerment of women is insufficient; she stressed women must be supported in their efforts to make decisions in all sectors of development.

By the same token, Nigest Haile, Founder and Executive Director of Center for Accelerated Women's Economic Empowerment (CAWEE) spoke focusing on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the opportunities present for women entrepreneurs.

As the continent implements the free trade agreement, Nigest stressed on how African

women stand to benefit from the Continental Free Trade area, and how their businesses can thrive within the continent.

Similarly, she noted the necessity in supporting the emerging and potential women exporters in the continent, considering the extremely low figures of African trading within, Africa and with other countries globally.

The need for a holistic approach and materializing of gender favorable trade policies is crucial, this includes reducing trade costs and integrating markets. She shared that in this regard, the Ethiopian Ministry of Trade is taking the lead in developing the national Continental Free Trade Area Strategy, in which CAWEE is part of the national steering committee, as to her.

Moreover, highlighting the commitment of CAWEE to gender equality, Nigest shared initiatives of the organization including the launching of an ecommerce platform, the organization of an intra-Africa trade fair, as well as the establishment of bilateral cooperation with Dubai Chamber of Commerce.

For her take on the issue, Tigist Alebachew, Executive Director of New Millennium Women Empowerment Organization (NMWEO) reflected on Gender Equality and Self-sustainability.

She shared the various ways NMWEO contributes to advancing gender equality within Ethiopia, including promoting the financial freedom and economic empowerment of women, and raising awareness on the gender gaps in society.

Similarly, she noted the importance of women in the agriculture sector and protecting the environment, stressing on the role of rural women in enhancing ecosystem protection and the sustainable use of natural resources.

Speaking on Women's Contribution to Policy-making, as well as the challenges and best practices, Program Quality Manager of Women Empowerment-Action (WE-Action) Nadia Idris, highlighted the efforts of WE-Action in empowering both women and men on gender equality and transformation of households and livelihoods, this includes through the raising of awareness of men and boys, with the objective of promoting positive behavior and perceptions on gender.

Moreover, she noted the need for gender budgeting commitment and gender responsive services, and the integration of a gender sensitive approach in institutional gender transformation, development and humanitarian response.

Nadia also elaborated the challenges to gender equality and empowerment, such as the negative social norms, preventing them from being active actors in their communities, and the low representation of women in local communities.

Similarly, she mentioned positive development in Ethiopia, referring to the government's efforts in adequately integrating gender issues into sectors' plans such as health, education and agriculture.



Standing in unison to ensure lasting peace

BY MENGISTEAB TESHOME

A conflict and violence by its nature produce negative impacts in any nation. Yes, fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV) present a critical development challenge that threatens efforts to end extreme poverty in both low and middle-income countries. According to the World Bank report, by 2030, up to two-thirds of the world's extreme poor could live in FCV settings. Conflicts also drive 80 percent of all humanitarian needs.

Violence and conflict has spiked dramatically in the last decade, and the fragility landscape is becoming more complex. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world has seen a series of massive setbacks to stability in regions across the world: from Asia and Africa to Latin America and the Caribbean and more recently in Eastern Europe.

These latest developments add on to a multitude of risks affecting FCV settings, including food insecurity, climate change, rising inequality, demographic change, and the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic.

It was in early November 2020 that the Northern Ethiopia conflict and violence broke after months of tension between the Federal Government and the leaderships of Tigray State. We all remember the rigorous efforts made by the government to avoid the conflict. Unfortunately, it could not bear fruit for a number of reasons. However, after heavy costs of life and material loss on both sides, a ceasefire deal was signed in Pretoria that was brokered by the Africa Union.

The effort has kindled hopes in the hearts and minds of peace loving people. Most hold an end to the war that is believed to have killed many and displaced hundreds of thousands of people, destruction of

public facilities and private properties.

International and diplomatic communities, scholars and common peoples also hailed the move optimistically hoping it could help to close the chapter of conflict and violence and bring about an opportunity to secure lasting peace.

The Ethiopian Herald approached residents to learn their conviction towards the Pretoria peace deal; and the role fellow citizens should play to ensure lasting peace.

Solomon Zegeye, a resident of Addis Ababa and Micro-Business Senior Expert at Nile Insurance Company said that the conflict has disrupted the social life of the local community in many ways and harmed their psychological makeup aside from its huge economic impact. "In short, because of the conflict, I can say "we are in mass stress and trauma." The Pretoria peace deal, however, has opened a window of hope for the people, especially in conflict ridden-areas who had been in agony, stress and trauma.

Not only that, the conflict price increases depriving the purchasing capacity. The finance sector was impacted negatively and the provision of service in new products was exposed to risk.

Thanks to the Pretoria peace deal, now, the finance sector is reviving; and the nation's Foreign Direct Investment is recovering. As to him, it is a great return that should be upheld.

In bid to secure lasting peace, therefore, the two signatories should abide as per the rules and regulations outlined in the document and exercise them accordingly for the sake of the successors. Similarly, pertinent stakeholders should act promptly in promoting the value of peace among communities in the conflict areas. "We are witnessing that parts of the deal that both parties have agreed to are translated into action. An immediate

cessation of hostilities, delivery of humanitarian aid, restoration of basic facilities including electric power and telecom services are going well in Tigray State and the surrounding areas. The process of disarming TPLF's fighting force is in progress, he added.

"I think the peace deal is progressing well. However, there should be an unreserved effort of all Ethiopians to ensure lasting peace; and I want to call all Ethiopians living at home and abroad to stand in unison."

Dawit Demse, a resident of Addis Ababa for his part said that the peace deal signifies that Africans can address their own cases in their own context. As to him, armed conflict could be resolved and end up through peaceful agreements and addressing differences based on the law of the land.

"In my view, the peace deal marks a significant stride in letting the youth get skills and knowledge. At the same time, it provides a solid foundation for the preservation of Ethiopia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, which is a core issue to me and the people of Ethiopia."

At this juncture, both signatories need to focus on cultivating a peace agenda and adhering to signed documents; refraining from taking advantages for personal egos. "As peace is a delicate asset, we all should oppose war and preserve peace standing in harmony."

For instance, Ethiopian investors should pay attention in hiring the combatants investing in the manufacturing sector in bid to create jobs. "In my view, the skills, knowledge, and innovation that people accumulate are the greatest assets of economies on the rise."

Likewise, academicians and policy makers should also buckle up in developing a strategy that promotes human capital-oriented development that may help to increase peace in Ethiopia.

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