

Economist stresses on port diversification to boost security, competition

BY EYUEL KIFLU

ADDIS ABABA –Ethiopia has to cut dependency on a single port which intensifies insecurity, and vulnerability to the demands of the port service providers beyond the high harbour charges, so said an economist.

In an interview with *The Ethiopian Herald*, Jemal Mohammed (PhD), an economist at the Policy Studies Institute, highlighted the potential risks and disadvantages of relying solely on a single port.

According to him, the port service provider may exercise control over the products

entering and leaving the port, possibly increasing service fees and undermining negotiation power for the user country.

Ethiopia's dependence on the Djibouti port prevents competition, limiting options for the best prices and services. He emphasized the importance

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Ambassador Gebeyehu Ganga (PhD)

Ethiopia fostering stronger ties with Middle East, Asian countries: MoFA

• Middle East countries discern mutual benefits of Abbay dam

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

ADDIS ABABA – Ethiopia's exemplary bilateral relations with the Middle East, Asian and Pacific countries are bearing fruits for ensuring country's national interests, said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA).

Approached by *The Ethiopian Herald* MoFA Middle East, Asian and Pacific Countries Affairs Director General

Ambassador Gebeyehu Ganga (PhD) stated that Ethiopia developed unique bilateral ties with the Middle East, Asian and Pacific countries which helped to promote national interests including the construction of Abbay Dam for fair utilization of the Nile waters.

The relationship is based on a win-win approach and the countries have no interest to intervene in the internal affairs of others, he said.

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State issues ultimatum to anti-peace elements

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA – Amhara State Administration has urged irregular armed forces to surrender peacefully within seven days.

In a presser, the State Communication Head Mengesha Fentaw (PhD) said yesterday that an agreement has been reached

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Han Deog Cho

KOICA pledges support to Ethiopia's leaps to SDGs

• Sets to expand volunteerism engagement

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA – Ethiopia has made big leaps in improving citizens' livelihoods and registering rapid economic growth, the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) said, pledging support to

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Exemplary ties between business and community in Batu

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News



Dawit Hayeso (PhD)

Debt relief helps Ethiopia build economy on solid base: *Economist*

BY TAMERU REGASA

ADDIS ABABA- Government's successful works on the extension of debt repayment period enables the country to fix inflation and build the economy on strong foundation, so said Economist Dawit Hayeso (PhD).

Recently, Governor of the National Bank of Ethiopia Mamo Mihretu (PhD) told members of parliament that creditors allowed Ethiopia to defer payment of its 1.5 billion USD debt.

Having stay with Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) economist Dawit said that the extended payment period of the country's current debt could play a major role in the national development.

The secured finance serves to complete major development projects and increase domestic revenues, he noted.

Dawit mentioned that the money could be used to complete the construction of Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) that in return generates foreign currency from electricity sale.

The extension of the debt payment period has many economic benefits, he said, adding that it will increase production and productivity in the country and help solve the worsening problem of inflation.

The loan has been secured in the name of the people so that it should be used to improve the lives of the people, he underlined.

The economist also urged the government to make ensure the proper expenditure of the borrowed money for productive projects while monitoring the existing loans are being paid on time.

NRC zooms in on political parties' peace-building role

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

ADDIS ABABA- The National Rehabilitation Commission (NRC) has urged political parties to engage in peace building efforts and promote peaceful resolutions of disagreements that it said would ensure enduring stability.

The NRC is hosting a two-day conference under the theme: 'The politics of DDR and the role of political parties.'

Speaking at the occasion, the NRC Commissioner Teshome Toga urged political parties need to take the lion share in promoting peaceful resolution of disagreements rather than instigating upheavals.

According to him, the political parties should begin the peace advocacy from their own members and mobilize the latter for common good. Not only could the parties be instrumental in keeping the nation from entering into another devastating conflict, but they could also play a vital role for the successful implementation of the Pretoria Agreement.

The Commissioner further noted that the parties should work to build the culture of resolving disputes through negotiation and in a peaceful manner. "Political parties are major stakeholders on national issues. Thus, they need to exert their

role for the successful implementation of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program, National Dialogue as well as national unity."

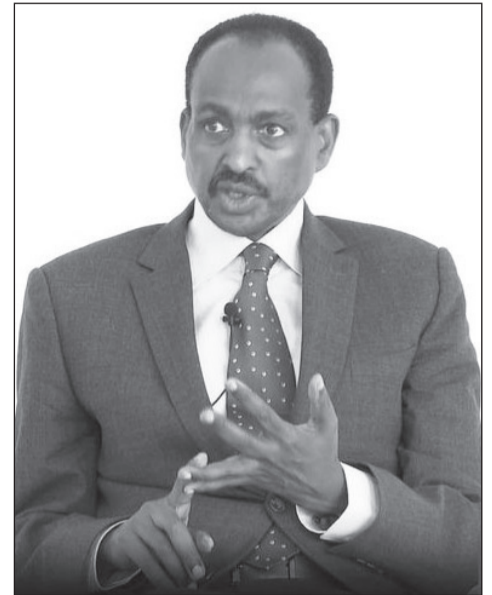
So far, the Commission has held several discussions with CSOs, private sector, media professionals and other stakeholders while it has continuous engagement with over 30 partners including France, Germany, Canada, USA, Turkey and many others.

Calling development partners and state governments to translate their pledges into action, Teshome expressed the Commission's desire to furthering the engagement with other actors to meet its objective.

Moreover, it was disclosed at the occasion that the Commission has finalized the preparation to launch an application dubbed 'DREAM-IMS' which is said to ease the registration and information administration process of ex-combatants.

Financial and other resource constraints, ex-combatants' too much expectation, inadequate knowledge of the Commission's mission and capacity related issues are amongst the major challenges the institution is said to have been facing.

The Ethiopian Political Parties Joint



Teshome Toga

Council (EPPJC) Chairperson Desta Tilahun said the council would carry out advocacy activities with an aim of encouraging parties to address their differences through discussion and dialogue.

Of the 371, 971 ex-combatants the Commission plans to reintegrate with the society, over 74 % would be drawn from Tigray State. The Commission also set a plan to integrate another 50,000 from Tigray in 2024 in the first phase, it was learned.

Ministry aspires to Ethiopia's digitally powered future

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA- The Ministry of Innovation and Technology (MinT) expressed aspiration to become the catalyst of Ethiopia's digital transformation and steering the country towards an innovative and digitally powered future.

The MinT is hosting a two-day digital development program workshop in partnership with Microsoft.

Addressing the gathering yesterday, MinT Minister Belete Molla (PhD) stated that it is not enough for Ethiopia to be a mere participator in the digital era and the country must be at the driver's seat.

The Minister further highlighted that the forum aims to create a clear roadmap for Ethiopia's digital transformation, guiding collective efforts towards a brighter, inclusive, and prosperous future. The program also offers digital advisory, cloud solutions, technical up-skilling, device support, digital service, and capacity building tools. "These are not just tools; they are keys to unlocking the immense potential of our public services and broader economy."

He added, "The program is more than an assortment of digital tools. It is a beacon of hope for low and middle income

nations, a pathway to a future where digital empowerment is not just a dream, but a tangible reality. Our collaboration with Microsoft is a testament to the commitment to this vision."

In these two days, the MinT hopes to set the tone and create a clear roadmap for the work ahead. And this forum is more than an exchange of ideas. The roadmap stakeholders develop here will guide their collective efforts in realizing Ethiopia's digital transformation. Today the country

stands on the brink of what may seem impossible, but its sons and daughters have the power to turn it into common reality, Belete remarked.

Alexander Jose Vaqueirinho de Pinho, Global UN & International Development Lead at Microsoft on his part said that Microsoft is empowering development countries including Ethiopia to accelerate their national digital transformation agenda and to reposition digital as priority engine for growth and development.



News

ESL earns over 2.2 bln Birr in four-month

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA- Ethiopian Shipping and Logistics (ESL) announced that it has made a profit of 2.266 billion Birr from services and other income generating resources in the first four months of the 2023 fiscal year.

ESL Corporate Communication Department Head Demissew Benti told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that it planned to obtain 2.224 billion Birr profit before tax and managed to secure 2.266 billion Birr over the last four months.

He stated that the profit was 102 % over the plan and compared to the same period of the 2022 fiscal year, it has shown 51 % increment.

It had aimed for collecting 11.52 billion Birr from the services provided by the institution and other sources of income, and 15.7 billion Birr was achieved during the stated period. The implementation has showed an increase of 16.6 % compared to the same period of the previous fiscal year.

He mentioned that the institution transported over one million tons of dry cargo by maritime during the mentioned



period; of this 614,376 tons were transported outside of containers and the remaining 498,182 tons were packed in containers.

He said: "Compared to the same period of the previous fiscal year, it has increased by 4.4 %. Over the last four months,

it planned to transport 34,830 TEU containers in the multimodal transport system and 39,373 TEU containers were transported compared to the 30,904 TEU cargo transported in the same period of fiscal year 2022. It has shown 27.4 % increment."

Ethiopia fostering stronger ties...

He mentioned that Ethiopia has been consolidating bilateral ties with the Middle East countries depending on its geographic location, cultural and religious aspects in addition to mutual interests.

He indicated that Ethiopia's exemplary partnership with the Middle East countries like Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other countries has paid off in terms of boosting overseas employment, investment and various partnerships.

Ethiopia has developed amicable ties with the UAE and Saudi Arabia and

agreements have been reached to deploy some 500,000 domestic workers this Ethiopian fiscal year, he added.

Moreover, the Middle East countries accept or understand the fair utilization of the Abbay dam, according to Amb. Gebeyehu.

There is also a strong trade and investment partnership with China, India, Middle East countries as they are market destinations of Ethiopia's agricultural products specifically vegetables and fruits, he underlined.

According to the Director General, the bilateral relations between Ethiopia and

China elevated to all-weather strategic cooperation partnership based on a win-win approach.

Ethiopia also consolidated its relationship with India, Japan, Korea and others in the area of Education, human resource development, investment, technology transfer, trade and investment among others, he stated.

Currently, these countries have been becoming a source of investment and market destination in addition to cooperation in other areas including education, science, health, culture and so on, it was learnt.

KOICA pledges support to ...

its move to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The agency has been aligning its engagement with Ethiopia's priorities and has made active involvement in manufacturing, health, climate change and peace building, KOICA Country Director Han Deog Cho told *The Ethiopian Herald*.

Ethiopia is on the right track to industrial development and KOICA has been contributing in the area by offering capacity building programs and promoting education, technical and vocational schemes that would nurture competent professionals, he added.

"Under the umbrella of the World Friends

Korea (WFK) program, South Korea has been sending volunteers to Ethiopia who have been contributing to the latter's socio-economic development and helping to change the local communities' livelihoods."

The director further noted that Ethiopia has been a major destination for WFK volunteers and they have been employing climate smart education, social inclusion and peace as vital tools for the country's development endeavor. In addition to solidifying inclusive and longstanding partnership, voluntarism helps address poverty and climate issues and foster socioeconomic progress.

"Currently, about 15 volunteers are

operating here in Addis Ababa and in the Oromia State. Efforts are also underway to deploy more volunteers with the capacity and expertise to meet Ethiopia's demand in various fields."

Volunteer deployment program is an essential mechanism to deliver positive development impact through cooperation areas and help to address the community's problems that require external support, he remarked.

KOICA was established in 1991 with a view of sharing experiences, assisting sustainable growth, ensuring mutual prosperity and strengthening South Korea's friendly relations with partner countries, it was learned.

Economist ...

of seeking alternative ports and fostering competition to benefit Ethiopia.

He explained that any disruption or change in Djibouti's government or business environment could have severe consequences for Ethiopia. Damage to Ethiopia's assets or delays in securing a new port through negotiations with other countries could occur.

He stressed the significance of finding alternative ports to alleviate the burden of transit taxes and harbour fees on Ethiopia. These fees comprise a significant portion of Djibouti's GDP, and if they increase, it would impact the former.

Jamal cautioned that without alternative ports, Ethiopia would be unable to deny any increases in harbour fees, potentially leading to inflation.

He commented on the use of Port Sudan to export agricultural products from the northern part of Ethiopia. While the Kenyan port could serve as an alternative for southern Ethiopia, he emphasized the importance of finding the nearest port for each region's product destinations.

Jamal suggested that use of the nearest port to Ethiopia, Assab, would require negotiations with the Eritrean government to establish access and foster peace between the two nations.

Additionally, diplomatic and political relationships with other countries would be crucial to mutually beneficial agreements and the utilization of their port services, he noted.

He highlighted the distance between Ethiopia's economic centre, Addis Ababa, and the ports, emphasizing the need to establish economic centres in different regions to facilitate exports from the origin or nearby areas of production.

He urged professionals, politicians, and economists to address the port issue, which has previously received limited attention, and actively seek national and international engagement.

State issues...

between the state administration and Amhara State Emergency Command post to give peace a chance to stop further bloodshed and ensure lasting peace.

Accordingly, a decision has been made for unlawful combatants to surrender to their nearby command post coordination offices and to elders.

He also disclosed that the zone and woreda administrators have been ordered to welcome the illegal combatants who positively respond to the peace call.

Those who submit peacefully, will not face charges for the crimes they have made so far and will back to their normal life after receiving the necessary rehabilitation trainings, he added.

However, Mengesha said, the ongoing law enforcement measure will be continued against those who show defiance to the call to continue conducting misdeeds.

The Head recalled that illegal combatants have inflicted human and material loss over the past months.

Hence, the joint effort made by the national defense force and the state security forces ensuing the state of emergency, helped to ensure a relative peace in the state, he noted.

Opinion

Enhancing the combating capacity of the Air Force

BY ABEBE WOLDEGIORGIS

Ethiopia is located in the Horn of Africa; the region known for its political instability for decades. The region is flanked by the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean where almost 40 % of the world oil is transported. It also has been a place where super power countries scrambled for their presence and established military bases.

Except Ethiopia, all countries of the Horn gained independence in the 1960s. Since then, the border demarcation and delimitation has not been conducted. This situation posed border conflicts and war among countries and resolving the turmoil seems out of site. Because of such rivalries interfering in a country's internal affairs by other neighboring country was a common phenomenon for decades.

Due to border conflict and irredentist movement of Somalia politicians, the country waged war against Ethiopia for almost three times. Hence, the political volatility of the region necessitated Ethiopia to establish strong defense force with modern Air Force and air defense system to protect its territories from foreign intruders.

However, as Ethiopia is technologically a less developed country, modernizing its army and the Air Force cost hard currency and needed support of other countries which pursue similar ideology.

To this end, a military agreement was reached between the United States of America and Ethiopia in 1953 During the Imperial era for a military assistance program. It aimed to provide Ethiopia with a capable military force for defensive purposes. As a result, the US military force sent a team to undertake a comprehensive study of the Ethiopian military capabilities, requirements, and probable threats facing the country.

The Imperial Ethiopian Air Force (IEAF) benefited immensely from the program. The US Air Force sent a team of officers led by a Colonel to assess the force and provided recommendations as part of the Military Advisory and Assistance Group undertaking the comprehensive study of the Ethiopian military. The IEAF was to be restructured organizationally and adopt US-style operating procedures. Emphasis was given to building up IEAF's training institutions. Several Ethiopian personnel was sent to the US for training, including 25 Ethiopian pilots for jet training and many more were trained locally by US Defense personnel. In 1957, the first three of several T-33A1 jet trainers were supplied followed by F86 fighters in

1960. In 1961, T28s were acquired for advanced training. This influx of equipment and training made the IEAF the most prestigious show-piece of American aid in Ethiopia. It was also reputedly the most modern and efficient unit of the armed forces

In 1964, the Somalis began receiving large quantities of weaponry, ground equipment, and Mig17 fighters from the then Soviet Union. In response, the US started delivering the supersonic F-5Ac jet fighters in 1965 to counter this new threat. However, it was done carefully not to escalate the situation further.

The US delivered the F-5As without providing major weapon systems for the aircraft, the ability to use air-to-air missiles. Nevertheless, the delivery of F-5As had serious implications in the Horn of Africa because no neighboring country had anything similar to this new jet fighter. The Somalis were furious and described the F-5A transfer as a grave threat to the security of the Somali people and the rest of the Horn.

For the first time in 1965, backed by enemies of Ethiopia from the Middle East and to realize its territorial aggrandizing policy, Somalia invaded Ethiopia from its North Eastern territory the place known as Togo-chale. To reverse the situation, the Ethiopian infantry and mechanized army supported by the Air Force fought the enemy and decisively defeated the invading army. In the war, the role of the Air Force in biting the enemy was admirable. For the second time the Somalia leaders again attempted to invade Ethiopia from central part of the country but their ambition was in futile and reversed by the Ethiopian forces.

In the 1970s, due to the expansion of the cold war between the western block led by the United State that pursue capitalist economic system and their opponents socialist countries led by the Soviet Union, Africa became the battle ground for the two opposing blocks. These in turn forced many countries to engage in unnecessary competition in terms of purchasing sophisticated weapons and combat air craft.

For the third round of war, in 1977 Somalia invaded Ethiopia and reached to the town of Dire Dawa and engulfed Harar town and the war was severe and cost thousands of lives from both sides. Similar to the past, the Air Force got upper hand. The Somali air force with its Mig jets crossed the air space of Ethiopia but was unable to combat effectively.

It was pre emptied by the Ethiopian Air Force and lost its combating capacity. The let Gen Legesse Tefferu, an air

force pilot shot down incredibly five Somali Mig Jets by dog fighting with his F5 US made combating air craft. He received admiration from the world known media such as Washington post newspaper.

The victory of Ethiopia reduced Somalia in to internal political instability and civil war. After the down fall of Mohammed Siad Barre's regime in 1991, Somalia had been doomed to anarchy and it had been a breeding ground for terrorism. Since then, Ethiopia has been fighting terrorism attack launched by the Alshabaab groups and in reversing the terrorist plot, side by side with the ground forces; the Ethiopian Air Force delivered its duties in biting the enemy.

Similar to the eastern front, Ethiopia also faced various military incursions from the western and northern fronts. In 1977 during the Derg era, when Ethiopia was preoccupied by the war of the Somalia invasion, the Ethiopian armed opposition group known as Ethiopian Democratic Union /EDU/ supported by the Sudan regular army invaded the north western part of Gondar in the part of Humera. Similar to the other parts war, the Ethiopian ground force was supported by the Ethiopian Air Force and defeated the invasion army. The border between Ethiopia and the Sudan is still not officially demarcated and delimited.

The ongoing civil war in Sudan further made the border area volatile and Ethiopia should reconnaissance its air space in the border areas.

After three decades of civil war, in 1991 Eritrea was separated from Ethiopia and became sovereign State and recognized as independent country by the United Nations. The government of Ethiopia led by EPRDF had good relation for 8 years with Eritrean government. Both countries used common currency which was the Ethiopian Birr. However, in 1991 the two governments' good relations deemed in to foe due to various reasons. As mentioned above, similar to the other neighboring countries, when Eritrea was separated from Ethiopia, proper border demarcation and delimitation was not conducted.

Hence, by claiming the border town of "Badime" as a pretext, Eritrea invaded Ethiopia and bloody war broke out between the two countries and both sides lost lives of many people and property destruction occurred. During the battle, in line with the ground forces, the Ethiopian Air Force played pivotal role in defending the country and shortening the combating time.

As mentioned above, Ethiopia is

located in politically volatile region and has no border demarcation except with Kenya and Djibouti and these left the country to be vulnerable to border conflict.

Currently, Ethiopia is constructing Abbay Dam on the Abbay River which is expected to generate over five thousand Megawatt electric power. The completion of the project will change the nation's energy landscape and will bring tremendous impact on the nation's ambition to change its agriculture led economy in to the industry led one.

However, the lower riparian countries, instead of appreciating Ethiopia's efforts for regional cooperation through energy export, they claimed as if Ethiopia overrides their rights to use the Abbay River water. On the contrary, our country repeatedly announced that it will never deny their rights with regard to the usage of the water and invited guests that included experts from the lower riparian countries to visit the Dam site and they confirmed that the Dam never harms their interest.

However, they still accuse Ethiopia as if it is against them. Some extremist politicians refute that they have an ambition to halt the construction of the Dam by whatever means including using force. Therefore, Ethiopia should be ready to defend its air territories and to take any deterrent measures against the external threat. To this end, modernizing the Ethiopian Air Force must be a priority agenda.

As it is known, currently, Sudan is submerged into civil war and anarchy. It seems that the war will be protracted because of the involvement of external interest groups in the internal affair of Sudan. They are manifesting their interference by supporting both warring parties as per the interest they claim from the country or the area. As it is known the Abbay Dam is located only 20 kilo meter away from the Ethio-Sudan border and the submerging of Sudan in to anarchy and the crippling of state apparatus in that country makes the Dam site very vulnerable to the external threat.

South Sudan also has been submerged in conflict for a decade and a half which makes the region further volatile. Therefore, in order to secure its peace and stability as well as keeping its sovereignty intact, modernizing the combating capacity of its Air Force and air defense system is timely issue for Ethiopia.

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

Editorial

Ethio-Italian cooperation key to enhance quality education

The recently signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Ethiopia's Ministry of Education and its counterpart Italy's Ministry of Education is a significant milestone in their mutual collaboration in the education sector. This agreement highlights the growing partnership between the two countries and paves the way for enhanced educational ties, fostering a culture of shared learning and advancement.

The Education Minister Professor Birhanu Nega said Ethiopia's unwavering dedication to academic excellence will transform the education sector. The government has implemented a range of reforms to ensure that all Ethiopian citizens have access to quality education on a fair and equitable basis. Indeed, these efforts demonstrate the nation's commitment to empowering its citizens with knowledge and skills for future success.

Equally enthusiastic about the collaboration, Italian Minister Giuseppe Valditata expressed his government's interest in cooperation with Ethiopia in areas such as technical and vocational education, language and culture and student and teachers exchange programs. Certainly, this mutual desire for cooperation reflects both countries' commitment to cross-cultural learning and exchange of best practices in the education sector.

Obviously, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education's commitment to ensure equitable and quality education is commendable. Through various reforms, such as strict examination measures, curriculum revisions, and standardized guidelines, the Ministry is working tirelessly to provide equal access to quality education for all Ethiopians.

It is also worth noting the Ministry's non-tolerant stance on cheating during national examinations. By implementing strict monitoring, particularly during the Ethiopian General Secondary Education and Certificate Examination Entrance Examinations, the Ministry is ensuring that only qualified and competent students are selected. The reforms and measures undertaken by the Ethiopian Ministry of Education in areas such as access, equity, quality, relevance, efficiency, research, and technology transfer are showing positive results.

The Ministry's dedication to educational standardization and continues improvement is evident in its efforts to enforce curriculum guidelines and frameworks. This commitment ensures that standards are maintained and learning outcomes are improved.

More importantly, Ethiopia and Italy have long been engaged in fruitful educational cooperation, with Italy offering scholarships to Ethiopian students to pursue higher education in Italian universities. This has enabled Ethiopian students to gain valuable knowledge and skills, which they bring back to their country to contribute to its development.

In addition to scholarships, there are other areas of collaboration between Italian and Ethiopian universities. Joint research projects, idea exchanges, and the establishment of joint academic programs are examples of the fruitful partnership between the two countries.

The inking of education cooperation between Ethiopia and Italy creates a watershed moment to further refine the deep-rooted and historical ties of both nations. Education being a priority for the former, Italy's support will surely be a plus to revitalize the sector and bring the much needed change. There should however be a demonstrable resolve between both sides to turn the accord into reality.

As the saying goes, teaching is the mother of all professions, investing in education is nothing less than transforming a nation. It is through education that generation can be equipped with the required know-how. And, the cooperation between Addis and Rome will turn the ambition of decent education into action. Trained manpower is firepower to catapult the country to economic prosperity. On the other hand, absence of trained manpower has been a hurdle in the sector and it is cooperation with countries like Italy that redress the shortfalls.



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Opinion

BRICS as a Future-oriented Association

BY ALEXANDER KOMISSAROV

Today, no one has any doubt that we are witnessing tectonic shift of the world order that is acquiring an equitable, democratic, multipolar nature. More and more countries of the Global South are pursuing independent course policies, defend their fundamental national interests as well as their sovereignty and identity. This tendency has led to a surge of interest towards BRICS. As a result, an important decision has been made to invite six countries, including Ethiopia, to join the association starting from January 1, 2024.

This decision, made at the 15th BRICS Summit held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in August 2023, marks the beginning of a new stage of the development of the association. It will also define a main vector of further development of the BRICS member countries for the coming years and, of course, give a powerful impetus to the qualitative improvement of their bilateral and multilateral relations. So, it would be useful once again to recall what this association represents.

BRICS is an interstate group presently comprising Brazil, China, India, Russia and South Africa. These countries are influential members of various international organizations such as UN, G20, WTO, Non-Aligned Movement, Group of 77 and organizations of regional cooperation, i.e. Shanghai Cooperation Organization, African Union, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, Commonwealth of Independent States, Eurasian Economic Union, MERCOSUR etc. But BRICS is an association of a new type, where there are no leaders and followers, no teachers and students, no better ones. It has long established itself as a democratic platform where interaction is built on principles of equality, mutual respect and support, while all the decisions are adopted basing on consensus.

The expansion of BRICS, as well as the desire of more than two dozen states to establish special relations with the association, clearly demonstrates aspiration of the overwhelming majority of countries to develop fair and mutually beneficial cooperation without dictate from the outside.

BRICS, as a platform for coordinating different approaches and elaborating mutually acceptable solutions, provides states of the Global South with opportunities to ensure their rightful place in the emerging multi-polar world architecture. This, in fact, is the essence of the future-oriented strategic course of BRICS that meets the interests of most of the international community.

The growing influence of BRICS goes hand in hand with its increasing economic potential. The share of the BRICS countries, which are home to more than three billion people, has reached almost 26% of the global GDP. In terms of purchasing power parity, they have a combined GDP larger than that of the G7. Forecast for 2023 is 31.5% and 30% respectively. With the new members, the contribution of BRICS to the world economy might increase up to 37%. The enlarged association will constitute 46% of the planet's population, 25% of global exports (merchandise trade), and 43% of oil production.

The multifaceted strategic partnership within BRICS is based on three key pillars – politics and security, economics and finance, culture and humanitarian ties. The BRICS states continue to

facilitate closer collaboration among them, and their joint work is bringing concrete and tangible results. More and more new joint infrastructure and investment projects are launched, commodity exchanges are growing, and contacts in different sectors of economy are intensively expanding. There is an active cooperation between the states' parliaments, city administrations, business, academic and scientific circles, civil society, youth, women and the media. In addition to summits, more than 20 dialogue formats function within the association.

The spheres of interaction cover a wide variety of areas, such as energy efficiency, climate change, food and energy security, poverty reduction. Special emphasis is made on the economic component of the partnership, in particular the implementation of the Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership 2025. Cooperation is being stepped up in different fields such as diversification of supply chains, de-dollarization and transition to national currencies in mutual payments, digital economy, small and medium-sized enterprises support, fair technology transfer. Efforts are being exerted to develop common approaches to reforming the international financial architecture, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, with the aim of increasing the role of developing countries.

A lot of attention is paid to cooperation in the fields of science, education, innovation, information and communication technologies. Priority areas also include joint work to counter new challenges and threats, including anti-terrorist cooperation and anti-money laundering. There are different promising areas of partnership, such as nuclear medicine and peaceful space exploration.

There is no doubt that Ethiopia will be able to benefit a lot from cooperation in the aforementioned spheres within BRICS, facilitate its economic growth and voice the country's and the continent's interests and development priorities as well as forge solid and lasting diplomatic cooperation with other members of association.

In 2024, the chairmanship of BRICS will pass over to Russia. My country plans to hold nearly 200 political, economic and social events, which will be hosted by over a dozen Russian cities. As the BRICS' chairman, Russia intends to do its best to contribute to the implementation of the decisions made at the Johannesburg Summit, including those related to the expansion of BRICS, as well as to bolster the countries' strategic partnership in all areas.

In conclusion, BRICS is a unique platform within which states can realize their goals and find reliable partners. Moreover, the wide geography of the association and its friends contributes greatly to the harmonization of the world system, which suffered for many years from individual states' claims to hegemony. Aimed at resolving collectively the pressing issues of the global agenda, based on compliance with international law, true multilateralism and respect for the interests of the world majority, BRICS is providing a significant input to the formation of a new model of international relations pursuing creation of a truly democratic and equitable world order.

The author is Counselor of the Russian Embassy

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

Business & Economy

Exemplary ties between business and community in Batu

BY ABEBE WOLDEGIORGIS

Ethiopia aspires to attain structural transformation through shifting from agricultural led economy in to industry led one. Currently, agriculture contributes more than 50 percent to the Gross Domestic Production (GDP) followed by the service and the manufacturing sectors.

As the main stay of the economy of more than 85% of the population who earn its living from the agricultural sector, it should be modernized, but it is characterized by rain fed, subsistence and vulnerable to extreme climate conditions so that it could not be satisfactory. Hence, to attain structural change, the stranded labor force working in agriculture sector must be shifted to the non-farming sectors. Side by side with these, promoting modern commercial farm which can attract foreign and local investment is vital.

Among the flourishing commercial farms; flower, fruit and vegetables and others can help to meet the aspiration for the development of self-sustained private led economy.

To encourage the private sector and smooth the inflow of capital to the sector, the government has taken various measures and among others; providing banking services and farm land in fair price, facilitating logistics, electric power and piped water supply and introducing new laws to help investors develop confidence.

Currently, flower products have been the second foreign currency earner next to coffee. The sector, in addition to creating job opportunities to the local community, it is delivering its social responsibility.

The Sher Ethiopia PLC, which produces roses, located near Zway Lake can be mentioned in this regard. The roses are grown in greenhouses that consist of a steel framework and a plastic cover. Approximately 12,500 employees grow, harvest, grade and pack roses at three farms. Between 2.5 and 4 million roses are processed and transported to the airport in Addis Ababa every day, from where the roses are flown by Ethiopian Airlines to Europe for further distribution. This makes the farm the largest rose grower in the world and the biggest rose supplier in Europe.

Ethiopia has excellent conditions for growing roses: fertile soil, a favorable climate, sufficient rainfall, and the right altitude. The horticultural sector is very important for the economy of Ethiopia. Sher Ethiopia is a major player and responsible for close to 4% of all foreign currency flowing into Ethiopia.

On top of supporting the nation's economy by bringing foreign currency, the company is discharging its social responsibility via supporting the local community. To this end, it has done many things including



Eleni Kebede: A sponsored student by Zaway Rose PLC



Zaway Roses farm

On top of supporting the nation's economy by bringing foreign currency, the company is discharging its social responsibility via supporting the local community

constructing schools for the children of the community. Eleni Kebede, 20, was born in Batu town also known as Zaway, 168 kilometers south from Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa. She is now a first year student at Wachemo University. Her study began at Sher Ethiopia School, which was established by Sher Ethiopia PLC, the biggest flower farm in Ethiopia and in the world as well.

She was only 4 years old when her mother who works at the farm dropped her at the school before starting work. So that she didn't have to worry about Eleni as all the necessary facilities including meal, sleeping and playing materials with people who take care of the children are already made available by the school free of charge.

Since then, thousands of kids whose parents work at the flower farms and other children from the surrounding community have been benefited from the free education program.

"In terms of quality also Sher Ethiopia is the best school in Batu town. Many children aspire to go there," Pastor Hobicho Debelo, leader of elders and religious fathers in Batu town said.

Today, the school has accommodated around 7,000 students from lower kindergarten level to 10 plus 2. The school supplies meals, school uniforms and all the necessary utensils and exercise books for all the children.

Zaway Roses PLC is one of the five rose farms within Sher Ethiopia rose farms that covers a total of 500 hectares of land. Depending on the size of their farm, the five farms sponsor around 200 students every year, according to Ermias Solomon, Operational Manager of Zaway Roses. Half of the parents of these children work while the remaining is selected from the community to benefit from the free school. "We do these as part of our Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and because we are Fair-trade Standard Certificate member," Ermias said.

"Even though our contribution is like a drop in the ocean, we are glad to see those kids going to college today with our contribution," he added.

In addition to free education and feeding program for those who are beneficiary of full scholarship, the flower farms have also been providing school supplies for up to 400 children annually to help those children go to school. According to Ermias, the hospital and stadium built by Sher Ethiopia have also been serving the community.

Azeb Teshome, 20, is also among the first batch of students of Sher Ethiopia School to go to college. She is also a first year student at Wolaita Sodo University. Two of her sisters including one who was recently awarded a laptop by the school for her best achievement are also beneficiaries of the free education program, which is often known as Zaway Flower Scholarship.

"Because of their close relationship with the community and their continuous support, these flower farms are considered by the community as their own properties. The farms are exemplary for other companies whatever field they are engaged in," Nebi

Gudeta, Investment Head at Batu City Administration in Oromia Region said.

Nebi said that he and other officials have witnessed the collaborations of the flower farms in their different projects from supporting job creation efforts of the city administration for the youth, to helping elders and people with disabilities as well as providing health insurance for hundreds of families.

Currently, in addition to the total of 20,000 employees working at the five flower farms, 471 youths are organized in an association by Batu City Administration have created linkages with the farms and are supplying various materials of sanitary products and stationeries and selling byproducts, according to Nebi.

In relation to employees' tax income, the city administration is also collecting around 200 million Birr on average annually from the five farms, according to Nebi, who stressed the significance of the contributions of the rose farms to Batu City.

When it comes to hard currency generation from export of roses, Zaway Roses PLC, which operates only on 42 hectares, has been generating around 10 million Euros by selling 115 million stems per year - about 300,000 stems every day.

"These flower farms have lifted burden from many families...I urge the community to protect these investments and the government should also support them."

"I wish they have the capacity to help more as the city has been expanding and the number of inhabitants has increased a lot over the past years," Pastor Hobicho said.

While the lion's share from the total 500 hectares of land is owned by the Dutch-based Sher Ethiopia Company, AQ Roses PLC and Herburg Roses each owns 40 hectares, and Braam Flowers covers 22 hectares of land.

When she completes her study, Eleni plans to become a lawyer and serve her community. "I am so grateful for what these companies have done for us. Such successful practice has to be encouraged and continue," she suggested.

Art & Culture

Your checkered past will get you

(Short Story)

BY ALEM HAILU G/KRISTOS

Out of the blue a cold sweat began coursing down Samson's spinal cord when he caught the sight of a lady and a young girl presumably a mother and a daughter. They began approaching him directed by the pointing finger of the guard of the organization Samson works in. Sat on his office chair Samson was talking with his coworker-turned- fiancée Sara that stood by his side.

Unconsciously, Samson sprang to his feet his eyes glued to the young girl. What the camera of his eye captured and his sub conscience transported him two decades back on the timeline.

He and Sara were discussing about the shortlist of invitees they could call for their wedding with the money they decided to jointly outlay.

"Fifty from your side, fifty from mine," he swung his hand emphasizing the need to downsize the number of wedding invitees.

"Please, Samson all together I have to invite sixty people. I think we could afford," she put her arm on his shoulder affectionately.

"In that case let us make it 40 from my side and 60 from yours," he moved his head on both sides to show a fair mix.

"Sorry Samson apart from my relatives, neighbors, close colleagues, friends from college want to attend the wedding which will remain a memorable occasion for me,"

"Things have changed specially after the inflation. We must not bend backwards to throw a fantasy wedding putting our hard-won money on the altar of inflated pride," he began striking out names from his shortlist, while Sara started adding names on her list.

"Yes, you are right. We need the money to 'they lived happily ever after,' " she giggled; he followed suit.

"What made you surmise the marital vibe is like that?" he casted a passionate glance towards her.

"That is what people say!" she upheld forked fingers of both arms.

"You must have taken that from Papa Tesfaye Sahelu, the one that used to tell tales to children in a TV show."

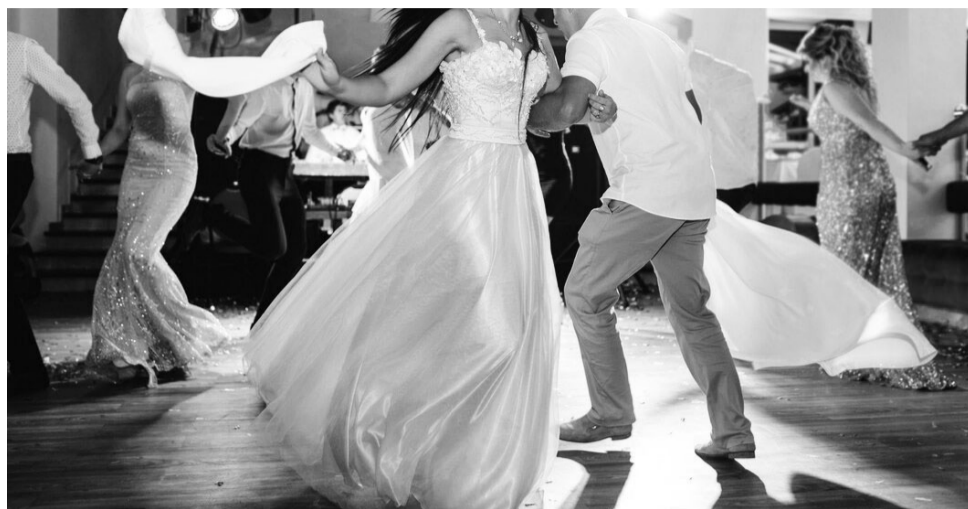
"Of course, I grew up imbibing moral and ethics from papa Tesfaye during my formative years."

"Don't you think marriage is a bitter-sweet thing?" he sarcastically smiled.

"You used a nice expression. Yes it must be bitter sweet."

"In literature such expression is called oxymoron. In a good marriage the two ingredients are found in proper balance."

"I read your mind. You mean the hardship of parenting and the pleasure of consensual intimacy."



"Yes you are right. Standing by each other side in punching away the hurdles life poses and in enjoying the flower it proffers also affords hidden satisfaction 'we made it hurrah!'"

"Love birds must not jump into marriage simply expecting the bright side of marriage. They must learn in advance the presence of a shady area where it casts its shadows," a dark cloud crossed her face.

"Yes it has ups and downs, twists and turns."

"It as well has hairpin turns."

"I remember reading marriage is an institution where partners' integrity, selflessness and faithfulness fall under a question mark,"

"Do not worry discussing once in a while we shall turn our marriage a hit,"

"Yes we have to establish a genuine relationship."

"Picture perfect marriage collapses when relations sour because of the follies of one of the partners or both of them. They must not drift apart, for they will stop clicking. That is why the pessimist say 'marriage is the tomb of love.'"

"Often relations sour when one of the partners begins to project his/her hidden habits after marital vows. The fickle one could resume somersault of love. That is why there is a need to take time for studying a partner's covert and overt behaviors."

"It could not be gainsaid studying would-be spouse's checkered past is essential."

It was when Sara and Samson were eagerly talking the blissful life ahead of them the mother and her daughter approached them.

Sara was a reserved and cool girl. More often than not, she was aloof.

A goofy man Samson was at a loss how to romantically address a member of the fair sex till he gets tipsy. He changed his timidity with a painstaking effort. And after it was too late he endeared himself to Sara to make a sprinted finish to break ranks of the bachelor ones. The flattery of Samson's unstinting attention and the compliments he baths her with swept Sara off her feet.

"It is with a pail full of beauty God showered you with...Is it the attire that lends glamor to you or you that afford beauty to the attire?.. Both long and short dresses befit you. Have you been on the front row when God was

dispensing beauty?..."

All his remarks sank in Sara's mind and warmed her heart which soon got conquered by love.

"Unlike many guys you are calm, cool and collected. These virtues of yours attracted me very much."

"Thank you!"

"The screen saver of my eyes," he rubbed her cheeks with his arms.

This way despite the age gap between them they developed a friendship which conspicuously blossomed into a strange affectionate bond which augured well for marriage.

Soon after the lady and the young girl drew closer towards Samson's table, receiving a call from the bridesmaid about choosing the bridal dress for rent in a nearby shop, Sara went out of office to answer the phone.

The young girl was a mirror image of her mother except that the wear and tear of the tyrant time has left its ugly mark on the face and elegance of the mother Rahel boasting a brown chocolate skin that matches with that of her eyes and hair color. As brown is his favorite color Rahel magnetized him upon first sight two decades back. It was that selfsame face he beheld when seeing the young girl Rebecca in his office.

The strange surprise made him to revert back and reminiscence the record moment of happiness he lavished with Rahel, while he was on a field trip to Illubabor to make a TV reportage on the inauguration of a hospital made by a philanthropist.

That day, on a return trip, as he missed the car assigned to take them on a field tour he was forced to rent a lodging at a small hotel at the outskirts of the city. After taking dinner on time he had to resort to alcohol. Goading the cashier Rahel to take whisky—triple shots— he gulped down bottles and bottles of beer and consummated it with whisky saying 'Beer after whisky is risky but whisky after beer is dear'. Rahel was laughing "Is that so? I didn't know that. I like challenging customs. Let me check out things," she took a bottle of beer. In the good old days everything was less expensive.

A rain accompanied by a ferocious wind and also punctuated by a lightning had made the night a terrible one. Rahel, who was intent to go home, had to willy-nilly accept his persuasion to stay nightlong in

the Hotel. That turnout of events became a reason for the conception of Rebecca.

"Must Rebecca undergo a DNA test for paternity test? Does Samson have integrity?" were the questions Rahel tossing and turning in her head. She was on the roller-coaster of emotions.

Heading towards Rebecca kissing her on her cheeks "What is your name pretty?" he accorded her a warm smile.

"I go by Rebecca dad. Thank you!" she turned her face towards her mother.

Kissing the mother in a similar fashion Samson said "Rahel, why didn't you tell me about my lovely daughter Rebecca all these years?"

At this moment Sara who returned back and heard about the unfolding angry stormed out throwing her wedding ring on the floor. Rolling all the way the ring fell by the leg of Samson. Indifferent to what happened the three continued talking.

"You did tell me your being a TV journalist while we were watching a documentary you produced entitled 'Wedding and the Ethiopian month Miazia.' The show had a contagious effect. That day we were high on mood. When I called at ETV they told me you had resigned and left without a trace. They were not willing to give me any further information."

"I see!"

"Rebecca is now a student at a private college. Her stepfather, engaged in modern farming, is a kind and responsible person. Financially we are well off. She has two brothers—twin boys—he and I born. It is because Rebecca nagged me to death 'show me my biological father' I came to Addis to conduct a research to trace you down."

"You did a nice thing. I will take charge of her college fee and help Rebecca get herself back on her feet. Now let us go to a nearby restaurant and celebrate. We shall talk about the past, deliberate how to face today and address tomorrow," he bent down and picked the ring.

On their way out, when Sara saw them from afar she made a u-turn and moved away picking pace.

"Is she your wife?"

"My fiancée!"

"I see. Is she disturbed by our visit?"

"I think so. We are to get married after three weeks. I have to undergo a peace brokering work."

"I have to help you out!"

"Sure. But we have to wait until tomorrow as 'anger unlike love fizzles out quickly.'"

On a sunny Sunday afternoon celebrants of a wedding were displaying their traditional grooving styles in Samson's parents' house. They were vying to display the chirography of their dance is synchronized with the music. Among the pairs dancing on the make-shift stage, jubilant were Sara and Rahel as well as Samson and Rebeca.

Global Affairs

Beware carbon myopia at COP28:

Why climate, nature action must now come together in the race for a liveable planet

As COP28 delegates focus on the first Global Stocktake, there is no doubt that the race to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions is vital.

But while electric vehicles and solar power uptake have seen visible and welcome progress in particular, the transition to a thriving future on a healthy planet requires much more than decarbonization alone.

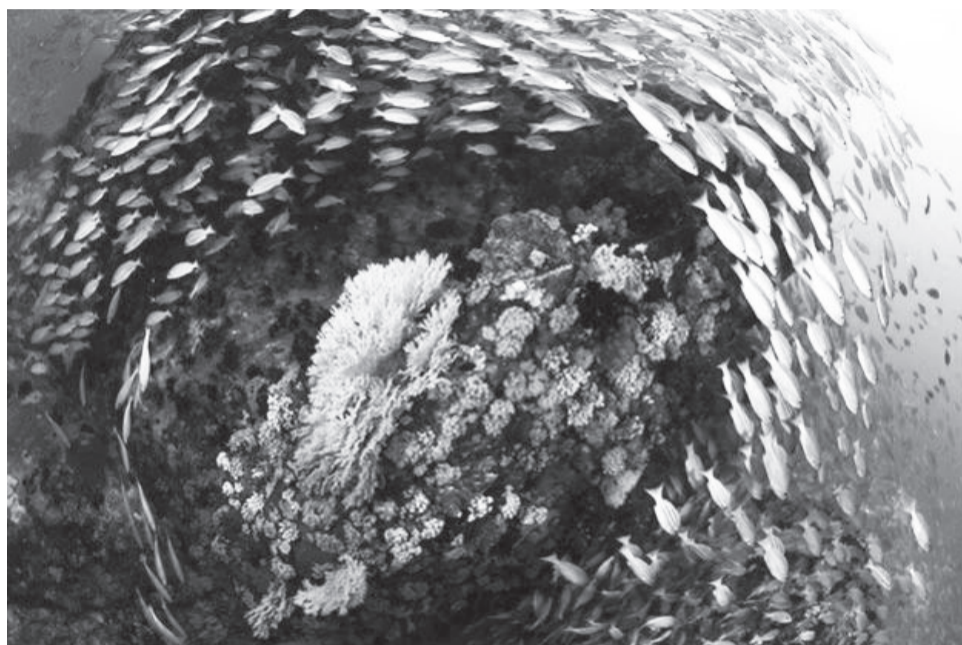
Don't get me wrong. Decarbonization is a must. It has to be done. But focus on just one lane of what must be a systemic transition to a liveable planet is dangerously myopic.

Water vapor, for example, is overlooked as a highly significant greenhouse gas. It is the most abundant greenhouse gas, and responsible for about half of greenhouse heating effects. Recent research published in the International Journal of Environment and Climate change highlights that the quantities of water vapor in our atmosphere are affected by a breadth of environmentally damaging human activities, beyond fossil fuel emissions.

The oceans are the world's biggest carbon sink and a weather and climate regulator in their own right. Harm to ocean ecosystem functions due to ocean acidification, toxic "forever chemicals" and microplastic pollution has led to reductions in phytoplankton photosynthesis by as much as 50 per cent since the 1950s. Phytoplankton photosynthesis underpins almost all marine animal life by generating most of the oxygen and food that provide other organisms with the chemical energy they need to exist.

This has knock-on implications deeply interlinked with climate action: reduced phytoplankton leads to higher concentrations of dissolved carbon dioxide in ocean surface water, further accelerating ocean acidification and allowing evaporation and atmospheric water vapor concentrations to increase, increasing humidity, precipitation and temperature as an additional climate change feedback loop.

Importantly, if we achieve net zero carbon by 2050, we could still face catastrophic climate change if ocean ecosystem health is overlooked. In addition to the consequences of



A reevaluation of how humanity interacts with nature will bring the sea change we need

global heating, ocean acidification and the collapse of the marine ecosystems could lead to the loss of most seals, birds, whales, fish, and food supply for three billion people.

Take another example: deforestation. In the past 300 years or so, 1.5 billion hectares of forest have been removed – an area roughly one and a half times the size of the US. Scientists have shown that ecosystems damaged by humans are more vulnerable to wildfires, which add to atmospheric carbon dioxide and cause excessive atmospheric heat to pass back to the ocean, releasing more water vapor and further increasing greenhouse gases.

Similarly, the increasing severity of devastating floods in recent years is not only linked to climate change but often also the result of forest and vegetation loss, land conversion, intensive land management and river straightening. Anthropogenic climate change is making extreme weather events more frequent and more severe, while human activity is also eroding the resilience of the environment to absorb these impacts.

Any narrow focus on something that is systemic is inherently problematic. Our planet's multivarious ecosystems are deeply interconnected dynamic systems within which human activity is interwoven. We cannot silo our environmental challenges, nor our responses to them. Successful climate mitigation can be only achieved in the wider context of

terrestrial and marine ecosystem health and social impact, measuring progress in lockstep with planetary health metrics and the sustainable development goals.

This is why it is beyond time to rethink our relationship with nature. Without a shift in how we value our natural environment and our relationship to it, we will always be trapped in a race against time to clean up after ourselves, treating only the symptoms of a dysfunctional relationship with our natural world, rather than the cause.

A reevaluation of how humanity interacts with nature will bring the sea change we need. Protecting nature is too often falsely considered a trade-off against economic development, when the fact is that one helps the other: the collapse of ecosystem services would cost \$2.7 trillion annually by 2030. The truth is that thriving, protected ecosystems are an exceptionally powerful development asset.

Not only is the protection of nature an absolute prerequisite for the success of climate action, but policies that preserve natural land could also increase global real GDP in 2030 in the order of trillions of dollars. This includes benefits through carbon sequestration, and through the multiple benefits that natural lands, waters and oceans provide.

The economic case for protecting nature by the World Bank found that restoring 350 million hectares of land could generate about \$170 billion per year in net value by sequestering up to 1.7 gigatons of carbon dioxide equivalent annually and through watershed protection, improved crop yields and forest products.

As we race towards net zero, we must look with equal urgency at nature's protection to ensure we decarbonize alongside progress towards ecological health and social stability on a superhighway of durable transition. Only change that accounts for humanity's relationship with nature at a systemic level, its climate and its ecosystem health, will truly be a transition to thriving future on a liveable planet.

SOURCE: INTER PRESS SERVICE

Law & Politics

IGAD's growing role in mediating regional conflicts

BY EYUEL KIFLU

In recent years, the Horn of Africa conflict has witnessed a remarkable shift towards African-led solutions. One prominent example of this is the successful resolution of the conflict in Northern Ethiopia. Amidst these challenging times, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has emerged as a key player, actively working towards a peaceful resolution and fostering stability in the region.

IGAD, an organization that has taken center stage, has been instrumental in promoting dialogue and negotiation among the warring parties in the northern Ethiopia conflict. Through its diplomatic efforts, the organization has facilitated several rounds of talks, mediating discussions aimed at achieving a peaceful resolution. The recent silence of guns in northern Ethiopia, brought about by the Pretoria hostility agreement between the conflicting parties, stands as a testament to IGAD's tireless endeavors, supported by the African Union and other stakeholders. Ethiopia's commitment to resolving the crisis through African means has been widely appreciated, offering valuable lessons for addressing the ongoing problems in the Horn region.

Moreover, IGAD's commitment to resolving regional problems extends beyond the Northern Ethiopian conflict. The organization has been actively engaged in addressing other conflicts, such as the ongoing Sudan conflict and the armed violence in Oromia state, Ethiopia. Its recent involvement in the failed negotiations between the Ethiopian federal government and the Shene terrorist group in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, demonstrates IGAD's dedication to finding comprehensive solutions to African problems.

Also, after the failed second round of negotiations between the Ethiopian federal government and Shene terrorist group, IGAD expressed its hope through Executive Secretary Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu and acknowledged the vital role of dialogue and negotiation in addressing grievances and resolving conflicts, essential for achieving enduring peace in our region. IGAD has been closely engaged in the ongoing dialogue between the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Shene terrorist group.

Leveraging upon IGAD's experience in mediating similar situations, the Executive Secretary took note that



PEACE, PROSPERITY AND
REGIONAL INTEGRATION

in any negotiation process, there are inevitable periods of challenge and complexity. IGAD will continue to remain seized of the situation and stands ready to provide unwavering support to both sides in their pursuit of a peaceful resolution to the situation, according to an IGAD statement on November 22, 2023.

Beyond this, Ethiopia, in particular, has been a staunch supporter of the growing initiative to resolve African issues through African means. The country advocates for African problems to be solved by Africans, a strategy that has shown promising results and has been replicated in the current Sudan situation.

Highlighting the importance of IGAD's role, the 41st Extraordinary Session of the IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government recently took place in Djibouti. With the support of the African Union, IGAD called for a unified African-anchored mediation process, coordinating various national, regional, continental, and international efforts.

During the Assembly, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed reiterated Ethiopia's commitment to supporting a peaceful resolution with Sudan. The Office of the Prime Minister announced Ethiopia's continued dedication to resolving the conflict in the neighboring country, which has persisted for several months. Ethiopia, as an active member of IGAD, has played a significant role in supporting the peace and stability of Sudan.

Following the session, IGAD made a significant announcement—the fighting forces in Sudan had agreed to a ceasefire and committed to upholding it. General Abdul Fatah Al Burhan, whose forces have been engaged in combat

with the Rapid Action Force since last December, attended the conference in Djibouti. Additionally, IGAD leaders held phone conversations with General Hamdan Degalo, the commander of the Rapid Action Force. Both generals agreed to the recommendations, and it is expected that they will meet separately after the ceasefire, as reported by the BBC.

The IGAD summit undeniably plays a crucial role in pacifying the region, serving as a beacon of hope for peace and stability. According to a report by the Ethiopian News Agency, IGAD emphasized in a statement that there can be no military solution to the current crisis in Sudan. It emphasized the importance of peaceful dialogue and discussion as the only way forward for a peaceful, stable, united, and democratic Sudan.

In order to garner full political and diplomatic support for IGAD and the African Union in their efforts to achieve a peaceful resolution to the ongoing conflict, the statement stressed the need to intensify efforts and foster closer collaboration and coordination with all stakeholders. Furthermore, IGAD called for quarterly meetings to assess the progress of the peace process in Sudan.

The statement also highlighted the accelerated efforts to organize an all-inclusive Sudanese-owned and Sudanese-led civilian dialogue. This dialogue aims to forge national consensus and pave the way for a civilian-led transition, culminating in open, transparent, and democratic elections.

IGAD's statement reiterated its call for an immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities by all parties

involved in the conflict. It also urged for unimpeded humanitarian access and the protection of civilians in the affected areas and communities.

Additionally, the statement called upon IGAD member states to reaffirm their pledges for humanitarian support to Sudan, while urging the international community to promptly respond and scale up its assistance to alleviate the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the country.

Furthermore, IGAD commended the role played by the IGAD Secretariat, led by the Executive Secretary of IGAD, Workneh Gebeyehu, in successfully facilitating the 41st Extraordinary Summit and co-facilitating the latest round of the Jeddah Talks. The co-facilitators of the Jeddah Talks, namely the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United States of America, and IGAD representing the African Union (AU), were also commended for their extended support in preserving the modest progress made in the last round of talks. IGAD expressed its continued and full support for the ongoing mediation efforts.

To sum up, IGAD's active role in resolving the Horn of Africa conflict, particularly the Northern Ethiopian conflict and the Sudan crisis, has been commendable. Through its diplomatic efforts and mediation, IGAD has played a crucial role in promoting dialogue, achieving ceasefires, and laying the groundwork for peaceful resolutions. The organization's commitment to finding African-led solutions is an encouraging step towards lasting stability and peace in the region. With continued collaboration and support from all stakeholders, IGAD is poised to make further progress in its mission to bring about a peaceful, united, and democratic Africa.

International News

Kenya to Roll Out Visa-Free Regime on January 1 – Ruto

Nairobi- President William Ruto has announced that Kenya will be a visa-free destination beginning January 2024.

Ruto stated Tuesday, while leading the country in commemorating the 60th Jamhuri Day celebrations at Nairobi's Uhuru Gardens, that Kenya is the birthplace of humanity and remains open to everyone who wishes to visit.

He pointed out that Kenya is the home of humanity, "a scientific fact that fills us with pride and underscores our rich heritage."

"It is with great pleasure, as President of this extraordinary country, to make a historic announcement of the decision of the Government of Kenya. Kenya will be a visa-free country," Ruto announced.

The Head of State said that it shall no longer be necessary for any person from any part of the globe to "carry the burden of applying for a visa".

"To echo the call of the Turkana people

to the world: 'Tobong'u Lorre!' a simple message to humanity: Welcome Home! This is why, the Government has abolished the requirement of visas for all our visitors."

Ruto said that Kenya had developed a digital platform to identify and vet travelers in advance.

Electronic travel authorization

Consequently, all travelers to Kenya will obtain electronic travel authorization as they visit.

If implemented, Kenya will become second country in Africa to open its borders after its East African counterpart Rwanda abolished visa requirement for all Africans.

President Ruto has been on the forefront in advocating for a borderless continent for prosperity of African States which he argues continue to lag behind because of the existence of borders which have partly hindered free movement of goods and people.

On December 9, President Ruto appealed to African governments to address trade barriers hindering youth entrepreneurship.

The President said by creating a conducive environment for entrepreneurship, Africa will expand opportunities for its youth, transforming their ideas into thriving cross-border businesses.

He said African governments should strive to provide young people with access to capital, mentorship and opportunities.

"This can be achieved by simplifying business regulations, facilitating access to finance and promoting regional economic integration," he said during the official opening of the Youth Connect Africa summit held in Nairobi.

President Ruto affirmed Kenya's support for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) which seeks to create a borderless market for African businesses.

Source: Capital FM.

Kenya: Rice Farmers Counting Heavy Losses Due to Floods

Kisumu - Rice farmers within the West Kano Irrigation Scheme are staring at a Sh50 million loss after flood water marooned rice under farms.

The scheme chairman Jared Odoyo says rice crop within the 650 acres is now wasted as the region continues to receive heavy amounts of rains. Odoyo says farmers took loans from banks and other micro finance institutions to develop their farms, which are now in ruins.

"Farmers are at crossroads since they must repay the loans and with schools opening next year, it is going to be a disaster," he said. He says the bumper harvest they had hoped to get in January next year is now a dashed hope.

Odoyo says the outlet pump too has failed to cope up with the magnitude of water as he appealed to both the county and national governments to assist farmers by acquiring a new pump.

"The outlet pump has been a problem to the farmers for two decades, it is a source of misery to the farmers and we would like to have a new pump bought," he said.

While addressing the press at the scheme, the farmers hailed the appointment of the substantive chief executive officer for National Irrigation Authority (NIA), whom they say will now drive the enhancement of rice production and food security in the region.

The Ministry of Water, Sanitation and Irrigation late last month picked Eng. Charles Muasya as the CEO for NIA. However, a farmer hailing from the West Kano Scheme has moved to the employment court in Kisumu to challenge the appointment of Eng. Muasya.

The farmers distanced themselves from the complainant noting that records do not indicate that he is a rice farmer in the region.

"We have gone through the list of our members and the name that has gone to court and purporting to be a farmer from this scheme is not our member," said Odoyo.

Odoyo says they have faith in the new CEO who has visited them on many occasions during his time as the acting CEO.

"What farmers want is service delivery to the people, the government is the appointing authority and if Eng. Muasya has been picked as the best, then we are behind him," he said.

The farmers noted that they will not be dragged into the politics of NIA but will work with whoever is chosen by the government. "We want the new CEO to help us address challenges affecting us at the scheme, let him come help us fix the new pump to get this flooded water out into Lake Victoria," he said.

Joseph Yogo, a farmer, appealed to the new incoming CEO to liaise with the Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS) to deal with the marauding hippopotamus that is wreaking havoc in their farms.

Yogo says besides floods, hippos are moving into their farms destroying everything in the farms.

"KWS has the capacity to take these hippos, we have tried to keep them at bay but we have failed, we need help," he said.

Source: Capital FM.

Namibia to Host Inaugural Global African Hydrogen Summit

As part of Namibia's COP28 programme, the Namibia Investment Promotion and Development Board (NIPDB), the Environmental Investment Fund of Namibia (EIF), DMG events and Vasco Da Gama Energy on 06 November 2023 officially launched the inaugural Global African Hydrogen Summit (GAh2S), to be hosted in Windhoek from 3 to 5 September 2024. Themed "From Ambition to Action: Fuelling Africa's Green Industrial Revolution", the three-day summit is expected to convene heads of state, government agencies, industry business leaders, project developers, investors, thought leaders and technologists from across Africa and around the globe to drive critical investments and financing into bankable green energy projects.

Project and investment showcases are to span the hydrogen, renewables, power, infrastructure, transportation and mobility sectors.

The launch was officiated by the mines and energy minister, Tom Alweendo, who emphasised that the world is facing an unprecedented climate crisis and that the urgency to transition to clean and sustainable energy sources has never been more apparent. Alweendo added that this has become a global imperative that demands collaborative efforts and innovative solutions, and Namibia is poised to play a pivotal role in this global transition agenda.

Said Alweendo: "Africa's energy position is changing and it is against this backdrop that as a country we are positioning ourselves as the sustainable energy capital of Africa. This will not only be achieved through the sustainable beneficiation of our primary

energy resources, but also through the development of green and blue economic growth and energies, investing in platforms that facilitate dialogue and partnerships, skills and technology transfers, as well as trade between Africa and the rest of the world".

He continued "the Global African Hydrogen Summit will be the first platform of its kind to be leveraged by African governments, investors, financiers, scholars and the public in order to unlock additional opportunities for our continent and its partners. It will also provide a platform for the global players in the hydrogen value chain to showcase their projects, plans and technologies to the African continent," said Alweendo.

GAh2S will focus on the global role that Africa expects to play in the hydrogen market and will facilitate collaboration and advance dialogue across policy, investment and the emerging hydrogen value chain. The continent has the potential to harmonise its own industrialisation to become a global powerhouse of green manufactured products, whilst applying a localised multiplier effect, stimulating in-continent value including employment creation, ancillary industries, light manufacturing and natural resource refining - uplifting economies across Africa, whilst sustainably bringing an end to energy poverty.

Clean hydrogen can cover a significant portion of the global energy transition needs, especially in hard-to-abate sectors and industries such as steel manufacturing and aviation. Several African countries--most notably Egypt, Kenya, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia and South Africa--are actively pursuing clean hydrogen production. These countries formed

the collective Africa Green Hydrogen Alliance in May 2023 to collaborate on capacity creation, financing, certification, and regulatory and policy agendas of green hydrogen development in Africa. A McKinsey & Company report projects that by 2050, the annual investment required will be more than double to US\$160 billion, with the focus of investment likely shifting to an expected 43% of capital expenditure spent on hydrogen.

With an abundance of solar and wind energy resources as well as the availability of unpopulated land, Namibia has a unique potential to enable low-cost green hydrogen production. The country is currently investing in the research and development of green hydrogen technologies, through engagement of, and support from, foreign institutions and partner countries like Germany. In May 2023, the government of Namibia and Hyphen Hydrogen Energy announced a deal for the next phase of a US\$10 billion green hydrogen project that will export green molecules to Europe once complete.

Long-term offtake agreements are expected in this case. The development of a stable green hydrogen market has the potential to facilitate investment in skills for the domestic workforce, enhance local jobs creation and thus uplift livelihoods.

As a dynamic and innovative investment platform, the Global African Hydrogen Summit is anticipated to provide a variety of engagement opportunities including an educative masterclass, high level leadership dialogues, a strategic conference, project investment boardroom roundtables, and a technology and innovation hub.

Source: New Era.

Planet Earth

Harnessing better land policy in Africa for rapid economic development

BY STAFF REPORTER

Africa is the second largest continent in the world in terms of land width. Its land is also highly resourceful as it is suitable for agriculture, mining, tourism and manufacturing industry, among others. Therefore, land is a valuable resource in the continent that should be harnessed properly to drive the economic growth of the continent rapidly.

In a recent conference related to the land policy in Africa, experts from around the continent have reflected their say for the future of the continent's land use policy.

In the AfCFTA negotiations, land issues lie in the domain of domestic regulations. A Press Release from UNECA indicated that assured land tenure and land security is the only way to support intra African investments, which Mr. Makong said, are still low in Africa. The success of the investment protocol under the AfCFTA will depend on countries' domestic laws and the alignment of such laws with the AfCFTA.

"There are guidelines on land reforms that need to be turned into regulations within the domestic systems. Policy coherence has to be at the heart of what we do. This can be achieved by engaging everyone, including women and youth at the grassroots level," said Mr. Makong.

Eileen Wakesho, Director, Community Land Protection at Namati, Kenya said the focus on AfCFTA is mainly on the movement of goods, services and people and the economic benefits to be accrued, however the biggest challenge is that access to land in Africa is not equal.

Data shows that between 2010 and 2020 in sub-Saharan Africa, 7.3 million hectares were leased or acquired, and less than 40% was eventually developed.

"Expansion of infrastructure requires land. The land is acquired but people are not compensated because they have no ownership. There is need to check on the cost and see if it benefits people," she said.

Most large scale investments have low transparency rates during land acquisition stages and the consequences of this lack of transparency trickle down to women. As such, customary rights and land acquisition need attention. There is need for research on whether AfCFTA will weaken or strengthen the customary land rights.

Understanding the impact of the AfCFTA to customary rights and land acquisitions and learning from traditional authorities, including asking key questions such as does the AfCFTA require more land acquisition and whose land will be acquired?

"To harness the full potent of AfCFTA, African countries should ensure that land related investments do not dispossess existing land rights holders and instead promote inclusive and sustainable development," she said.

Ishima Sanken'I VI, a traditional leader from Zambia said traditional leaders are

usually not consulted on land management and governance decisions which has led to rampant land corruption. Traditional leaders, including kings need to be fully involved in decisions on land acquisition matters and use as they are the representative of the owners of the land.

The guidelines for the AfCFTA strategies require the whole of society – youth, SMESs, women and there is an emphasis on government leadership to bring everyone together, said Mr. Karingi. National implementation committees will be critical to the success of the strategies.

"The guidelines have been created which means that within the domestic frameworks, legislation can align. We are not going anywhere unless we go to the grassroots. Investment authorities need to countries to more attention," added Makong.

If African countries create innovative and good land governance policies that promote equitable access to land, creates an enabling environment for investments, it will unlock the productive potential of the continent.

These are the sentiments echoed by leaders at the opening of the Fifth Conference on Land Policy in Africa (CLPA) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, November 21 - 24, 2023.

Judith Nabakooba, Uganda's Minister of Lands, Housing and Urban Development said there is a need for Africa to have good land governance policies that strengthen women's rights to land to achieve fair and sustainable outcomes for all.

"Uganda understands the relation between land, trade and wellbeing of the people. Effective land governance and management is the cornerstone of sustainable social justice," said Ms. Nabooka, adding, "Policies formulated should be visional and must integrate climate change issues, reform land justice systems."

Josefa Sacko, Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment noted that there have been significant strides since the last CLPA in advancing land policies across the African Union Member States.

"Two years ago, we convened to address the challenges impeding sustainable land governance, and I am pleased to report that there has been a noticeable momentum in the implementation of policies aimed at fostering sustainable land administration practices," said Ms. Sacko.

"One significant area of progress pertains to the advancement of women's land rights, in alignment with the African Union's agenda on land. Through targeted policy interventions, legal reforms, and awareness campaigns, we have witnessed tangible progress in elevating the status of women as key stakeholders in land governance."

She said that commendable efforts have been made in Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo, Guinea and Malawi to assess women's rights to land in policies and laws and take action to address the

identified gaps.

She noted that the African Land Policy Centre (ALPC) has started the process of developing the Continental Strategy for integrating gender within national land sectors.

On behalf of the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, Mr. Claver Gatete, Robert Lisinge, Acting Director of the Private Sector Development and Finance Division said sound land governance systems are essential to facilitating youth, women, communities, and the private sector to engage and benefit from AfCFTA and digitalization.

"If African governments enforce good land governance and policies, it will support agro-industrial parks, infrastructure and renewable energy, all needed ingredients for industrialization and trade," said Mr. Lisinge.

He noted that inclusive digital technologies can support land and trade policy-making processes through data driven decision making. They can identify opportunities for reform, job creation, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and food needs in Africa.

Kanziemo Leontine, Advisor, Natural Resources Management at the African Development Bank (AfDB), said land governance and regulating access to and use of land, is an enabler of accelerating the implementation of the AfCFTA through contributing to the production of goods, unlocking agricultural potential, promoting gender equality, as well as balanced territorial development. Furthermore, Agenda 2063 calls for governments to fully empower women in all spheres, with equal social, political and economic rights, including the rights to own and inherit property, sign contracts, and register and manage businesses.

"The issue of good land governance becomes critical for the achievement of the AfCFTA," she said adding that governments should continue to invest in supporting women farmers.

Hans Lundquist, ambassador of Sweden to Ethiopia and Djibouti, said land is a fundamental resource that provides wellbeing. By improving land governance, we can create a prosperous land security and investment.

CLPA is organized by the tripartite consortium consisting of the African Union Commission (AUC), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). CLPA takes on the AU theme of the year which, in 2023, is 'Year of AfCFTA: Acceleration of the African Continental Free Trade Area Implementation.'

The adoption of this year's CLPA theme is expected to generate greater political commitment and accelerate the effective implementation of the AfCFTA to fully benefit the African citizenry and achieve the aspirations and goals of Agenda 2063.

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