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Photo: Berihun Tadele

Second-generation Diaspora laud Ethiopia's diplomatic excellence

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA- A member of the second-generation Ethiopian Diasporas who have continued to arrive here praised the country's century-old diplomatic journey that has paid off in elevating its position in international relations.

Approached by *The Ethiopian Herald* while visiting the ongoing Diplomacy Week and Exhibition with family, Azeb Yiregalem, from London, said that Ethiopia's diplomacy which is intertwined with ensuring national interest and the rights and benefits of citizens abroad is laudable.

In this regard, the ongoing Diplomacy Week and Exhibition showcases Ethiopia as the diplomatic master and among the founders of the United Nation (UN), African Union (AU) and other

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Ethiopia's diplomacy week, exhibition in eyes of visitors

BY DANIEL ALEMAYEHU

ADDIS ABABA - Visitors have commended the Diplomacy Week and Exhibition at the Science Museum.

"The exhibition helped us to understand and appreciate the road it has travelled and where Ethiopia is today," said Rebecca Mphonyo, the First Secretary from the Embassy of the

See Ethiopia's diplomacy... page 3



Wonchi- Dendi Project model for Africa's eco-tourism

• Manifestation for people's-centered dev't approach

BY BILAL DERSO

ADDIS ABABA- The Wonchi-Dendi Eco-Tourism Village and Lodge Project could be regarded as an example in Africa by demonstrating and integrating the environment, culture and people's lifestyle, a noted scholar said.

While attending the project's the inauguration ceremony, Prof. Alemayehu Gebremariam stated that the meticulous infrastructural addition in the natural splendor makes it Africa's model for ecotourism development. The scholar has served as a professor at California State University for many years.



See Wonchi- Dendi Project ... page 3

Photo: Hadush-Abreha



Center's advice to African nations: Follow Ethiopia's suit

• Lauds Ethiopia diplomacy Week , exhibition

BY YESUF ENDRIS

ADDIS ABABA-African countries should follow Ethiopia's suit of exhibiting the untold history of the continent, urged the

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Challenges and opportunities facing the construction sector in Ethiopia

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Stretching wings to the grand part of national dialogue

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News



Ethiopia, South Korea establish alumni association

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

ADDIS ABABA- A 20-member South Korea's Yeungnam University delegation has established the Park Chung Hee School of Policy and Saemaul (PSPS) Alumni Association that also comprises 45 Ethiopian alumni over the weekend.

The association's establishment is said to create strong links with public institutions notably with TVET and technology centers to foster knowledge and technology transfer and better facilitate investment opportunities in Ethiopia.

Yeungnam University International Affairs Vice-President SeoYongwon said on the occasion that his visit to various institutions including Bole Lemi Industrial Park and Addis Ababa and Adama Science and technology universities, among others, allowed him to see numerous opportunities for future cooperation.

"Ethiopia has great potential in terms of natural resources, skilled labor and political presence in Eastern Africa and beyond and it is an important country for South Korea to look for opportunities in international cooperation," he added.

Professor JeongJaehak, a solar energy specialist and the delegation's leader, emphasized the two countries' historical ties; recalling Ethiopia's crucial participation during the Korean War in 1950s. "This visit symbolizes our gratitude and commitment to fostering strong bilateral relationships."

For another representative from Yeungnam University, the two countries' cooperation would allow Ethiopia to ease its technological gap through capitalizing on South Korea's immense technological prowess. "The cooperation is a good opportunity to not only transfer knowledge and technology transfer, but also to be replicated in education, energy and infrastructure arenas."

Mentioning the Yeungnam University's PSPS is a national community development campaign, he noted that Ethiopia and South Korea have good relationships in the area and most of the alumni are from the former.

The Yeungnam University's current President Choi OeChool (PhD) has played a pivotal role in establishing the PSPS in 2011 and has since been instrumental in formulating regional development plans in Ethiopia, the representative remarked.

The alumni association is expected to engage in technology and investment areas with its key partners such as South Korean Embassy and KOICA, it was learned.

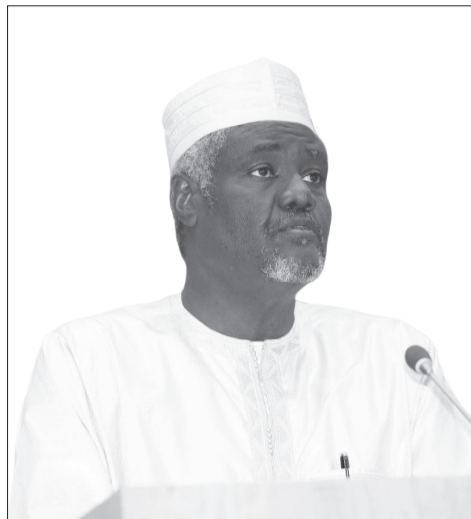
AUC emphasizes need for more investment in education sector

ADDIS ABABA (ENA) Chairperson of African Union Commission (AUC) Mussa Faki Mahamat emphasized the need for more investment in the education sector in the continent in order to produce a generation that is productive.

The Chairperson made the remark at the opening of the 47th Ordinary Session of the African Union's Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC) in Addis Ababa yesterday.

The session is underway under the theme "Educate an African fit for the 21st Century: Building resilient education systems for increased access to inclusive, lifelong, quality, and relevant learning in Africa."

On the occasion, Mussa Faki Mahamat stressed the need for more investment in the education for it is crucial to have a



productive generation in the continent.

AUC Chair also mentioned about the efforts being exerted to resolve conflicts

and bring peace in the continent stressing the importance of collaboration and unity among member states to successfully achieve this goal.

African Union's Permanent Representatives Committee stated that the meeting is crucial as it is expected to exchange views on issues related to Agenda 2063, continental peace and regional integration and recommend possible resolutions.

The objective of the meeting is to discuss various draft reports and prepare the agenda of the 44th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council scheduled to take place 14-15 February 2024, in Addis Ababa.

Participants at the PRC meeting include Ambassadors from African Union Member States and AU officials.

Integrated effort requires to provide 1.6 mln citizens with clean water

BY YOHANES JEMANEH

ADDIS ABABA – Combined efforts among stakeholders required to achieve the Water for Life plus Project that targets supplying potable water to 1.6 million citizens, Ministry of Water and Energy (MoWE) said.

MoWE Minister's Senior Advisor AberaEndeshaw told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the water for life plus project was launched two years ago to help 1.6 million Ethiopians with access to clean water and energy.

The project which aimed at improving quality of health and education among others incorporates 318 healthcare facilities and 587 schools, he stated, adding that so far 28 healthcare facilities and over 45 schools enabled to have basic access to drinking water.

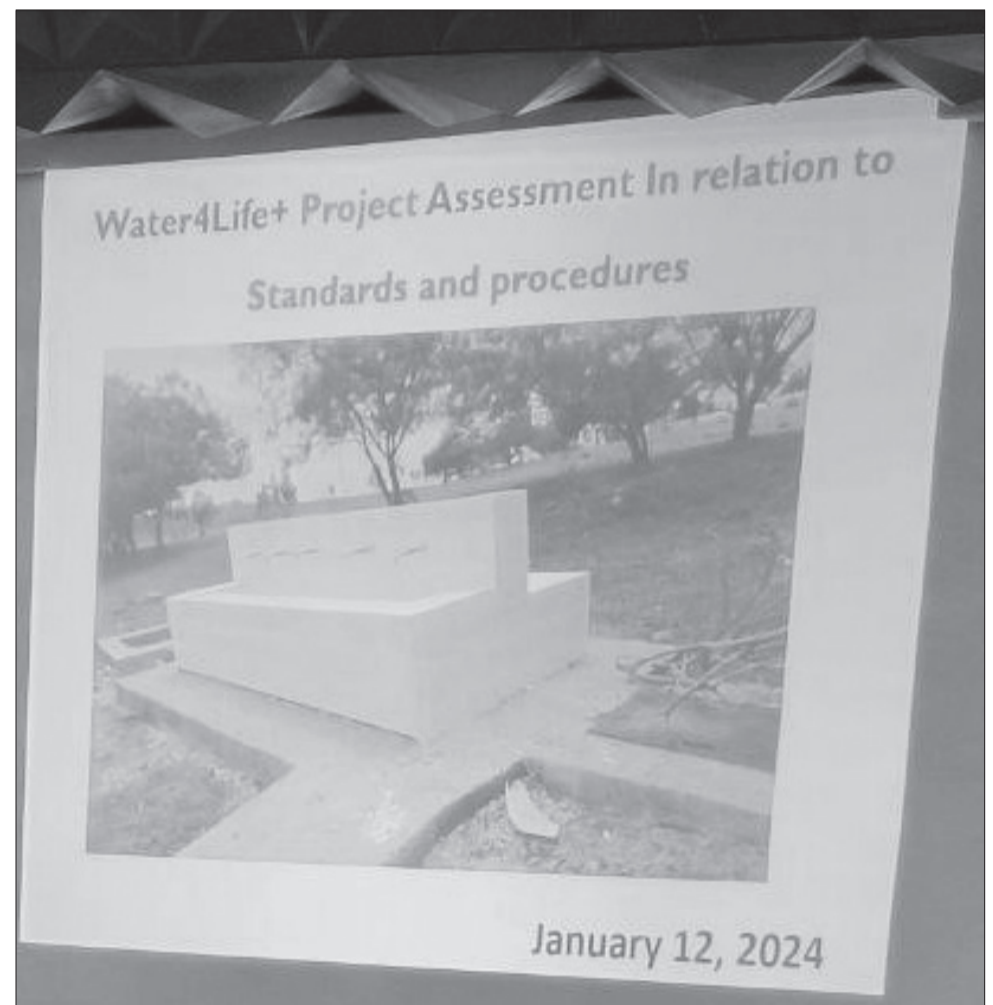
Health State Minister DerejeDuguma (MD) believed that the project is crucial to benefit the society for improving health through addressing potable water which is the most necessary input.

However, absence of check and balance has affected the project execution performance, he added.

Over the past two years, only 224,359 people were benefited from the project that was planned to reach 800,000 citizens with potable water, so said ErmiasMekonnen, Water for Life plus Project Audit Coordinator at MoWE.

By the same token, only 45 water wells were drilled from the planned 244 wells designed to be prepared in the same period, he mentioned.

There are also water bores that don't



contain water while some water wells either have a high level of fluoride content or have no information that show the amount, he stressed.

As to Dereje, establishing a close cooperation among stakeholders, strengthening the project management unit, and ensuring leadership involvement is crucial to resolve bottlenecks and make the project effective to bear sustainable fruits.

Ermias on his part suggested that purchasing specified drilling machines,

conducting geological survey before drilling, creating close cooperation between the program management unit, the steering committee and other stakeholders is essential to achieve the project.

The water for life plus project is being implemented in 10 woredas in Afar, Amhara, BenishangulGumuz, Gambella, Oromia, SNNPs, Somali and Tigray states with 239 million USD budgeted by the Ethiopian government and Children's Investment Fund (CIFF), it was learnt.

News

Local efforts in Yeha intact cultural heritages

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA-Owing to the great commitment of the local population of Yeha, the cultural heritage site was not destroyed and the magazines remained untouched during the armed conflict, Germany's Embassy in Addis Ababa said.

In a press release sent to The Ethiopian Herald, the Embassy noted that a small team from the German Archaeological Institute was able to return to their archaeological research sites in the Tigray State in October 2023, after more than three years of disruptions.

The work had been interrupted due to the armed conflict that broke out in November

2020. It was only after two years that the Pretoria Peace Agreement was signed between the conflicting parties, marking the beginning of a peace process, the press statement added.

Monumental buildings such as temples and palace complexes were built in the ancient political and religious center of Yeha.

The Ethiopian-German Cooperation Project, which is being carried out with the Friedrich Schiller University of Jena and is funded by the German Research Foundation and contributes to the archaeological research and to the restoration of the ancient tourism site. It also supplements the training of local restorers and the presentation of research results in a new museum.

Some 3000 years ago, northern Ethiopia had close economic contacts with distant regions. The trade relations extended via Nubia (present-day Sudan) to Egypt. There were also close connections to the territory of Saba in southern Arabia (Yemen). The exchange and trade of luxury goods such as incense, gold and ivory were particularly important.

From the early 1st millennium B.C. to the 4th century B.C., people from southern Arabia (Sabaeans) settled in Tigray. Together with the local population, they developed and used the existing raw materials. The resulting economic boom led to major cultural and social changes, it was learned.

Wonchi- Dendi Project...

"I was very impressed by the lake's location and its wonderful natural beauty. Diasporas who have been far away from here could learn about their home country's natural blessings and promote it in areas of their living. I understand how immense natural beauty Ethiopia has been endowed by just witnessing this breathtaking project."

The professor, who mentioned his visit to CheberaChurchura National Park, Gorgora and other projects, emphasized the need to make extensive promotional activities to introduce such places to the outside world.

The deep greenery and the spectacular location of the lodge is really fascinating and its proximity to Addis Ababa and the convenience of the road make it possible for people to come and visit, enjoy and learn about the local culture.

Mentioning his acquaint of the local community's culture in his visit to the lodge, Alemayehu highlighted that the eco-tourism project is a dependable source of income and displays Ethiopia's beauty to the rest of the world.

"There are some interest groups who are campaigning to tarnish Ethiopia's image and harm its economy in a coordinated manner and it is crucial to repulse these ill-attempts by introducing such places to the international community.

According to him, the Wanchi-Dandi Project has demonstrated Ethiopia's success in eco-tourism and would play a significant role in expediting the tourism industry and supplementing the national economy. "Also, this ecotourism project would revitalize business in the area and ensure the benefit of the local community."

Noting the coming of the second-generation Ethiopian Diasporas to home country, the academician has pleaded them to understand about the beauty and natural resources of the country by visiting such places.

Women and Social Affairs Minister Ergoge Tesfaye (PhD), who was also attended the inauguration, said that the project's execution has created a great opportunity and lesson in a way that focuses on the local community.

Ergoge further stated that the government has designed various programs to achieve the goal of sustainable development and determined to all development works should be people-centered. "The Wanchi-Dandi Eco-Tourism Village and Lodge Project is an example of the government's dedication for people-centered development by embracing the local community."

She added, "The project has created an opportunity for the local community to live a better and modern life without being displaced and to participate in different economic activities including tour guide and others."

The realization of the project has made the hidden tourist attraction of the naturally beautiful area known, and also created a wide opportunity for the community to connect with other areas and benefit more from the built infrastructure, the minister emphasized.

It is to be recalled that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD), accompanied by senior government officials and members of the Addis-based diplomatic community inaugurated the project, which is part of the Dine for Ethiopia's Imitative, last Saturday.

organizations.

"I am lucky to be here because I saw and received a lot of information about my country, especially in the diplomatic arena. It is a good opportunity for me to inform my family, friends, and the world about Ethiopia's diplomatic success when I get back to London."

As to her, a number of countries have been utilizing such types of mechanisms to promote their diplomatic excellence and to make constructive relationships with others. Therefore, the Diplomacy Week which showcased Ethiopia's diplomatic journey will help to promote the nation's effort towards political capability and being

Second-generation...

internationally accepted. "Besides, Ethiopia needs to employ such forums to permanently preserve its national interest."

Azeb further stated that pictures that were displayed in the exhibition are depicting the country's diplomatic efforts and informing its role in international politics which is bound by ideological affiliation. She urged the issuance of a Free Africa passport and currency to create bonds in the continent.

For their part, Amhara Mass Media Corporation (AMECO) staff and management, who were also partook in the event indicated Ethiopia has been playing a significant role in seeking a peaceful resolution for African crises and taking

part in peacekeeping missions, combatting terrorism, fighting climate change, and others.

Accordingly, AMECO Deputy CEO Setegn Abuhoy said the exhibition would play a crucial role in informing the world about Ethiopia's diplomatic efforts across many years. "We (the media) should be well informed, ready, and responsible to report the news and safeguard the national interest."

The government's adherence to seek diplomatic approach and peaceful mechanisms as tools to achieve Ethiopia's ambition in international relations is something worth appreciation, Setegn remarked.

Center's advice...

Chairperson of the Black History and Heritage Center.

In exclusive interview with Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), the Center's Chairperson Tsegaye Chemma said that the overall human history needs to be displayed the same way Ethiopia did in unveiling its 116 years old diplomatic journey.

Ethiopia has lots of historical treasures in which the diplomatic history is one of them, he said, noting that it teaches not only Ethiopians, but also all Africans.

As to Tsegaye, Ethiopia is known for the anti-colonial and pan-African struggle, thus,

the diplomatic exhibition displays important events happened during that period [of struggle].

Researchers, historians and academicians should take the historical resources [presented in the exhibition] as input to improve educational curriculums, he advised.

"As an advocator of history of blacks, the center needs all important historical events to be incorporated into curriculums," he said.

He also recommended African diplomats based in Addis Ababa to visit and take lessons from Ethiopia's history.

They can exhibit their own history as many

of the historical events happened in Ethiopia are the common histories of other Africans, according to Tsegaye.

He also said that the Black History and Heritage Center has also begun conducting researches to uncover the hidden blacks' history.

"We are now researching in the Eastern Part of Ethiopia taking some unverified information about the existence of buried wall estimated to have long kilometers of coverage," he indicated.

The Diplomacy Week ,Exhibition and Expo has been launched on January 11 and will be concluded on 12 February.

Ethiopia's diplomacy...

Kingdom of Lesotho and Permanent Mission to the African Union Commission and UNECA.

It exhibits the unique Ethiopian culture and its diplomatic history, she stated, noting that it creates a better understanding to appreciate what things are happening and the way they are happening.

"Ethiopia played a pivotal role in the diplomatic arena. For instance, the effort to bring the two side together and made them seat in one table during the formation of the Organization of the African Unity (OAU)," Rebecca said.

Without Ethiopia, who would take the

initiative to bring the two side together, she stressed, adding "The progress that we are seeing today in the AU and Bilateral relations is to be appreciated. Other Africans should learn from the Ethiopian diplomatic journey."

Visitor OumouWarr, who is from the Intergovernmental Organization for Francophone affirmed that the exhibition helps to know what has been done in the past, what is happening now and what Ethiopia wants to accomplish in the future.

"We can understand that Ethiopia has a history worth sharing as the nation has never been colonized. It is very interesting. Ethiopia has inspired a lot of leaders to fight

for their freedom and independence," Oumou said.

Similarly, Kunta, a private visitor from Austria, said "It is good to present the stories both in Amharic and English so that Visitors could simply understand what it means. Ethiopia should share much about its diplomatic journey to Africa and the world."

The nation should also play a key role in diplomacy as before since there are many things that Ethiopia owns that worth sharing, said the visitor, adding that the government of Ethiopia should do more in order to portray the country to the international community, and also strengthen its diplomacy.

Opinion

Values of Ports for the Ethiopian Economy

BY GETACHEW MINAS

Sea ports are very vital for the economic development of any country. Some countries have several ports for facilitating the import and export of goods. Countries deprived of such natural endowments suffer from exorbitant charges of port services.

Developed countries have revolutionized the way they ship and track shipments from anywhere in the world. They have expanded their reach to a wider group of customers. In so doing they reduce service costs and they run their operations online quickly.

It is, therefore, very vital to use efficient ports. Ports are very significant for the Ethiopian economy, despite Ethiopia being a landlocked country.

Access to efficient and reliable ports is crucial, decisive, fundamental and essential for facilitating international trade. It ensures the smooth flow of goods to local and international markets. In so doing it supports economic growth and development in the country. There are quite a lot of strategies in which ports contribute to the Ethiopian economy.

Ethiopia's case for reliable and cost-effective seaport access is very strong. To secure its economic future, it must lower the economic costs associated with being landlocked. Studies reveal that generally landlocked countries tend to be 20% less developed than they would be if they had access to the sea. This is partly caused by cost of trade such as transportation costs ranging between 50 to 260% higher for land locked countries. For Ethiopia to achieve its development objectives, it will require "export-oriented" industrialization and higher productivity in agriculture. The country needs to have more control over trade-related costs and ensure stability on both sides of its fronts with neighboring countries. It is reported that transportation costs reach up to 16% of the value of export. It is figured out that foreign trade amounts to one-quarter of the gross domestic product of developing countries. The ports Ethiopia currently uses are becoming expensive, accompanied by storage space and empty containers for export. These factors have motivated Ethiopia to engage in aggressive port diversification initiative. Currently the number of sea and dry ports Ethiopia uses is on the rise.

In addition to the Djibouti port, Kenyan border Moyale dry port, Somaliland's Berbera and Djibouti's Tajura are emerging as alternatives. However, the latter routes lack the infrastructure, including roads, petrol stations, service and repair shops, etc. to support bulk shipments.

Ethiopia has significant leverage over Djibouti in terms of area and population. It is the leading revenue generator ahead of other nations that leased naval bases from Djibouti. Ethiopian trade has been reported to have generated the largest revenues for the Djiboutian economy.

The Ethiopian service sector accounted

Ethiopia has opportunities for peaceful economic cooperation with countries bordering the seas. This provides supply chain efficiency and benefits. In this regard, seaports play a crucial role in enhancing the overall efficiency of the supply chain

for more than 80% of the Djiboutian GDP, much of it accounted by port services and logistics. With all these services, Ethiopia has still the economic case for securing reliable access to seaport. If Ethiopia is to attract both domestic and foreign investments into its industrial and agricultural sectors, it must guarantee investors that they will have access to global markets at reasonable cost. The planned railways indicate the country's industrialization and transport programs. As the planned railway network reveals, Ethiopia's seaport options are largely limited to Djibouti, which is an important maritime trade route. Both countries benefit from the growing services of seaports.

Economically efficient seaports give opportunities for Ethiopia to diversify its trade partners. This helps her to engage in profitable global markets. This opportunity is enhanced through diversification of trading partners, associates and collaborators. Diversification is vital for reducing dependency on specific regions and enhancing economic resilience. Such a strategy helps in reducing transportation costs in global trade. Proximity to efficient ports can help reduce costs.

Landlocked countries often face higher

transportation expenses. However, well-connected and strategically located ports can mitigate these economic costs. Ethiopia has opportunities for peaceful economic cooperation with countries bordering the seas. This provides supply chain efficiency and benefits. In this regard, seaports play a crucial role in enhancing the overall efficiency of the supply chain. Studies indicate that these ports facilitate the smooth delivery of goods from ships to land transport. In so doing, they reduce waste of time and facilitate transiting activities.

Modern transit services ensure timely delivery of goods thereby minimizing cost. Efficiency and effective maritime services attract foreign direct investment (FDI) which will facilitate economic development in Ethiopia. Thus, access to reliable ports makes the country more attractive to foreign investors.

Investors consider efficient transportation infrastructure, including roads and ports that facilitate the import and export of goods. These transportation facilities are critical factors when investors decide to establish or expand their operations in the country. Investors critically consider the facilities at seaports for the enhancement of their external trade. They may continue with economic diversification in which seaports are considered. Ports support economic diversification by facilitating the import of raw materials and the export of finished goods.

The import of other inputs such as machinery, spare parts and tools require efficient port services. This is particularly relevant for industries such as manufacturing that require a diverse range of inputs. Export of manufactured goods also requires efficient and modern port services.

Ethiopia benefits from port services in different ways. The operation and maintenance of ports create employment opportunities. Job-seekers may have to be trained in activities related to port services. Additionally, the industries and businesses that rely on port services contribute to skill development and income for unemployed persons. Of course, they also generate revenues for the government from port operations and employee income. Ports generate revenue through various mechanisms, including fees for services, customs duties, and taxes on imported and exported goods. This revenue can be invested in infrastructure development and public services, which in turn generate more employment and income for people residing near seaports. Ports contribute to broader infrastructure development. Road and railway networks are connected to the ports. These networks are extended to inland destinations creating opportunities for people residing along the roads and railways. This connectivity is, therefore, essential for the efficient movement of goods within the country.

Ports are important factors for promoting regional integration. As ports are interconnected they create proximity,

closeness, contact and convenience. Those countries who own ports should provide assistance to landlocked neighboring countries. The countries may suffer from heavy costs of port services. The burden of such costs may discourage regional economic integration. As a result, the people of those landlocked countries may suffer from the burden of rising prices of imported goods. These goods may consist of basic necessities including health facilities, food items, means of transport and other items. People cannot avoid using these basic imports which require foreign exchange for accessing them. Similarly, they have to export goods to earn foreign exchange with which they import what they need. A few developing countries ensure that the imports are only basic. They do not allow import of luxury goods and services that exhaust their foreign exchange.

For developing countries to have healthy economic system, they need to improve their trade balance. They need to focus on export of goods that have the capacity to earn foreign exchange. Ethiopia's exports are essentially agricultural goods and minerals. These exports, however, require inputs or tools with which to produce them. In other words, they need machineries, tools and spare parts all of which require foreign exchange for accessing them. However, these imports enhance competitiveness at local, regional and global levels. If they fail to compete they find it difficult to maintain their balance of trade, in which values of imports become much higher than that of the exports. In this case imports have to be financed by means of borrowing from global financial institutions. These institutions charge high interest rates if the borrower country is weak in its economic performance. Such a borrower is associated with high risk and lenders avoid it to minimize losses.

Developing countries including Ethiopia have to develop strategies for enhancing competitive ports. In a world of high competition, ports of the developing countries face dangers of being irrelevant due to their poor services. Only those countries who are engaged in new and competitive initiatives become masters of the sea with dominant shipping services. Those who lag behind would require immense efforts to move faster and surpass their competitors in the efficiency of port services. The use of port services by Ethiopia presupposes strategic considerations. In this respect, the value of ports for the Ethiopian economy lies in their pivotal role as gateways to international trade. They are facilitators of economic diversification, and drivers of job creation and infrastructure development. Efforts to enhance the efficiency and connectivity of ports in Ethiopia require the exploring of strategic partnerships. This will be important for Ethiopia's economic development and global integration. Thus, ports are of great value for the Ethiopian economy.

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

Editorial

Wonchi Lodge: Best tourism village worthy of a visit

The number of tourist destinations in Ethiopia is increasing as the reform government has continued investing in the tourism sector through cultivating and developing tourism destination potentials. Fortunately, Ethiopia is endowed with tremendous tourism potentials that are worth investigation. Realizing the prevalence of these potentials, the government has identified the sector as one of the pillars for national development and has been investing in it immensely. Among the activities, identifying the tourism destinations like eco-tourism takes the line's share.

Last Sunday, Wonchi Lodge, which proves government's project execution excellence, was inaugurated at the presence of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) who said the successful execution of the Wonchi- Dandi Eco-Tourism Village and Lodge is the testimony for Ethiopia's excels in conducting projects with different size and complexity. As this project is part of the Dine for Ethiopia's Initiative, senior government officials and members of the diplomatic community attended this colorful inauguration. Interestingly, this inauguration has brought considerable progress in the sector.

On the other hand, the successful completion of this project is the clearest indication of the government's relentless commitment in project execution excellence. Indeed, this is one of the peculiar characteristics of the reform government unlike that of the previous one. Though the government has been facing several challenging circumstances in the last five years, it has demonstrated excellence in bringing projects to efficient completion per their schedules; besides this, the projects are instrumental to address the area's infrastructural setbacks that had been affecting the livelihood of the local community. In fact, the Wonchi Lodge is a pretty project whose implementation is carried out in a way to embrace the local communities and ensure their multifaceted benefits.

Moreover, since the nation has high potential for similar projects, the private sector ought to support the government's efforts towards the expansion of tourist destinations. Attending the event, African Union Commission (AUC) Chairperson Moussa Faki Mahamat stated his delight over the way Ethiopia preserves nature like the eco-tourism project that can be an "exemplary" for the rest of Africa. According to him, eco-tourism is vital to pursue Africa's development as well as to preserve its splendid ecosystem. Indeed, Ethiopia shall continue to be a leading example in this regard across the continent.

More importantly, following this inauguration, the Wonchi eco-tourism area is worth visiting. For instance, the Second Generation Diaspora members who have recently come home in response to the call from the Prime Minister are expected to pay a visit to Wonchi and they surely find their stay very rewarding. There are several peculiar features that make Wonchi very attractive. Above all it is framed for its natural beauty that enhances its recreational value. It is a picturesque location on the mountain range between the towns of Ambo and Woliso. It is also possible to spend a number of days exploring the natural beauty of Wonchi Crater Lake which is the beautiful legacy of a once powerful volcano erupting in the Tertiary period of the Cenozoic Era. In the lake, there are small islands, hot mineral springs, waterfalls and beautiful valleys worth visiting. This lake is a habitat for varieties of animal and plant species, some aquatic birds; and it is a splendid area for a number of indigenous forest reserves, including Egnia Abyssinica.

Above all, Wonchi Eco-tourism is a remarkable destination for tourists as it offers distinctive natural beauty and recreational activities that suit any interest. There are also endless options for exercise and recreation such as hiking, cycling and swimming besides exceptional facilities. In short, visiting this newly inaugurated tourist destination is certainly a rewarding experience.

Opinion

Streamlining the role of digital technology for economic growth

BY GIRMACHEW GASHAW

In this dynamic world where countries are computing one another to come up with problem solving research and innovation, if you are not capable of beating that contest, the lonely option you have is to be recipient of technologies. As these technologies are a means of modernizing people's way of living and bringing the ease of doing business, it is a must to have all at hand.

This era of technology helps to get any sort of information in a speed of light using digital technologies. The people residing in one bend of the world can exchange ideas, views and feeling with others residing in other places. In short, the gaps we were seen in previous centuries are now becoming a history of our planet.

By and large, the digital era makes the world a narrow village that visualizes what is happening in other parts of the world as we seemed to be physically present there. Using the advanced technologies, the players of international businesses can accelerate trade exchanges. This type of market system is called the digital marketing.

It is the promotion and marketing of goods and services to consumers through digital channels and electronic technologies. These digital channels can include the internet, mobile devices, social media platforms, webinars, search engines, online customer communities and other digital platforms.

Digital marketing also includes a range of approaches and tactics to reach and persuade the target audience through digital media, including email marketing, social media marketing, search engine optimization, content marketing and online advertising.

The goal of digital marketing is to improve brand awareness, generate leads, increase website traffic and, ultimately, drive sales and business growth. The process can involve digital marketing tactics similar to traditional marketing. Organizations can combine both traditional and digital marketing techniques as a strategy.

In this globalized era, a nation is alienated from others, would not be effective be it in political, social and economic spheres. Hence, apart from understanding how the world countries are interacting one another, applying various advanced technologies is what the era demands from us. Likewise, Digital marketing in Ethiopia is a rapidly growing field, as more and more businesses are realizing the potential of the internet to reach customers and accelerate businesses.

In order to maintain economic fracture and accelerate the ongoing Ethiopia's growth, it is quite imperative to improve

digital economy and expand industry revolution.

So as to make the market stable and control the ever mounting inflation and price hike, there is no better option than advancing the digital market.

Apart from improving the finance system, the digital economy helps citizens to transacting their money from one account to the other accounts and strengthening business engagement so as to create more jobs.

Digitalizing the finance system is one of the ways that helps to recover the economy. For this reason, encouraging potential businesses to engage in this area is quite critical.

Recognizing the low level of awareness of the society towards the application of digital finance system is an off-putting challenge; intellectuals and the media should discharge their share to create a well informed society and reverse the situation observed now and then.

As we are not producing product that meet the desired quality and standard, products that we are now observing are imported ones. And this is greatly contributing to economic crack.

Members of Ethiopian Economic Association who are also participating in the world economic exhibitions should also take a responsibility of attracting foreign investors and improve the digital economy.

Digital system is one of the immense options that the 21st century brought to the world. Accordingly, the digital finance is the best option of the day that helps the revival of the country's economy. Countries in the world are now engaged in the digital system. For Ethiopia to be fully involved in the system, fundamental policy changes are highly needed.

Digital financial system is also optional instrument to minimize, avoid erroneous working system and attract investments.

Parallel to implementing digital finance system, producing standard goods that arouse the interest of local buyers is also critical. The developed countries gave priority for their local products. In order to prop up the present economic performance of the country, the government needs to interfere in the market regulating the market and strengthening the digital system.

Apart from upgrading the digital system, improving the service provides in the government institutions and modernizing the working system is also significant.

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



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Business & Economy

Challenges and opportunities facing the construction sector in Ethiopia

BY ABEBE WOLDEGIORGIS

Ethiopia's construction industry and infrastructure development includes transport infrastructure, road construction, railway and energy projects, real estate and industrial parks. Small and medium construction companies operate in the informal market and local and foreign companies operate in the formal market. The involvement of foreign companies is dominated by Chinese companies which are undertaking large projects. The construction market in Ethiopia is projected to grow at an annual average growth rate of more than 8% to 2026. The country's 10-year development plan includes infrastructure development and the objective of public-private partnerships.

Cognizant of the crucial role of the construction in the nation economic growth and to maximize its encouraging activities, the Ministry of Urban Development and Infrastructure made discussion recently with the pertinent stake holders on the newly introduced law. On the occasion, the State Minister of Urban Development and Infrastructure Wondimu Sita said that, the new policy of the sector is prepared by celebrated professionals who have long experience. They identified the sector's main problems which have to be resolved. As to him, the sector must be competitive and sustainable so that it can play vital role on the expansion of infrastructure.

It is proved that currently the sector has become the major job creator for the unemployed in the urban centers. However, similar to other sectors it faced various challenges and among others, shortage of hard currency for the importation of inputs, the exacerbating unethical practices in the sector, the discrepancy between the complex nature of the construction and the incompetent contractors, the unsafe construction practice risking workers health, delay of project accomplishment and additional cost incurred on the projects, shortage of inputs obtained from local market such as cement and others and shortage of finishing materials imported from abroad.

According to Wondimu, until 2014 there was no construction policy but for the last 10 years the newly introduced policy has been implemented. More than 150 thousand professionals join the sector annually.

More than thousands consultants have also joined the sector. The sector has played pivotal role in expanding infrastructure such as water, health, telecom and others. To support the sector, the construction management institute is established and hundreds of professionals graduate and join the labor market annually.

About 16 iron and steel mills are established and supply their products to the market and in such venture it has been possible to substitute the imported iron to some extent.

The new draft law considers that exerting coordinated efforts for the betterment of the sector by contractors, consultants and owners



Some construction works delay due to shortage of inputs

of the project is vital and emphasis is given to such venture.

In addition, it is underlined that workers' associations and managements should work in the collaborative manner without compromising the construction industry peace. It also emphasizes the vitality of inspection of the construction inputs quality both produced locally and abroad.

According to Wondimu, due to the rampant corruption, malpractice, shortage of hard currency, delay of payment from the owners of the project, shortage of inputs and other inhibiting factors most professionals leave the sector and engage in other businesses and it is proved that the span on average professionals stay in the sector is only 10 years. To reverse such desperate situation, the Ministry has introduced the 30 years road map that enables to tackle the deep rooted and complicated problems of the sector and to make it competent in the local as well as in the regional market. The new policy intends to hold 25% of the regional markets.

He further said that, the sector is heavily dependent on imported materials because numerous inputs are imported from abroad hence, to substitute imports, the policy underlined to exert efforts. The new policy has main objectives and among others, it strives for the establishment of competent institutions in the sector, improving the financial system and inputs, enhancing the sector competency and strengthening partnership.

The policy also considers the vitality of social inclusiveness by constructing buildings conducive to physically disabled and women. It also emphasizes the essentiality of the influx of well qualified professionals to the sector.

As to Wondimu, evidence shows that there is skill gap between what the sector labor demand and freshly graduate engineers

and architects who joined the sector hence, to narrow the gap emphasis will be given for provision of capacity building. The development of the sector should rely on the well qualified human resources. The sector still utilizes an outdated technology. therefore, coming across with cutting age technology should be a priority agenda.

Substituting foreign professionals by the local ones is out of site and needs steady efforts. The procuring system is not conducive for consultants, contractors and project owners and unless the problem is resolved attaining the sector development is impossible. The local construction works have poor quality and the capacity for quality control is still not mature. Therefore, rigorous efforts are needed to address the problem through improving the payment system by introducing an obligatory mandate to the executive institutions.

The issuance of license is characterized by non-transparent and mischievous process which calls for the assignment of professionals with strong sense of integrity to tackle the problem. 25% of the construction works make workers vulnerable to physical risk and it also contributes to environment pollution. Therefore, to reduce the unwanted outcome conducting the working activities cautiously is essential. It is proved that, women participation in the construction sector is insignificant and in some companies their wage is 50% below the men and adjusting the unjust practice is vital.

Medina Mohamed is an executive officer in the Department of Construction Infrastructure Development. As to her, the new draft proclamation has two rules and four regulations which help to make the sector competent and create better level playing field to professionals who join the sector. For long the sector has been vulnerable to malpractice and corruption and mitigating the problem needs unreserved efforts.

As to her, there are chronic problems that

thrived for decades that include lack of quality inputs, ensuring accountability, duplication of efforts, wastage of resources, fragmented laws and regulations, lack of safety in the working places. Hence, providing immediate solutions to the problems is vital.

Huge investment is poured on the sector but most works do not conduct based on the cost benefit analysis which left the sector to be inefficient.

The newly prepared draft law expected to support the sector to function its day to day work based on ensuring quality construction, to inspect the activities of the stake holders, to be competent at the international level, to add value on the construction works, create markets derived by competition, enhance the role of stake holders, to implement periodical evaluation of contractors, to remove people allegedly joined the sector with no valid certificates, to reduce the possible physical risk during the construction. In addition, it helps to make standardize construction works, to deter theft and malpractice, to realize knowledge and technology transfer, simplified the designing and construction supervision, to make formal contract among owners, contractors and consultants to avoid possible disputes, ensuring weather the construction laws and regulations enforced or not. It also supports regions construction institutions to supervise construction works.

Engineer Dawit Mehari is the Construction Management Institute Vice Director and as to him, the construction sector has not reached the level that it was expected to and to change the situation to the better level the new draft law is prepared. The draft law utilized various stake holders' ideas raised on discussions conducted in various occasions and clearly defines the role of each stake holders' duties and rights and if the law is endorsed by the pertinent institution, it paves the way for alleviating the decades long problems of the sector.

As to him, it is not possible to address the deep rooted problems of the sector that prevailed for decades by one institution. Therefore, all stake holders must play their part in dealing with the shortcomings of the sector.

Emphasizing the roles of stakeholders in information exchange and mutual cooperation Dawit said that, the sector utilizes various materials imported from abroad as inputs by allocating hard currency obtained from the nation's meager resource but sometimes the imported materials found to be below standard. Hence, to keep the quality of the materials the Ethiopian Standard Evaluating Institute has the major responsibility to supervise the materials standards. However, after inspecting the standard it tends to conceal the results rather than making it accessible to stakeholders so as to ensure transparency in the process. Such kinds of practices have their own demerits on the sector working activities. Hence, it has to discharge its duty to make the information accessible to the stake holders.

In the Sphere of Diplomacy

Chronicles of diplomatic wisdom

BY EYUEL KIFLU

The diplomacy week meant to flashback Ethiopia's diplomatic journey kicked off last week at the Science Museum in Addis Ababa, which is third diplomatic hub in the world. Opened with a photo display followed by a grand panel discussion graced by seasoned and career diplomats, the diplomacy week is underway for days now.

Over 116 years have elapsed since the country embarked in its diplomatic endeavours, although the path was not a rose of beds, it is no exaggeration to say that the years have largely been accompanied by praiseworthy success. Even there were times the country outperformed super powers in giving impetus to international organizations. Navigating the odds wisely, the country's diplomatic achievements reverberate beyond its borders, stands shoulder high in Africa and beyond. It is worth noting that Ethiopia is a founding member of the League of Nations (later known as the United Nations) and has actively contributed to the organization's objectives.

Speaking to *The Ethiopian Press Agency*, a partner in staging the big event in connection to the diplomacy week, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Demeke Mekonnen, emphasized that Ethiopia's long-standing diplomacy has not only benefited the country itself but has also made significant contributions to Africans and black people worldwide for centuries. He recalled that Ethiopia was a member of the League of Nations as the only free African nation in a predominantly colonized Africa, and it represented the interests of black people. This historical fact serves as a testament to Ethiopia's diplomatic contributions to Africans and other black people.

The DPM, FM highlighted that, Ethiopia has engaged in foreign relations through various means since ancient times and established the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 116 years ago. He emphasized that Ethiopia's diplomacy is closely linked to its national security and has yielded tangible results in protecting its interests. He also stated that Diplomacy Week holds paramount importance in drawing lessons from the past, identifying opportunities, and addressing challenges in the diplomatic sphere.

During the Diplomatic Week panel discussion held last week, Ambassador Dina Mufti presented an article emphasizing Ethiopia's comprehensive support for various African freedoms. He highlighted Ethiopia's significant contributions to the establishment of the African Union and the United Nations, which are considered major diplomatic victories. Ambassador Dina also mentioned Ethiopia's substantial involvement in peacekeeping missions in Korea, Liberia, Rwanda, Somalia, and other countries, suggesting that these achievements should be leveraged for further diplomatic relations.



Throughout history, Ethiopian leaders have engaged in different diplomatic efforts, and their contributions to African and international institutions have underscored the country's diplomatic ability. The panel discussion during Diplomatic Week shed light on Ethiopia's contribution to the establishment of the League of Nations and its role in various wars and stages during the 15th and 16th centuries.

However, the country's diplomacy has faced hurdles both internally and externally. In recent years, the conflict in northern Ethiopia tasted the country's diplomatic relation with others, especially the west. Nevertheless, the country has mitigated these challenges through diplomatic activities and managed to reach a peace agreement with the warring party.

During this time Ethiopian Diasporas contribution in struggling foreign influence in the country was crucial. Also, the digital diplomacy that made during that time is made a tangible result for the country.

Veteran Diplomat Konjit Sinigiorgis discussed how Ethiopia effectively navigated challenges during the Italian invasion by engaging in diplomatic work at the League of Nations and later at the United Nations. She highlighted that, Ethiopia signed as the 57th member of the United Nations. Konjit also mentioned that, the country effectively managed the issue of Israel and Arabs despite United Nations challenges during the Korean campaign by deploying troops to Korea.

Regarding the establishment of the Organization of African Union, Konjit noted Ethiopia's effective lobbying efforts within the Casablanca and Monrovia Groups. The country's success in persuading other African countries to choose Addis Ababa as the headquarters of the African Union was highlighted as a significant diplomatic achievement.

Ethiopia's on-going struggles to protect its

**Ethiopia's commitment
to addressing issues
such as poverty and
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internal affairs makes
it the leading voice of
African causes**

national interests and contribute to Africa are evident. Since Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (Ph.D.) came to power, the country has made significant strides in enhancing its foreign relations. Ambassador Teshome Toga, in his article titled "Current Ethiopian Diplomacy and the Trend of the Next Era," discussed the changes in Ethiopian law and foreign relations that took place in 2018, resulting in numerous diplomatic victories. These reforms have attracted attention from many countries and have been instrumental in strengthening Ethiopia's diplomatic standing.

Ambassador Teshome highlighted Ethiopia's ability to foster closer economic and infrastructural ties among countries in the Horn of Africa, particularly through the establishment of new peace relations

with Eritrea. This achievement has instilled hope among Ethiopia's partners. He also emphasized that the country's principle of solving African problems in Africa has been widely accepted, and the country aims to strengthen its role while safeguarding national interests amid evolving global dynamics.

Ethiopia's commitment to addressing issues such as poverty and external interference in African countries' internal affairs makes it the leading voice of African causes. The country has numerous diplomatic endeavours planned for the future, both domestically and internationally.

During the panel discussion at Diplomatic Week, participants raised various issues, including Ethiopia's access to the sea. They highlighted that securing access to the sea is a struggle against colonialism, and Ethiopia remains steadfast in overcoming this challenge. Despite external forces attempting to hinder Ethiopia and the region's prosperity, the country continues to shine. By leveraging its diplomatic capabilities and countering nefarious missions, the nation is on the path to achieving high economic growth.

Experts have urged the country to embrace digital diplomacy more extensively in this digital era. Utilizing various digital mechanisms to enhance the nation's diplomatic capacity is crucial. Although Ethiopia's 52 embassies and consulates in different countries are making efforts to utilize digital information dissemination mechanisms, there is still a need for further attention and improvement in this area.

Overall the Diplomacy Week, which commenced on January 11, will continue until February 2, 2024. The exhibition at the Science Museum in Addis Ababa has attracted diplomats, officials, and visitors from different countries and organizations. The exhibition remains open to diplomats from various countries continue to visit and engage with it.

Law & Politics

Stretching wings to the grand part of national dialogue

BY FITSUM GETACHEW

The Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission was established with 11 Commissioners by the House of People's Representatives on December 29, 2021 to lead an independent, inclusive, and transparent national dialogue across the country.

The main objective of the Commission is to facilitate consultations among various segments of the society on fundamental issues of the country by identifying the root causes of existing differences through dialogue.

Since its establishment, the Commission has been carrying out various activities, engaging numerous stakeholders at federal and regional levels including civic societies. The National Dialogue is expected to help create a consensus by averting the root causes of conflict and disputes that have been ongoing for a long time.

There are various controversial issues regarding among others the formation of the current Ethiopian state and what sort of country we want to build going forward. During the past several decades we have observed that Ethiopians have been engaged in various kinds of disputes about what kind of country we want to form and what sort of system of government we intend to follow.

Hence, the formation of the National Dialogue Commission that could present another opportunity to begin anew for the country leaving aside all controversies and removing all clouds of doubts on how we should conceive the state and move ahead leaving aside useless allegations and politically motivated and driven narratives that can only inflame the emotions of peoples. The National Dialogue Commission has the duty to bring together all suppressed voices and views and discuss them extensively putting things in the right historical context and without being carried away by emotions and hasty generalizations or assumptions.

Comparisons with other countries' experiences and how they resolved their issues of formation and how they managed to cope with historical issues that threaten to haunt present day realities will be useful.

History shows us that no country was formed without disputes and at times even violence and wars that took heavy tolls on the people. Hard and difficult decisions had to be adopted by the leaders of the epoch with inevitable consequences that could cost a lot in terms of human and material resources. At times civil wars had to be affronted and a lot of

confrontations faced and eventually settled with truces, negotiations and discussions.

Peace was in the end made and compromises reached. Cohabitation cannot be conceived and reached without readiness to make concessions and compromises. Here the leadership has a critical role to play.

National and common interest must prevail over marginal and extremist positions. Pragmatic decisions need to be adopted in the interest of the great majority of the people. However, it should not be forgotten that there will never be unanimity on any number of issues in a country full of diverse cultures, languages and beliefs but the most prevailing ideas must be embraced and implemented to avoid a risk of incessant wars of attrition. That is how multinational, multiethnic and multicultural states have been formed and prospered in their diversity and in the acceptance of their diversity as strength rather than a weakness. If the relations are based on equality before the law and the principle of the rule of law is applied without any form of discrimination, then everyone will have trust and confidence in the system and the possibility of growing together becomes reality.

In the world today we have several examples of such states even with difficult past stories but they have not remained tied to the past as we often experience in our case. Past stories must not be allowed to be a source of relentless controversies today and divert our attention from facing the problems of today and be prepared to face those that come along our way going ahead. We are living in a fast changing world with globalization taking its toll on every country both negatively as well as positively but what we need to do is adapt to current realities and cope with them as much as we can. The negative stories of the past should rather serve us as a lesson not to be repeated.

The National Dialogue Commission is intended to settle all these outstanding issues that have been a source of infinite disputes and controversies as if Ethiopia does not have more pressing and timely economic, political and diplomatic issues that need the full attention of the government and all political parties and other bodies that have their constructive roles to play. In recent days, this Commission has been covering several regions and interest groups as well as political parties, civic society organizations and all grass root bodies whose contribution to the discussions is key.

Agendas have been set, issues identified and the selection of participants has

been made moving to the next stage of the discussions. The Commission has been explaining its intentions and plans to all these participants and more and more groups are being called to join the conversation. It has said it wants to include in its discussions all 1,400 districts of the country.

In the past few days, there have been reports of the Commission presented to parliament and explanations were given by the Chief Commissioner on the way things were developing. Professor Mesfin Araya has informed the parliament that the Commission has consulted with the representatives of the diaspora from Africa, the Middle East and Asia and soon they would be stretching their wings to have discussions with those in Europe and North America as well. These are important groups of people whose voices must be included in the discussions.

Furthermore, the Commission has also been insisting in trying to include even those forces that are engaged in armed revolt against the establishment because the discussions cannot exclude any force that has complaints or dissent against the government and the establishment in general. But an atmosphere of peace and stability is required in order to continue fruitfully its discussions in areas where there are sporadic informal and formal armed groups presenting a potential danger to the security and safety of the members of the Commission in their attempt to gather the people in relatively remote localities and hear their voices and ideas. It has always sustained that the Commission does not want to exclude any group because of their political views and the main objective of this entire exercise is to bring together every one around a table and deliberate on any number of issues that need to be addressed legally and peacefully in a transparent manner.

The Commission has thanked all those who supported it in its endeavors particularly the government for facilitating the entire operation and those who have also been supporting it financially. The Commission is working knowing that it is necessary to alleviate and resolve the differences and disagreements through a broad based inclusive public dialogue that engenders national consensus. It is trying to convince everyone involved that conducting inclusive national dialogues is important to bolster national consensus and along the way a culture of trust and of working together on critical national issues. That is why participation is crucial for the success of the mission of the National Dialogue Commission.

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Society

Inclusive participation for effective national dialogue

BY TEWODROS KASSA

Currently, the Ethiopian National Dialogue finalizes preparations to conduct the national dialogue. Thus, the commission is identifying participants of the dialogue carefully so as to represent all segments of the society.

Experts from the Commission also underscored that the national dialogue serves as a platform for constructive discussions and negotiations among various stakeholders. It enables different voices to be heard, facilitates consensus-building, and promotes the shared understanding needed for sustainable peace and development. In Ethiopia, national dialogue is essential to address historical grievances, build trust among different ethnic groups, and establish a foundation for a more inclusive and democratic society.

In this regard, Civic Society Organizations (CSOs) play a vital role in facilitating national dialogue in Ethiopia. They serve as intermediaries between and among the government, civil society, and communities. They can provide a neutral and inclusive space for dialogue, create platforms for open discussions, and ensure that marginalized voices are heard. They also actively engage in promoting transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights throughout the dialogue process.

Moreover, CSOs play a crucial role in fostering democratic governance, promoting social justice, and encouraging citizen participation in Ethiopia. As the country undergoes significant political, social, and economic transformations, the need for effective national dialogue becomes increasingly evident.

Initially, CSOs primarily focused on economic development and community empowerment. However, over time, these organizations have transformed and expanded their scope to actively engage in advocating for democratic governance, human rights, and social justice.

The role of CSOs in undertaking and facilitating national dialogue in Ethiopia is not underestimated. CSOs play a crucial role in promoting democratic values, social justice, and citizen participation in Ethiopia. These organizations are non-governmental and operate independently from the government. They work to address various societal issues, including human rights, education, healthcare, and environmental conservation.

Everyone agrees on the importance of having successful national dialogue in the current Ethiopian context. To this end, all segments of the society including CSOs and other institutions sought to showcase strategies to enhance the effectiveness of national dialogue, highlight successful case studies, and provide recommendations

Ethiopia continues its journey towards a more inclusive and participatory society, the role CSOs can play in promoting effective national dialogue will be incalculable



for strengthening their role in shaping the future of Ethiopia.

Recently, the Civic Society Organizations (CSOs) have affirmed their commitment to further bolster their involvement in facilitating the national dialogue process, which is deemed crucial in achieving sustainable peace within the nation.

They have also emphasized that the national dialogue will serve as a platform to foster consensus and address the underlying factors contributing to long-standing conflicts and disputes.

The presidents of the Ethiopian Teachers Association and Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions (CETU) stated that they are working together with the National Dialogue Commission for the successful conduct of the upcoming dialogue process.

President of the Ethiopian Teachers Association, Yohannes Benti told local media that the national dialogue is instrumental to bring lasting peace in Ethiopia as it strives to address the root causes of conflict.

Thus, he stressed that those who claim to be involved in nation's affairs are expected to fulfill their citizenship obligations by discussing and actively participating in the process.

The President reiterated that the association is working to discharge its role by using this notable opportunity to help the efforts achieve lasting peace.

The Association has signed an agreement document with the Commission and is working to participate in the dialogue through structures at all levels, he elaborated.

President of Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions (CETU) Kassahun Follo on his part said that, the Union has been participating in the process since the establishment of the Commission. The Union also participated in selection of participants, he said.

In order to accelerate the economic development of the country, creating a common understanding on major affairs of the country is irreplaceable and should be

prioritized, the President stressed.

Noting that the dialogue will not only be a one-time event, but also a forum where it should be practiced to resolving differences through dialogue, Kassahun underscored.

The Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission was established with 11 commissioners by the House of People's Representatives to lead an independent, inclusive, and transparent national dialogue across the country.

The main objective of the commission is to facilitate consultations among various segments of the society on fundamental issues of the country by identifying the root causes of existing differences through dialogue.

Since its establishment, the commission has been carrying out various activities, engaging numerous stakeholders at federal and regional levels including civic societies.

Accordingly, CSOs' involvement in national dialogue brings several advantages. Firstly, they have a deep understanding of the needs, concerns, and aspirations of the communities they work with, making them effective mediators. Secondly, CSOs foster inclusivity by actively involving marginalized groups, women, and youth in the dialogue process. Lastly, CSOs' expertise in conflict resolution and capacity-building enhances the effectiveness and sustainability of national dialogue initiatives.

In sum, as Ethiopia continues its journey towards a more inclusive and participatory society, the role CSOs can play in promoting effective national dialogue will be incalculable. To ensure that national dialogue is truly representative and inclusive, CSOs must prioritize engaging marginalized groups and communities. This means actively reaching out to individuals who have historically been excluded from decision-making processes, such as women, youth, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities. By creating platforms and spaces for their voices to be heard and valued, CSOs can help bridge the gaps in society and foster a more equitable, inclusive and participatory dialogue.

Planet Earth

Necessary preparations...

Above all, the Green Legacy initiative promotes community involvement. Participation in environmental conservation activities by the community has increased significantly as a result of the Initiative. It has sparked a sense of environmental responsibility among the general public by bringing attention to the value of planting trees and practicing environmental care.

Because dealing with climate change necessitates a multi-stakeholder strategy. Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), corporations, and communities must work together to utilize varied resources and skills. Community participation may create collaboration among many stakeholders, allowing for shared visions and coordinated activities. Collaboration with academic institutions may bring research-backed ideas to the forefront while engaging local companies can lead to sustainable practices.

The initiative provides economic benefits to residents as a result of the effort. The effort has the potential to provide economic advantages through sustainable forestry techniques, ecotourism, and the development of green employment associated with tree planting and forest management. Additionally, worldwide Inspiration: The initiative has motivated other governments and worldwide organizations to take similar steps to combat deforestation and climate change. It serves as a paradigm

for large-scale environmental efforts with the potential to have a big beneficial impact. It influences on the environment. It is a significant step in addressing Ethiopia's environmental concerns and contributing to global efforts to prevent climate change.

Indeed, the Green Legacy Initiative has the potential to address key environmental concerns in Ethiopia while also contributing to global efforts to battle climate change and promote sustainable development. Taking these facts into consideration, the government started the second phase of the green legacy program last year. The second phase will expand on the success of the first phase by focusing on reforestation, afforestation, and environmental protection activities.

Accordingly, these are being made for this year's Green Legacy initiative. This year the Green Legacy Initiative National General Committee stated that important preparations are being made for the Green Footprint Program.

As a result, the necessary preparations are being made for the Green Legacy program this year. The Green Legacy Initiative National General Committee indicated that substantial preparations are being conducted for the Green Footprint Program.

Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture and chairman of the main committee Minister Dr. Girma Amente said that Ethiopia intends to plant 50

billion saplings for two stages of the Green Legacy Initiative.

In his remarks, he mentioned that 32.5 billion saplings have been planted thus far, and efforts are underway to plant around 18 billion saplings in the future. 6.5 billion tree seedlings will be planted as part of the effort in 2024 after this. In particular, to ensure the security of the Renaissance Dam, this year's tree seedling planting will pay particular attention to the Nile River basins.

He further claims that the tree seedling operations would be conducted in a manner that protects the cities' biodiversity and environment. This year's planting locations for saplings have been determined. The locations of the sapling planting programs have also been marked on a map.

FDRE Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed (PhD) said that for the upcoming planting season, billions of coffee and fruit seedlings are being prepared. A greater emphasis is being placed on preparing 400 million tea plants, half a billion fruit seedlings, and over 2 billion coffee seedlings for the upcoming planting season.

He pointed out that over the past year, more than 2 billion coffee seedlings, more than half a billion fruit seedlings, and more than 400 million tea plants are under preparation for the next planting season with improved focus. "If we are able to plant these seedlings and nurture

them to production, it will have a great impact on our overall economy and efforts to address climate change," he affirmed.

This year's Green Legacy program, according to primary committee member and Minister of Water and Energy Engineer Habtamu Itefa (Dr.), will be carried out in a way that would preserve water regions while Dr. Bele Mola, the Minister of Innovation and Technology and a member of the main committee, noted that the effort is being carried out with a focus to ensure that technology supports the process of planting saplings.

In fact, it has been more than five years since the government of Ethiopia launched a major statewide planting of seedlings under the premier's Green Legacy Initiative. As part of the project, the country has planted more than 32.5 billion seedlings of diverse varieties, including numerous types of fruits. Ethiopia is implementing this massive endeavor to aid the country's continuous efforts to enhance agricultural output and ensure food security by reducing the effects of climate change.

Therefore, stakeholders, the government, and the general public should work even harder to ensure that the first phase's success continues into the second, emphasizing environmental protection, afforestation, and reforestation initiatives. The second phase should also include strong monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to evaluate the results of tree-planting initiatives and inform data-driven decisions about future environmental conservation strategies.

WHO certifies Cabo Verde as malaria-free, marking a historic milestone in the fight against malaria

A total of 43 countries and 1 territory have now been certified as malaria-free. The World Health Organization (WHO) has certified Cabo Verde as a malaria-free country, marking a significant achievement in global health. With this announcement, Cabo Verde joins the ranks of 43 countries and 1 territory that WHO has awarded this certification.

Cabo Verde is the third country to be certified in the WHO African region, joining Mauritius and Algeria which were certified in 1973 and 2019 respectively. Malaria burden is the highest on the African continent, which accounted for approximately 95% of global malaria cases and 96% of related deaths in 2021.

Certification of malaria elimination will drive positive development on many fronts for Cabo Verde. Systems and structures built for malaria elimination have strengthened the health system and will be used to fight other mosquito-borne diseases such as dengue fever. Travellers from non-malaria endemic regions can now travel to the islands of Cabo Verde without fear of local malaria infections and the potential inconvenience of preventive treatment measures. This has the potential to attract more visitors and boost socio-economic activities in a country where tourism accounts for approximately 25 per cent of GDP.

"I salute the government and people of Cabo Verde for their unwavering

commitment and resilience in their journey to eliminating malaria," said WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "WHO's certification of Cabo Verde being malaria-free is testament to the power of strategic public health planning, collaboration, and sustained effort to protect and promote health. Cabo Verde's success is the latest in the global fight against malaria, and gives us hope that with existing tools, as well as new ones including vaccines, we can dare to dream of a malaria-free world."

Certification of malaria elimination is the official recognition by WHO of a country's malaria-free status. The certification is granted when a country has shown – with rigorous, credible evidence – that the chain of indigenous malaria transmission by Anopheles mosquitoes has been interrupted nationwide for at least the past three consecutive years. A country must also demonstrate the capacity to prevent the re-establishment of transmission.

"The certification as a malaria-free country has a huge impact, and it's taken a long time to get to this point. In terms of the country's external image, this is very good, both for tourism and for everyone else. The challenge that Cabo Verde has overcome in the health system is being recognised", said the Cabo Verde's Prime Minister, Ulisses Correia e Silva.

Cabo Verde, an archipelago of 10 islands in the Central Atlantic Ocean, has faced

significant malaria challenges. Before the 1950s, all islands were affected by malaria. Severe epidemics were regular occurrences in the most densely populated areas until targeted interventions were implemented. Through the targeted use of insecticide spraying, the country eliminated malaria twice: in 1967 and 1983. However, subsequent lapses in vector control led to a return of the disease. Since the last peak of malaria cases in the late 1980s, malaria in Cabo Verde has been confined to two islands: Santiago and Boa Vista, which have now both been malaria-free since 2017.

"Cabo Verde's achievement is a beacon of hope for the African Region and beyond. It demonstrates that with strong political will, effective policies, community engagement and multisectoral collaboration, malaria elimination is an achievable goal," said Dr Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa. "The attainment of this milestone by Cabo Verde is an inspiring example for other nations to follow."

Cabo Verde's journey to malaria elimination has been long and received a boost with the inclusion of this objective in its national health policy in 2007. A strategic malaria plan from 2009 to 2013 laid the groundwork for success, focusing on expanded diagnosis, early and effective treatment, and the reporting and investigating all cases. To stem the tide of imported cases from mainland Africa, diagnosis and treatment were provided

free of charge to international travellers and migrants.

In 2017 the country turned an outbreak into an opportunity. Cabo Verde identified problems and made improvements, leading to zero indigenous cases for three consecutive years.

During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the country safeguarded progress; efforts focused on improving the quality and sustainability of vector control and malaria diagnosis, strengthening malaria surveillance – especially at ports, airports, in the capital city and areas with a risk of malaria re-establishment.

Collaboration between the Ministry of Health and various government departments focused on the environment, agriculture, transportation, tourism, and more, played a pivotal role in Cabo Verde's success. The inter-ministerial commission for vector control, chaired by the Prime Minister was key to elimination. The collaborative effort and the commitment of community-based organizations and NGOs demonstrate the importance of a holistic approach to public health.

As Cabo Verde celebrates this monumental achievement, the global community commends its leaders, healthcare professionals, and citizens for their dedication to eliminating malaria and creating a healthier future for all.

Planet Earth

Necessary preparations completed for this year's Green Legacy initiative

BY EPHREM ANDARGACHEW

Ethiopia has faced serious environmental problems, such as deforestation, soil erosion, and biodiversity loss. In response to these issues, the Green Legacy Initiative was launched, to plant billions of trees around the country.

Ethiopia's Green Legacy Initiative is a tree-planting initiative that aims to halt desertification and deforestation. The project was launched in 2019 by Ethiopia's Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed, as a part of his larger initiatives to solve the nation's environmental challenges.

The initiative has garnered widespread support from the Ethiopian population, with millions of people participating in tree-planting events. The government has also mobilized various institutions and organizations to support the initiative, including the military and civil servants. Hence, the initiative has received overwhelming support from the Ethiopian people, as seen by the millions of individuals who have taken part in tree-planting programs.

As a result, the Ethiopian Green Legacy Initiative has had various positive impacts since its inception, including reforestation

and afforestation. Millions of trees have been planted around Ethiopia as part of the campaign, adding to reforestation efforts and boosting the country's forest cover. This can reduce soil erosion, increase water retention, and restore biodiversity.

Additionally, it supports national initiatives to mitigate climate change. It is anticipated that the massive tree-planting initiatives would aid in carbon sequestration and lessen the consequences of climate change. By taking up carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, trees help to mitigate the effects of greenhouse gas emissions on the climate.

Additionally, the country begins to effectively use the program for the management and conservation of soil. To improve soil fertility and stop soil erosion, trees are essential. The program promotes sustainable farming methods and works to prevent agricultural land deterioration by planting trees. Since the country's forestry initiatives help to preserve biodiversity by providing homes for a variety of plant and animal species, it is crucial to safeguard the ecosystem. For ecosystems to remain healthy and to support species, this is vital.

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