



# The Ethiopian Herald

Vol. LXXX No 111 18 JANUARY 2024 - Tir 9, 2016

Thursday

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Photo: Berihun Tadele



## Ethiopia mulls garnering African support to seaport access

BY STAFF REPORTER

**ADDIS ABABA** – African nations should support Ethiopia’s attempt to access seaport as it helps achieving mutual benefits, urged the Ministry of Planning and Development (MoPD).

Apart from securing national interest, Ethiopia’s quest for seaport access pursues country’s diplomatic principles of promoting

*See Ethiopia mulls... Page 3*

## Institute of Human Origins board members visit ‘real’ Lucy

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

**ADDIS ABABA**- As part of the upcoming 50th anniversary of the discovery of Lucy, a team of 25 people from Institute of Human Origins, Arizona State University (ASU) visited the ‘real’ Lucy at the Ethiopian National Museum.

Institute of Human Origins Director Prof. Yohannes Haileselassie indicated that the group, which comprised board members and supporters of the Institute of Human Origins, Arizona State University, would pay a visit to Hadar, the origin of Lucy.

The delegates would also be expected to visit Omo valley, Arbaminch and other historical and cultural sites. “The visit has

*See Institute of Human ... Page 3*

## DPM shares Ethiopia’s economic reform successes with WEF president

• Ethiopia, dev’t partner to consolidate cooperation

BY STAFF REPORTER

**ADDIS ABABA**- Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Demeke

Mekonnen briefed World Economic Forum (WEF) President Børge Brende on basic reforms that the Ethiopian government has made to increase the flow of investment.

Deputy Premier met with the President yesterday at the sidelines of the 54th Annual Meeting of the WEF 2024 in Davos, Switzerland.

In the discussion, Demeke pointed out that the

*See DPM shares ... Page 3*

## Depriving Ethiopia from sea access disintegrates HoA: *Amb. Seleshi*

BY YESUF ENDRIS

**ADDIS ABABA**- Opposing the Ethio-Somaliland agreement on mutual benefit has no justifiable cause, Ethiopian Ambassador to the U.S. said, adding that depriving the former from sea access would create permanent instability in the Horn of Africa (HoA).

Ethiopia’s direct access to port will guarantee an enduring peace in the HoA and denying the aspiration of the hundred and twenty million people would bring imminent threat for the already volatile region, Ambassador Seleshi Bekele (Eng. PhD) told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA).

*See Depriving Ethiopia ... Page 3*







## ECCSA runs project aims to improve farming community's livelihoods

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

**ADDIS ABABA** - The Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations (ECCSA) has launched the project that aims to support the production of selected agricultural commodities including avocado, onion and soybean and ensure the benefit of the farming community.

The project is said to benefit about 930 youth and women and to be implemented in Amhara, Oromia and Sidama states until the end of the current year.

Speaking at the launching ceremony, ECCSA President Melaku Ezezew stated that the project mainly focuses on increasing the productivity of avocado, onions, and soybeans thereby bringing the change in the rural community's livelihoods through market access. The project is being implemented in cooperation with international organizations.

Melaku further noted that the project is also instrumental to create a market linkage for producers and strengthen rural value chain and is being held under the theme "Strengthening Capacity of ECCSA and Agri-business Association, towards Agri-business Oriented Policy Dialogue."

The project is funded by a Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and helps to enhance the capabilities of ECCSA members in investment and business policy implementation, particularly focusing on the value chains of avocado, onions, and soybeans.

"The project benefits farming associations and unions and fosters capacity building through training and policy advocacy. In this regard, the GIZ allots over half-a-million Euros grant to supplement Ethiopia's export of agricultural commodities to the international market. Our partnership with the organization helps the association to achieve its objectives."

According to him, the primary objective of the project is to provide the tools to policy advocacy and comprehensive training that would help to equip project beneficiaries with the necessary skills and knowledge. This practice would help project beneficiaries to navigate the complex landscapes of the agriculture value chain.

GIZ Representative Prof. Fikre Lemessa said for his part that the project mainly improves value chains in the production of onions, soybean and avocado. "Also, this project holds the capacity to drive positive changes through enhanced capacity, effective advocacy, and policy dialogue in the three states (Amhara, Oromia and Sidama).

The GIZ upholds its support to the realization of the ECCA's project objectives such as supporting small holder farmers, encouraging the private sector's involvement in Ethiopia's economy and ensuring the betterment of the rural community, he remarked.

# Ethio-Somaliland deal enhances logistics supply to industries: IPDC

BY YESUF ENDRIS

**ADDIS ABABA**—The sea access agreement with Somaliland enhances logistics supply to industries based in Ethiopia, Industrial Parks Development Cooperation (IPDC) disclosed.

IPDC Chief Executive Officer Aklilu Seyoum said that the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between Ethiopia and Somaliland on seaport access curbs logistics challenges that Ethiopia has been encountering for absence of such facility.

Discussing the advantages of the MoU with employees yesterday, the CEO noted that the agreement paves the way to link Ethiopia with sea thereby enables investors to transport import and export industrial products with better performance.

Following the agreement, the Ethiopian government will develop port infrastructure in Somaliland along with Gulf of Aden coastline, The Ethiopian Herald learnt.

IPDC is expected to have key responsibility of building and managing dry ports and



some infrastructure in and near to the Berbera port to overcome the obstacles the Ethiopian industrial sector has been facing due to absence of free port to import and export, he mentioned.

"We Ethiopians need to push forward for the implementation of the agreement," he said, adding that supporting the MoU does not necessarily mean praising the ruling party agenda.

There was such a noise and misinformation when Ethiopia laid Abbay Dam's cornerstone and similar noises are hearing

these days since the signing of the sea access MoU with Somaliland, he stressed.

Ethiopia had more than or equal to ten ports until colonisers invade Red Sea and Gulf of Aden coastline areas. After the independence, Ethiopia had been using the Assab and Messewa port for its incoming and outgoing logistics items until the nation became landlocked following Eritrea's cession, Aklilu recalled mentioning the significance of the new agreement with Somaliland as an opportunity found after long years.



## EOTC urges faithful to convey peace, unity during *Timket*

BY MESERET BEHAILU

**ADDIS ABABA** – Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) Holy Synod Member urged the faithful to promote peace, love and unity while celebrating Ethiopian Epiphany (*Timket*).

Briefing local media on the festivity, EOTC Holy Synod Member and Bishop of Central Gondar Zone, Abune Yohannes said that *Timket* holiday commemorates the baptism

of Jesus Christ in the Jordan River and the Harrowing of Hell.

Accordingly, the Orthodox Tewahedo Christians celebrate Epiphany each year as it is the gate of sacrament and Christianity, he mentioned.

Abune Yohannes noted that celebrants should be cautious and appear in a soothing and tranquil manner while observing this year's *Timket* in Gondar, Amhara State.

He added that all parties should give priority

and protect children, the elderly, and foreigners.

This year's Epiphany celebration has a manifold advantages in promoting the positive image of Gondar in particular and Ethiopia in general. Therefore, efforts are underway to celebrate this outdoor festivity peacefully in harmony, he expressed.

It is to be recalled that the Ethiopian Epiphany was registered as the intangible heritages by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO.)



## Ethiopia, France keen on strengthen parliamentary relations

**ADDIS ABABA** - Ethiopia and France have agreed to further strengthen the parliamentary relations between the two countries and cooperate in various areas of common interest.

Chairman of the Standing Committee of Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs at the House of Peoples' Representatives, DimaNego received a French delegation led by Chairman of National Assembly's Committee of National Defense and Armed Forces, Thomas Gassiloud.

During the occasion, DimaNego briefed the delegation about the current situation in Ethiopia and various reform programs launched to improve the economy of the country and ensure peace and security.

He also briefed about the MoU Ethiopia recently signed with Somaliland, which ensures joint development.

Since 1993, Ethiopia has become a landlocked country, and access to the Red Sea is crucial for Ethiopia's long-term national and economic security, he said, adding that there is no landlocked country like Ethiopia in the world with such a big population.

As it lies in geostrategic location, Ethiopia



is a pivotal to the region with a large population, long history and contributing to peace and security of neighboring countries, he added.

Despite the significance of the MOU for shared interests, some are disseminating distorted information and needs to be rectified, he said.

The security in the Red Sea requires Ethiopia's contribution and called on the French government to help Ethiopia in its effort for sea outlet.

Regarding bilateral relations with France, the

ties between the two countries are excellent, he said, adding that the parliamentary relation is important to further enhance the existing relations and openly discuss various issues of common interest.

He further said the relationships between the two countries open good opportunities to strengthen people to people relations.

Members of the standing committee also stated that Ethiopia needs sea access only through peaceful means and give and take approach.

"We are keen to strengthen ties with the French Parliament," they said.

Chairman of the National Assembly's Committee on National Defense and Armed Forces, Thomas Gassiloud on his part said that France is ready to work with Ethiopia in social and economic and other fields.

He expressed that his delegation understands the situation that Ethiopia has gone through in the past due to drought and conflict. "We are ready to work with Ethiopia in various sectors including the military."

The relationship between the two countries has marked 125 years and they enjoyed excellent relations, ENA reported.

## Ethiopia mulls...

peaceful cooperation and mutual development, so said MoPD Minister Fitsum Assefa (PhD).

She told FBC that Ethiopia's foreign policy prioritizes neighboring countries not only for security cooperation but also to ensure economic development and integration.

The rationale of Ethiopia's request for sea access can be considered from historic, geographic and international law perspectives, she stated.

Regardless of all the reasonable causes, Fitsum believed that the country has shown commitment and potentials to gain sea access only through a peaceful means.

"Our African brother and sister countries should support this ambition of Ethiopia intended only to achieve development," she urged.

Ethiopia has been reverberating African nation's causes to the world via the various regional and continental organizations in which the country is among the founding members, according to the Minister.

And today, she noted, Africans must repeat the same by standing together with Ethiopia in its endeavor to get access to seaport - which the country had unfairly and inappropriately lost in its recent history.

## Depriving Ethiopia...

According to Ambassador Seleshi, those interest groups that are opposing Ethiopia's aspiration to sea access are opposing its engagement in the regional affairs.

Those groups oppose Ethiopia's port deal knowing the fact that the accord will not bring any harm to their interest and they simply prefer to keep the country away from development and integration in the strategic region.

"Ethiopia is the most populous landlocked country in the globe and the diplomatic cost to reverse such a lack of port access could not be easy. Though, we need to keep moving forward until we ensure at least a single reliable and enduring solution."

The diplomat further highlighted that Ethiopia needs a sovereign access to port to protect its national interest and not to harm any party. "The global economy and diplomatic relations are challenging for a country devoid of guaranteed sea outlets. All this aspiration needs to be attained through a meticulous and intensive diplomatic engagement."

He added, "It was very clear that those groups attempted to suppress Ethiopia's engagement in the region even before the Ethio-Somaliland port accord. Hence, the Ethiopian government is defending its national interest considering what was happening in the past."

The Memorandum of Understanding signed between Ethiopia and Somaliland is not something that happened overnight and it takes a long discussion and negotiations over the issue. The signed agreement does not relate to anything that could be utilized for creating a hot agenda for others, Ambassador Seleshi emphasized.

The HoA countries agenda should be to integrate themselves for economic and political benefits, not to worsen problems. Climate change, for example, is another agenda which needs much greater concern than trivial political cases.

The HoA integration also needs diplomatic forms of people-to-people, government to government and business-to-business, he remarked.

## Institute of Human...

a great contribution for the tourism sector as not only creates a positive image but it would also attract other tourists that are interested in archeology."

Cognizant to the fact that Lucy was discovered on Nov 24, 1974, the year 2024 would be celebrated as the Year of Lucy. As part of the program, symposiums, lectures, temporary exhibits and other sideline programs would be carried out over the year.

Noting the program's aim to showcase how Ethiopia's values and promotes Lucy, the Professor said the institute is closely working with the Ministry of Tourism, and Ethiopian Heritage Conservation Authority

to facilitate the program over the year.

In addition, there will be an international meeting at the end of this year which will be held regarding the 50th anniversary of Lucy discovery. "Seeing the original fossil of Lucy was very remarkable and moving," Prof. Donald Johanson, who discovered Lucy, underscored during the visit.

The scholar further noted that it was very special that the Ministry of Culture and the National Museum made the opportunity available for people as many of them don't get the chance to see the original one.

It is to be recalled that Lucy was found by Prof. Donald Johanson and Tom Gray on November 24, 1974, at the site of Hadar in Ethiopia.



## DPM shares...

government is paying attention to the development of infrastructure and cited the Abbay Dam built by its own capacity as an example.

He assured that the government will continue the work started to make the service sector accessible, improve financial institutions and increase the share of the private sub-economy.

Borg Brand, on his part, thanked Ethiopia for its continuous participation in the annual World Economic Forum.

The president also said that the forum wants to continue strengthening the relationship with Ethiopia.

The DPM also had a discussion with the Bill and Melinda Gates Founder. During the course of the meeting, Demeke expressed appreciation for the foundation for its support in health, agriculture and

human resource development in Ethiopia.

He, moreover, called on the foundation to strengthen its support to the Ethiopian government's efforts to ensure sustainable economic growth.

According to the information obtained from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Bill Gates expressed the foundation's desire to continue to work on development projects that can change the lives of Ethiopian citizens.

The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has been making significant contributions in the past two decades in Ethiopia by carrying out works that have changed people's lives in the areas of development prioritized by the government.

In his discussion with Tanzania Vice President Philip Mpango, Demeke briefed the former about the current

status of the construction of the Abbay Dam and mentioned that the overall work of the project is in the final phase.

For his part, the Vice President said that his country will continue its efforts to ensure fair use of the Nile water resources among countries in the basin.

Mpango also stated that the ongoing tripartite negotiations should be continued so that differences around the Abbay Dam could be resolved through dialogue.

The two countries also agreed to hold a joint commission meeting soon, according to MoFA.

This year's World Economic Forum is focused on international development, technological innovation, climate change and current security issues.



# Opinion

## Exploiting coexistence, harmony for lasting peace

BY MENGESHA AMARE

Comprehending how to live together in harmony is an essential part of human life, and is something that would be definitely born to both the heart and the mind. Running peaceful coexistence locally or regionally does allow people of a given nation to create a more compassionate and thoughtful society, where they can reach agreements and solve problems more easily, and move forward as one. It is unequivocally a failure that makes developing countries like Ethiopia restless, and they have to work on peace, peaceful co-existence and harmony to be lands of their dream—stability and firm serenity.

No doubt, coexistence is a path which brings individuals, communities, and/or nations away from violence and destructive conflict, and run towards social cohesion and assimilation. It principally aims at addressing past wrongs, search for justice and forgiveness, build or rebuild communities, and explore ways for societal structures and systems to symbolize fairness, justice, tranquility, equality as well as equity. Yes, people of the same nation or compatriots have to develop harmonious way of living, fraternity and amicability and cooperation so as to build a great nation in which every citizen is treated equally devoid of prejudice.

Yes, peaceful coexistence allows people to create a more kindhearted community where citizens can reach agreements and solve problems more efficiently. It, in one society, is the pillar that supports many aspects of individuals' life.

Hence, campaigns for peaceful coexistence should continue directing the ongoing path reaching over 120 million people of varied religious, cultural, ethnic, linguistic backgrounds across the this great nation—Ethiopia, to come up with a unwavering nation. Peaceful coexistence helps consolidate strength of diversity among united people, stakeholder collaboration to attain a peaceful society, fairness, and justice as the bedrock for peace.

Recognizing all this, Ethiopia has been working hard to get all citizens involved in intensive discussion thereby consolidating unity, fraternity, amicability and harmony. Needless to state, justice is the cornerstone of a stable society. All citizens agree that without equity, fairness, and justice, peace will not be achieved. Hence, the government has to distribute amenities, appointments, and employment without bias or prejudice and on individuals to engage in legitimate means when demanding equity and fairness. In so doing, the meaning of peaceful co-existence or harmony can be vividly revealed. As diversity among individuals provides the fundamental strength and capability for everyone to bring forth different ideas, collaborate on a framework, and develop an action plan

to achieve peace for the entire community, we all have to well acknowledge and enjoy exercising it.

Without a shadow of doubt, tolerance and peaceful co-existence are crucial for creating a harmonious and inclusive society. The former allows people with different beliefs, cultures, and backgrounds to live together without discrimination. It also promotes understanding, empathy, and respect for diversity. Mainly, since peaceful co-existence fosters stability, reduces conflict, and encourages collaboration for the betterment of communities, Ethiopians, at all walks of life, have to attach due emphasis to peace and peaceful co-existence. Embracing tolerance and peaceful co-existence can lead to greater social cohesion, economic prosperity, and overall well-being for all individuals and groups summed up to a stable nation.

Interestingly, peaceful coexistence between the members of any society and the dissemination of a culture of tolerance, love and peace is the safety valve for all. These elements are considered the healthy and sound environment for comprehensive human development in all scientific, economic, commercial, human rights and health fields. A socially and economically stable environment, along with political development, enables everyone to exercise their freedom and obtain their economic, health, political and humanitarian rights without infringing the rights of others or practicing any kind of violence or conflict. Undeniably, peaceful coexistence between the various spectra is the fertile soil that stimulates economic growth at all levels. It is followed by the development of other economic and trade facilities, such as industries, import and export, as well as the fundamental factors of the development of all aspects of life, namely intellectual, scientific, industrial, educational, legal and political.

It is worth mentioning in this regard too that peaceful coexistence reinvigorates and assists in the development of sustainable development. It guarantees the full access of health care, starting from family formation and childbearing to adolescents, youth and seniors, in addition to gaining education at all stages and helps to refine talents and innovations which enables the nation to obtain patriotic, competent and responsible citizenry.

Peaceful coexistence, tolerance, love and peace and are the keys to solving all social, educational, economic, legal and even political evils. With those necessary keys, transparency is flourished, social justice and human rights are secured, and the principles of democracy are spread, which are the best tools of reaching stability, growth and prosperity.

In order to be able to take this path forward, all Ethiopians must emphasize the significance of preservation and retention of peaceful coexistence, which is increasingly needed as Ethiopians look forward to building their modern state,

whose spirit should be derived from the spirit of the most beautiful legacy of tolerance, love, fraternity and peaceful coexistence.

Since Ethiopians have made of peaceful coexistence a noble goal to be perused, it has been their shield which protects them from all forms of purposely schemed strife and saves the nation from the scourge of war.

The golden elements of peace are considered the healthy and sound environment for comprehensive human development in all scientific, economic, commercial, human rights and health fields. A socially and economically stable environment, along with political development, enables everyone to exercise their freedom and obtain their economic, health, political and humanitarian rights without infringing the rights of others or practicing any kind of violence.

Since mutual respect for sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference, equality are the fundamental elements of peaceful coexistence, all citizens of the country have to be abide by these golden rules and nurture them well. Entertainingly, efforts to resolve conflicts and achieve sustained peace are expected to be properly guided by perspectives about how conflict and peace are based in interpersonal and intergroup relationships, as well as historical, social, economic and political contexts.

All citizens have to consider the coexistence of groups in the country so as to evaluate the role of within-state boundaries in peace. True, Ethiopia is known as a country of great stability, without major internal conflict despite multiple languages and religions though a lot remains to be done.

The most effective way to diminish human suffering and the massive economic costs of conflicts and their aftermath is to prevent conflicts and solve problems especially following the principle of 'African solutions for African problems.'

Conciliation, close talks, dialog and reconciliation have become instrumental in playing an important role in boosting conflict prevention, reinvigorating diplomacy, good relations and regional integrity.

Besides, growing national, regional, continental as well as international recognition of peaceful coexistence have to be given due place. Integrating socioeconomic and developmental concerns with recognition of the importance of coexistence, stability, and human security would be of paramount importance in breaking the vicious circle of conflict and spirit of revolving around devilish vicious circle. Education centering peace has to be well expanded to thereby bringing about stable nation. Here, the youth in particular are expected to fuel the effort geared towards ensuring peace and tranquility. They have to actively participate in peace efforts so as

to promote the nonviolent transformation of conflicts, and foster harmonious and cooperative relations among citizens based on the values of peace and peaceful coexistence.

Yes, throughout history, societies have strived to establish peaceful coexistence. From ancient civilizations to modern nations, various philosophies, ideologies, and movements have shaped citizens' understanding of peace and tranquility. Vividly, coexistence is a state in which two or more groups are living together respecting their differences and resolving their conflicts nonviolently, in a civilized way and enjoying the heartiest approach. In Ethiopia, the policy of peaceful coexistence has to incorporate principles such as nonaggression, respect for sovereignty, national independence, and noninterference in internal affairs, respect of each other or one another, providing all citizens, even non-citizens, with due respect and privilege keeping hospitality tempo.

In a nutshell, Ethiopia has to embark on peace and peaceful coexistence so as to break the cycles of violence and internal conflicts via ensuring interventions are anchored in the needs of the communities affected by conflict. Thus the government, stakeholders working on the area as well as policymakers and practitioners should complement the approaches centered on physical reconstruction and federal government institutions with more bottom-up, inclusive engagement that leverages existing assets.

They should also pursue a more holistic and multispectral approach focused on building peace and harmony rather than adding fuel to fire that potentially exacerbate rivalry and disagreement at the expense of the peace of all citizens. Like all social environments, coexistence, peculiarly peaceful coexistence, fluctuates, depending on the level of social interaction. of course, it exists in situations where individuals and communities actively accept and embrace diversity, and where individuals and communities merely tolerate other groups, too, and such a lucrative step ahs to be well taken care of in Ethiopia to ensure peace.

So long as it is instrumental in devising possible mechanisms in due course of combating destructive sentiments and devastating scenarios, peaceful coexistence needs to be deliberately and wholeheartedly eyed on. Coexistence in general, peaceful coexistence in particular, is characterized by a recognition and respect for diversity in all aspects. It is this time that the country would hit the set target, the long aspired one in fact, ensuring peace and stability from corner to corner making social cohesion real based on justice, equality and inclusion.

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



# Editorial

## Time to visit Ethiopia!

As of tomorrow Ethiopians will begin the celebration of Timket, the holiday that commemorates the baptism of Jesus Christ. Timket, the local term for Epiphany, is celebrated in a unique ceremony across Ethiopia that is so captivating for people who hail from different parts of the world.

Coming Ethiopia on such occasions gives you wonderful experiences as you visit a significant number of Africa's historical and cultural heritages as Ethiopia has the largest number of them in the continent.

Indeed, coming all the way from the different corners of the world has many costs in terms of time or money; nevertheless, it pays rewarding experiences. In this case it is normal for visitors to have more options to visit. So are the tourist attractions that are available in Ethiopia. Seasonal holidays like Timket are only introductory or entry points. But once you arrive in Ethiopia on such occasions you can surf into a mosaic of diverse tourist attractions that are worth your travel.

Ethiopia has several diverse tourist attraction sites and facilities. It has got a number of UNESCO registered world heritages. These heritages are mainly categorized as tangible and intangible heritages.

A visit to these sites, especially the tangible heritages makes a visitor's time worthy as it is tantamount to visiting the largest number of registered heritages in the continent.

Alongside the natural and historical sites, Ethiopia is doing well to cultivate its ecotourism. The country is endowed with varied topography and climate conditions that are suitable and enjoyable. These are highly recommended tourist attraction sites. They depend largely on the beautiful natural scenery, fresh air, conducive temperature and free from pollutants like that of sound.

Starting from the urban recreational parks that have flourished in cities like Addis Ababa, Ethiopia is transforming many of the naturally beautiful and untouched landscapes to world class and sophisticated resort places. The resorts in Halala Keela, Elephant Paw and Wonchi are good examples of the potential that the country has in the sector.

The government is also expanding similar eco-tourism facilities in various parts of the country at the moment. This makes tourist stay in Ethiopia very interesting and profitable.

This month is also a prime time for visitors in Ethiopia. In connection with the New Year of the Gregorian calendar as well as Christian holidays like Christmas and Epiphany, many of the tourism facilities in Ethiopia are actively working every year. Furthermore, tourists from the most frequent origins like Europe and America, as well as the Ethiopian diaspora community also travel to Ethiopia during this season.

The season being a good factor to attract more tourists, visitors should also take the chance to explore more features about Ethiopia and enjoy its historical as well as natural tourist sites. They should not be limited to this season. As the former motto of Ethiopia tourism goes, Ethiopia is a country of 13 months of sunshine (now, Land of Origin). This still works in the tourist destinations of the country. Whether during summer or winter they can enjoy the clean air that is refined by the natural forests and vegetation of the resorts the construction of which has followed state of the art inputs and has also taken latecomers advantage in the field.



## The Ethiopian Herald

Established in 1943

Published daily except Mondays  
By The Ethiopian Press Agency

Office of the CEO  
Tel. 011-126-42-22  
Fax. 251-011-156-98-62  
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# Opinion

## Silencing guns: A path towards lasting peace, prosperity in Sudan

BY ADDISALEM MULAT

The achievement of lasting peace in Sudan holds significant advantages not only for the nation but also for the broader region. The establishment of a peaceful Sudan would open up opportunities for increased trade and collaboration, fueling economic growth and development. Moreover, it would serve as a crucial deterrent to the spread of extremism and terrorism challenges that currently plague the region.

In this pursuit, international support plays a vital role as it can provide the necessary mechanisms to exert pressure on warring factions urging them to abandon violence and engage in meaningful dialogues.

It is common knowledge that Sudan finds itself trapped in a seemingly endless cycle of conflict, a predicament that has persistently inflicted immeasurable suffering and resulted in a distressing loss of countless lives. With each passing year, the people of Sudan bear the weight of this prolonged state of turmoil their spirits gradually eroded by the unrelenting violence that engulfs their daily lives.

By silencing the guns, Sudan can begin the arduous process of healing, reconstructing, and fostering unity. It is only through this concerted effort that the nation can hope to restore its schools, hospitals, and roads to their former glory revitalizing the veins of progress and rejuvenating the hopes and dreams of its resilient people. The road to salvation lies in the collective endeavor to quell the violence and establish a security landscape that allows Sudan to flourish once again.

Furthermore, it is crucial to secure the engagement and commitment of all relevant stakeholders including governmental bodies, civil society organizations, neighboring countries, and international players.

The protracted conflict in Sudan has had severe economic repercussions, leaving a significant portion of the population grappling with financial hardship and struggling to meet their basic needs. One crucial factor contributing to the ongoing conflict in Sudan lies in the deeply rooted political divisions that have fueled power struggles among various factions. This has created an environment of intense animosity resulting in heightened tensions and escalating violence.

It is important to recognize that the peaceful resolution of conflicts is not just a desirable outcome but an essential human right. Every individual should have the fundamental right to live in a state of tranquility and security free from the constant threat of violence and persecution.

As the violence persists, the very foundations of Sudan's societal fabric erode leaving individuals and communities grappling with the monumental task of rebuilding amidst the ruins left in the wake of gunfire. Acknowledging the pressing need to alter

the trajectory of Sudan's path, there is a prevailing realization among its citizens that lasting peace can only be achieved by disarming this relentless source of harm.

Without a doubt, the destructive power wielded by these weapons of war has instigated profound devastation wreaking havoc on Sudan's critically vital infrastructure. The consequences of this violence have reverberated throughout the nation causing irreparable harm to indispensable institutions upon which the society relies.

By focusing on achieving political stability and fostering an inclusive dialogue among parties with differing interests, warring parties can curtail the necessity for violence and foster a climate of understanding and cooperation. Only through these collective efforts and a genuine commitment to resolving the root issues can Sudan progress towards a future characterized by lasting peace, economic recovery, and the overall well-being of its people.

While commendable progress has been made towards peace in Sudan, it is essential to acknowledge that there remains a considerable amount of work to be done. The complexities and challenges involved in the peace-building process necessitate unwavering commitment and cooperation from all parties involved.

By effectively silencing the guns, warring parties can ensure that this inherent right is upheld providing the Sudanese people with the peace and security they deserve. This action will not only eliminate immediate dangers but also lay the foundation for a society in which safety and stability are integral components of daily life. Creating an environment of peace entails addressing not only the visible manifestations of violence but also tackling the underlying causes of the conflict.

A peaceful Sudan would not only bring much-needed stability and security to its own people but would also serve as a beacon of hope for the entire region. Embracing peace-building efforts and actively working towards political stability and inclusivity will empower Sudan to overcome the scars of its past and create a brighter and more promising future for its citizens.

The intervention of external entities, particularly those equipped with the expertise and resources needed to mediate dialogue between warring parties, is of paramount importance in Sudan. These efforts provide a critical opportunity to halt further bloodshed and alleviate suffering. Instead of perpetuating violence and inflicting harm upon one another, the conflicting groups can come together engaging in discussions aimed at finding peaceful resolutions to their conflicts.

This mediation serves as a lifeline offering the feuding factions a chance to reevaluate their positions, bridge their differences, and work towards a harmonious coexistence.

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

# Business & Economy

## Modernizing the land management system

BY ABEBE WOLDEGIORGIS

Land is fundamental to development, growth and housing delivery in any society. It is a crucial element in property development process and its acquisition is vital to achieving efficient and sustainable housing delivery in urban environment.

Economists emphasize that access to land and property rights is a major key issue in economic growth and development. It is now increasingly being realized that economic development of any country depends on how efficiently the land is distributed among citizenry and competing urban uses. It is pertinent to note that providing the populace with access to land and empowering them to make effective use of it is central to poverty alleviation.

As argued that land is not just only basic to life but it also contains all necessities for life to exist and a tool for obtaining social prestige, economic security and political power.

Land management entails all activities concerned with the management of land as a resource both from environment and economic perspective. From an institutional perspective also, land management includes the formulation of land policies, the legal frameworks, resource management, land administration arrangements and land information management.

Therefore, inefficient urban land management can result in uneconomic use of land, uncontrolled informal settlements, urban sprawl, illegal land holdings, weak provision of basic services and infrastructure.

Economists also underlined that land is a component of production and when it is combined with labor, capital and technology, it plays a pivotal role for wealth creation. They also suggest that similar to labor and capital it has to have exchange value to attract investment. According to the Ethiopian constitution ratified in 1995, land is owned by the government and will not be sold or exchanged. Therefore, it lost its transaction value.

Debate among professionals engaged in land researches and economists still continued. Some argue that land must have transaction value and be exchanged similar to other commodities. Others also argue that the existing land holding system should be continued. In the Derg era, similar to today, land was owned by the government. After the ascending of EPRDF regime to power in 1995 it introduced the land allocating system to investors through lease in the urban centers which made the value of land very expensive in which inaccessible to the ordinary citizens but enabled to galvanize huge income to the city administration.

In the urban centers land is utilized for various purposes. It is used for the construction of residential houses, real estate, business centers, schools, universities, clinics, hospitals, football stadiums, theatre, cinema halls and others. According to environmentalists, municipality managers and architects urban development is directly related with the land usage for the targeted

objectives.

In addition to compartmentalizing the land in the urban centers for each purpose preparing open spaces for parks and recreational purposes is essential. Currently the world is facing challenges posed by climate change and global warming, urban centers have been vulnerable to the threat of flood and water and occasionally infrastructure has been demolished and animals and human lives also taken by disastrous effects.

On the other hand, shortage of water due to the reduction of water points because of evaporation posed by global warming made potable water in short supply. Hence to adopt the impact of climate change, the master plans should be prepared by considering these realities and letting open areas which serve as lung for urban center with no construction activities and inspecting them is critically vital.

In Ethiopia, historically urban centers including the city of Addis Ababa were not established in a planned manner with municipal services provision. In addition, they had no viable economic bases. Rather they were established based on the rural urban migration with no sufficient services and municipal administration. They also were established with insufficient income which allocated for the provision of municipal services as the result, most of them are below standard and observing shanty places is common. The number of unemployment is the highest in urban centers due to the small economy and saturation of labor demand.

Most traditional residential houses located in the suburb of rivers and streams with no toilets.

They let their liquid waste to the rivers and made bad odors which bring health risks to humans as well as animals. Moreover, the waste spoils the rivers water which harms marine lives.

Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Africa next to Nigeria with more than 120 million people. It is also known by its highest annual birth rate with more than 3 percent. Hence because of lack of opportunities in the rural part rural-urban migration is common which put pressure on urban centers municipal services provision.

To make cities and urban centers conducive for the residents, urban administrations should devote their energy and resource for the construction of roads and pavements, supply of clean water, electric city and residential houses which needs the allocation of huge budget. To that end the city administrations should enhance their tax collecting capacity.

The administration to deliver services, the municipal offices should be staffed by well qualified architects, engineers and lawyers.

As mentioned above land is a component of production factors and must be properly managed. It has also huge economic value particularly in the city and other towns and city administrations derive their huge amount of income from land lease. But most administrations land management offices did not develop modern information system.

The poor documentation system witnessed

in some offices opened the door for land grabbing and corruption. To utilize the land resource in the proper manner the city administration long ago implemented the rehabilitation schemes in the city. It demolished shanty residential places where land is lost its economic value, compensates the residents and re-settled residents in new places. It built new real estates and institutions. Such practices in addition to beautifying the city enabled to galvanize income through taxation from real estate developers and investors.

According to studies, the land administration offices in various urban centers proved that they are inept to allocate resource appropriately and corruption has been rampant. In the last thirty years various media have been revealing that dozens of municipal officials working in the office of land holding administration found guilty of corruption and faced justice.

As the land price has become skyrocket in the urban centers it is essential to establish modern institutions equipped with modern Information Communication Technology and in such a way in addition to preserving the land resources information, it helps to deter corruption practices.

Recently the Ministry of Urban and Infrastructure and the Korean Wavus Jv Company have signed a contract agreement for the establishment of Land Information Management System in cities of 4 regional states.

Speaking during the contract signing ceremony, Urban and Infrastructure Minister Chaltu Sani said the main aim of the agreement is to bring about change in the country's land administration and help cities manage land by using state-of-the-art technology.

The 30-million-USD project would be implemented in Bahir Dar, Adama, Hawassa and Sodo. She added that "the main strategic issues are bringing about change in our land administration system and helping the city administrations to manage their land by using state-of-the-art technology."

Wavus Jv Company CEO Kim Hak Sung said the first establishment of land Information Management System in Africa poses evident challenges and great opportunities.

He stated that the company will do its best to build a world class land information management system through active cooperation with local officials to increase the efficiency of land administration in Ethiopia and realize innovative improvements in the public service. Capacity buildings, document digitalization, establishing national and regional centers for Land Information Management System are the works the company is expected to realize.

Sung said "since this project is the first establishment of land information management system project in Africa, we believe that it will present meaningful challenges and great opportunities to us."

The contract agreement for the project was signed between Urban and Infrastructure State Minister, Fenta Dejene, and Wavus CEO, Kim Hak Sung.



# Art & Culture

## The New Year bound to be Africa's year of prominent art exhibitions

BY MULUGETA GUDETA

The just passed year 2023 was characterized as the year Africa blossomed with many works of literature and music, songs and dances. It was mainly a year of literary arts when young and veteran authors published their works or in case of plays they presented them for stage performance. Although African artists will continue in the new year, 2024 is expected to be a year of African arts exhibitions as disclosed by Ebony, a prominent black magazine exclusively dedicated to black arts.

Ebony magazine columnist Delaina Dixon recently wrote an article entitled, "Get your culture on. The Best Black Artists and Exhibits to see this fall and winter" in which she calls upon exhibition visitors in the following terms, "Buckle up art enthusiasts! This year is primed to be another year of groundbreaking brilliance from Black artists. A tapestry of Black exhibitions and experiences will be explored nationwide, from African art from middle ages to the personal art collection of Ebony cover star Swizz Beatz and Alice Keys.

The works featured bring joy, beauty and unbridled imagination to every installation. From soul-stirring canvases to immersive installations, prepare to be moved, inspired and even challenged by these exhibitions that promise to ignite conversations and leave you breathless with their sheer creative force."

As indicated above, last year was marked by a high-caliber literary outputs by African writers in particular dealing with the challenges faced by the continent in these troubled times and every author tried to highlight in their works the old themes of colonization, neocolonialism as well as themes of post-globalization turmoil that impact on individual African countries and the continent at large.

African writers continue to produce new works as young talents are emerging every year to the shock and astonishment of European and American book publishers and the writing community at large. Yet, literary masterpiece are not produced every year because writing and publishing books take relatively long time and arduous and sustained efforts. Meanwhile, other Black and African artists who have been engaged in other art forms such as painting, sculpting and other forms of African and Black arts are said to shine in 2024 with their unprecedented exhibitions that are expected to display new canvases, sculptures and masks so far unseen by the global art community. Long marginalized or ignored by the mainstream art market, the new and old African arts is going to see a year of unprecedented international attention and market opportunities that were not so far properly exploited by the artists although Black art is on the ascendency everywhere.

For that matter, the most popular art form in Africa is said to be, "sculptures and masks arguably the most widely recognized types of African art, textile design, and manufacturing have also been an important aspect of art making throughout the continent's history. African artistic productions like sculpting and mask making have been long ignored



or hidden in museums within the continent and in Europe or America where they are proudly exposed as properties of these museums while in reality most of them were stolen from the continent during the colonial era and afterwards.

According to one report, "The Salisbury African Galleries in the British Museum display 6000 objects from the largest permanent collections of African arts and culture in the world. The three permanent galleries provide a substantial exhibition space for the museum's African collection comprising over 20000 objects. The availability of a huge amount of arts in Africa and outside the continent has never deterred Black artists from contributing to this expanding bodies of works.

African art is not fully known and appreciated. However, a closer look would suggest that the continent has a proud artistic legacy. "Africa is home to a thriving and energetic contemporary art culture. Painting, sculpture, metal art, gun art, photography, installation art, contemporary textile and thread art, recycled art, printmaking and mixed media." African art has not only a very long tradition dating back to many centuries. It is also known for its diversity and the most intriguing fact about African art is that what is known as rock art was the earliest form of African art, much of African sculpture was historically in wood and that traditional religions are extremely influential on historical African art form.

According to Wikipedia, the art exhibition is traditionally the space in which art objects meet and audience. The exhibit is universally understood to be for some temporary period unless, as is occasionally true, it is stated to be a permanent exhibition." The art works may be presented in museums, art halls, art clubs or private art galleries, or at some place the principal business of which is not the display or sale of art, such as a coffeehouse. As to where the first art exhibition took place, it is important to note that, "The year 1914 was a turning point for African art in America when two New York galleries introduced African sculpture to their audiences."

What is however astounding in this process is the fact that while Africa has long been the major source of arts and culture in the world and the custodian of the most ancient arts and cultures, it had not enjoyed the opportunity to display its artistic treasures here at home in Africa.

Generally speaking, there are two types of exhibition. One of the main type of exhibition is called solo exhibition -this refers to the display of artwork from a single artist, usually the most famous pieces by the artist. Another type of exhibition is collective exhibition which displays the works of several artists. Meanwhile the difference between art gallery and art exhibition should be made clear.

As far as African art exhibitions are concerned, the National Museum of Art in the US has the largest collection of African art works and is the only national museum in the US dedicated to the collection, exhibition, conservation and study of arts of Africa. The largest art fair in Africa is the Investec Cape town Art Fair which is the largest art fair with over 100 exhibitors, 25 000 visitors and 6500 VIPs. It offers a platform for galleries, collectors, curators, and artists from around the globe to create connections at the forefront of contemporary art.

As indicated above, there are many artistic events in the pipeline which are planned to take place and that will feature old and contemporary African and Black arts in 2024.

African arts exhibitions around the world are already scheduled according to sources. Contemporary African Art Fair is pleased to announce the return of its event, scheduled to take place from February 8-11, 2024 at la Mamounia and DaDa in Marrakech. The Marrakesh Contemporary African Art Fair is believed to be a significant development and that it's expanding its physical footprint in Marrakesh by inaugurating a second location in DaDa, understanding to deepening its commitment to deepening its involvement in the dynamic Marrakesh art scene. This expansion is coming in recognition of the

fair's phenomenal success."

According to the article by Delaina Dixon, we quoted above, the following Black art exhibitions are scheduled to take place at different dates and venues in 2024. The first exhibition is called The Futuristic Ancestry: Warping Matter and Space-time (s) which is a photographic exhibition that will take place in New York. This is also an exhibition that will be staged by Jospheta Ntjam who had her first multinational solo show in the US featuring selection of new works, including biomorphic sculptures, photomontages printed on Plexiglas and aluminum.

Another art exhibition that will take place in Detroit, US this is called Reemergence: Black Cinema (1898-1971). It will take place at the Detroit Institute of Art in Michigan honoring the legacy of African-American filmmakers and actors from the dawn of cinema to the aftermath of the American civil rights Movement. We can keep on enumerating the many art exhibitions on African and Black arts that will take place this year. These exhibitions are dealing with modern art and their subject-matters and mediums of expression are rather sophisticated or stylish or post-modern in a way.

Some of them like the Harlem Renaissance and Transatlantic Modernism are historic and groundbreaking exhibitions meant to establish the Harlem Renaissance as the first African-American-led movement of international modern art, featuring 160 works from black artists portraying everyday modern life in the new black cities during the great migrations. The exhibition is expected to take place February 25 through July 2024.

These events will no doubt be interesting to Africans and black people in the Diaspora who have witnessed firsthand the artistic expressions black painters, filmmakers and others. This will also be a moment of reflection on the current status of African and Black people all over the world that will give inspiration to upcoming new generation of artists who will articulate future visions at the centre of which will be the future total emancipation of black people everywhere in the world.



# Indepth

## Assessing public debt sustainability with a long-term view

When students from poor families in developing countries are offered places at prestigious universities, they are often faced with a tough choice. One option is to accept the offer and create more debt, likely through borrowing from a loan shark, to pay for tuition fees. Another option is to forgo this opportunity, which could be the first in family generations, and start working as low-wage workers.

### Which option is better?

If what matters is the ability to repay debt in coming months, then entering the labour market not only avoids creating new debt but also generates income. Yet, if one adopts a longer-term view and considers that tertiary education could offer higher earnings, and thus ability to pay off debt, and savings in the long run, then going to a university seems more viable.

While governments are different from individuals in many ways, this is also the nature of choices that policymakers in developing countries face. They embark on ambitious development pathways, such as providing universal healthcare services and boosting renewable energy production, which are good for people and the environment in the future, but they often mean additional sovereign borrowing and debt today.

Should governments borrow more to invest in development, or should they give up these investments to attain 'sustainable' public debt level, as perceived by creditors and financial markets?

Arguably, investments to foster equitable and green development do not bode well with the current approaches on public debt sustainability analysis adopted by international financial institutions and credit rating agencies.

This is because returns to investment in development only become clearly visible in the long run, but the current approaches prioritize a country's ability to meet debt obligations in the near term. There is a risk that too much emphasis is being put on reducing short-term debt distress risk at the cost of social and environmental welling.

Given the lack of a long-term, development-aligned approach to assess public debt sustainability, ESCAP in its Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2023 proposes a new, 'augmented' approach to supplement the existing approaches.

This augmented approach duly considers the scale of a country's investment needs to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and how such investment can reduce, rather than increase, the government debt-to-GDP ratio in the future. For example, investing in the SDGs would raise the potential GDP level amid a more educated and healthier workforce, technological innovation, and climate-resilient economies.



*An office worker is conducting a financial review on a whiteboard.*

**Unlike traditional approaches, the augmented approach does not categorize debt or countries into a low or high risk of public debt distress based on some common thresholds. This is because 'sustainable' debt level should be country specific, depending on the gap between development progress and goals, among others**

The augmented approach also considers the sovereign debt implications of pursuing national SDG financing strategies and structural development policies. In the same way that many students seek financial grants and part-time jobs to make their university education a reality, governments also actively explore domestic and international financing options to fund their development ambitions. This financing aspect should form a critical part of any debt sustainability analysis.

Unlike traditional approaches, the augmented approach does not categorize debt or countries into a low or high risk of public debt distress based on some common thresholds. This is because 'sustainable' debt level should be country specific, depending on the gap between development progress and goals, among others.

Instead, based on the ESCAP Macroeconomic Model, this new approach illustrates different trajectories of government debt levels under different policy scenarios and adverse shocks. This helps policymakers make informed choices on how to strike a balance between achieving the SDGs and maintaining public debt sustainability in the long run.

The analysis on Mongolia as a pilot country in the Survey 2023 shows that investing in the SDGs would, as expected, result in a surging government debt level initially

due to large spending needs. Yet, after considering the sizeable socioeconomic and environmental benefits of investing in the SDGs as well as a package of policies aimed at promoting a green and diversified economy, mobilizing fiscal resources and attracting private finance for development, government indebtedness is expected to fall notably in the long run.

Going beyond policy research, the augmented public debt sustainability analysis was discussed at the fourth session of the Committee on Macroeconomic Policy, Poverty Reduction and Financing for Development in early November 2023. During a dedicated session, high-level government officials also highlighted policy actions that Mongolia, Pakistan and Viet Nam have undertaken to balance the SDG attainment with long-term public debt sustainability.

The augmented approach is also implemented as part of ESCAP's technical assistance for its member States. For example, ESCAP is working with the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) of Viet Nam to study the fiscal, socioeconomic and environmental implications of policies on carbon pricing, poverty reduction, and investments in information and communications technology. A national workshop was organized in mid-December 2023.

**SOURCE: INTER PRESS SERVICE**



# Law & Politics

## Rallying for collective security, development

BY DANIEL ALEMAYEHU

In its longest history, Ethiopia has accomplished major diplomatic turns earning the nation a reputation and recognition on the world stage. Owing to its glittering diplomatic history, the country is still one of the leading diplomatic clouts at the helm of international relations and diplomacy.

More to the point, Ethiopia is among the first nations to be named when it comes to being a founding member of major international and continental organizations. The African continent has been a pioneer in relation to forming bilateral and multilateral partnerships coupled with membership in organizations across the world.

The nation is still maintaining its course in building trust and mutual partnership with its counterparts as well. In recent years, Ethiopia has been scoring even better in its diplomacy route in accordance with assuring its national interest. Lately, the country has become one of the members of one of the world's giant economic partnerships, BRICS+.

In what could be said an important breakthrough for regional integration, the country has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Somaliland in relation to sea access. In addition, the country has also formed strong bonds with other blocs and nations as well. Very much known for its non-aligned stance on major international issues, the country is seen as a peacemaker and deal-maker in regional peace and stability. Speaking of diplomacy, the country has been doing great in playing the middle ground in many global tides.

The nation has worked to prioritize its national interest in all partnerships without neglecting the others. That is what Ethiopia has been doing for so long. Ethiopia, for the past many years, has been the voice and defender of Africa. Again, the country has tried to solve African problems with African solutions by deploying its troops paying the ultimate price to defend the peace and security of African nations, especially its neighbors. With all the deeds that Ethiopia has been standing by other nations, the country has never asked for anything in return.

The recent agreement with Somaliland shows Ethiopia's relentless effort to develop its economy and to integrate the region. However, some entities have been talking about the deal as if it ignores the benefit of others. This is what Ethiopia has never done before.

In the recently held panel discussion in connection with the Diplomatic Week organized by the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs, many diplomats, ambassadors, and representatives from various institutions and embassies participated in the event. At the event, various ideas have been entertained on the current Ethiopian diplomatic issues.

Pacific and Asia Senior Researcher and Director General at the Institute of Foreign Affairs, Anteneh Getachew (PhD) said that Ethiopia's diplomatic journey started thousands of years ago, the Adwa victory was the turning point for an institutionalized diplomatic effort and a new paradigm for the black people. The nation has also been a voice to the voiceless in the international arena including in the United Nations. Ethiopia is always playing the middle ground with a non-aligned stand.

**Accessing the sea and establishing a naval force gives Ethiopia the ability to develop its economy. All the misinformation and defamation have nothing to do with what Ethiopia is doing. It is what its enemies do to the nation**

Similarly, the recent agreement on accessing the sea with Somaliland shows how geography matters, said Ethiopian Ambassador to Pakistan Jemal Beker adding, "Geography determines your existence like Ethiopia and the Red Sea."

As the Red Sea is the major route for international trade, the region is like a choking point. So it is important to remember that nations from far away like the United States of America and Japan, come to the region and deploy their military base. On the other hand, Ethiopia is still a geographical prisoner in the region, the ambassador added.

In order to get access to the sea, the Ambassador stated, the Government of Ethiopia should exert its effort to increase and strengthen its diplomatic partnerships with different parties. It is very difficult to live in such an environment in Ethiopia. Access to the sea is the question of peace and security, collective security, economic prosperity, and social bonds among the regional states. Ethiopia is a center of gravity to the region as the nation is a home for the people of the neighboring countries.

Access to the sea is a life-and-death situation for the people and government of Ethiopia in terms of peace and security. The second point is the economy. In the region where Ethiopia moves 80-90 percent of its trade, having sea access is key. Investors and developers from Pakistan ask about whether Ethiopia has a port or not before coming to the country. It is difficult to overcome our poverty unless we import and export products very easily, said the ambassador adding, "Any nation with a port instantly adds 2.5 percent of GDP to its economy."

The idea of collective security, Ambassador

Jemal stressed, is important to bring change to the Horn. Somaliland cannot prosper alone as a nation; we have the experience to work with Somaliland. Ethiopia also creates a bond with Kenya and Somalia. The important reason why Ethiopia needs sea access is for collective prosperity.

"Ethiopia always shows its unwavering stand on mutual benefits. The country plays a win-win approach through give and take. Ethiopia has never violated any rules and broken any trust. With rigorous discussion and a call for cooperation, Somaliland came to Ethiopia and signed an agreement to let Ethiopia access the sea. In return, Somaliland gets a share from Ethiopia's flag carrier company, the Ethiopian Airlines."

The recent misinformation in relation to the agreement has no ground. Ethiopia has so many enemies from far and near. These entities do everything to halt the nation's stride to development. These parties also know that if Ethiopia is changed for good, the nation will also bring its neighbors to the height.

The Ambassador further elucidated, "Everyone should remember what Ethiopia has been doing in Somalia. We are scarifying our brothers and sisters in Somalia. It is the same ethnic group in Ethiopia and in Somalia. Those actors do not want to see Ethiopia and its neighbors grow. Their evil agenda will never be successful. The people of Ethiopia and Somalia are brotherly people so the people of both nations should see things carefully."

By the same token, former Ambassador and political analyst Prof. Biruk Hailu said that the diplomatic week is historical and should be visited by the public. The exhibition also shows the nation's diplomatic efforts from the past to now. It should be continued further.

The recent agreement between the Ethiopian Government and Somaliland, as to Prof. Biruk, witnesses the win-win approach that Ethiopia plays. The agreement is a give-and-take based accord between the two parties. Accessing the sea and establishing a naval force gives Ethiopia the ability to develop its economy. All the misinformation and defamation have nothing to do with what Ethiopia is doing. It is what its enemies do to the nation.

"It is a shame to forget what Ethiopia did to Africa and the region. Ethiopia's Army in Somalia is protecting the largest and most hostile area compared to other powers. More has been done to the continent as far as Ethiopia is concerned. Ethiopia has done a lot in the struggle of Africans to be free and should continue being a voice to Africa," the analyst noted.



# Women in Focus

## Betlehem Dessie: young talented, Ethiopia's tech queen

BY STAFF REPORTER

Sometimes, little things that seem to be inconsequential can uncover our special talent, alter the path of our lives for the better, and drive us to the life we want to live. The actions that we may carry out just to resolve our immediate challenges or we take them for granted can enhance our creative efforts, develop our skills, and help us to contribute something valuable not only for ourselves but also for others.

And the life altering experience of Bethlehem Dessie, “the youngest pioneer in Ethiopia’s fast emerging tech scene, web and mobile technologies developer, and a coding genius,” was begun on such occasions.

As she mentioned in various media outlets, the whole thing started when she was only nine and wanted to celebrate her 9th birthday.

In her keynote speech delivered at annual program of Women in Tech2020 (#WITsthl2020), organized by Women in Tech Sweden- the largest ever conference in Tech across the Nordic region’s and held in Sweden, Stockholm- Bethlehem said: “The story began when I turned nine and the time I asked my father for some money to celebrate my birthday. I asked my father for some money. Unfortunately, he told me that he did not have enough to give me.”

However, this did not make her lose hope. Rather, encouraged her to handle the matter in her own way and make money. She did it.

She started working at her father’s electronic shop located in Harar, the Eastern part of Ethiopia and the place where she was born and raised.

She engaged in video editing and transferring music to customers’ cell phones. As luck would have it, on that right day, she gained about 90 USD and celebrated her birthday.

This incident did not only resolve the financial problem that she faced to celebrate her birthday, but as the saying goes, “setbacks pave the way for one’s future”, opened the way to her future – to excel in the area and stand at the forefront in Ethiopia’s emerging tech scene.

Since that time, she started working devotedly to develop her knowledge and skills in computers. So soon, she learned how to develop a website, how to code on html, and used the dial-up internet connection to market her father’s business to more customers. That was how she first started coding.

And, by the age of ten, Bethlehem had begun coding in HTML by herself and started working for the Information Network Security Agency (INSA) at 11. Not only that, but side by side to her regular school work, she started teaching basic computer skills to her classmates from school, documents indicate.

“A self-taught coder, Bethlehem Dessie is already a pioneer in Ethiopia’s emerging tech scene. Coding since she was 9,



Betlehem Dessie

***“I do not feel that I have achieved all my goals yet. I still have big dreams. The things I have done so far are only processes and roads that will take me there***

Betlehem has copyrighted six software programs, including a digital library, a virtual laboratory, a document and inventory management system, and a DNB locator (named after her family initials, the locator is an application that maps irrigation systems and can be used by agricultural experts). She also developed “Askual”, a digital learning platform that brings students, parents and teachers together joining hands with other students,” it is stated at UNICEF website.

What is more, Bethlehem created “Anyone Can Code (iCog-ACC)”, a subsidiary of iCog that teaches 8-18-year-olds the basics of coding and robotics in Ethiopia and abroad. Not only that; but she also devised ‘Solve IT’, a nationwide innovation competition for 18-28-year-olds to find local solutions to local problems. She is also endeavoring to equip girls with the skills they need to work in their country’s growing tech industry.

While talking about this initiative, Bethlehem said: “Anyone Can Code (iCog-ACC) was designed with a focus on teaching young children from age 8 to 18 on the basics of coding and robotics. It is created with the idea of teaching and equipping young people in Africa with the basic skills of problem solving analytical thinking; including coding, robotics, block chain genetic engineering, and to make them ready for the skills that are needed in the 21st century.”

She considers her role in equipping thousands of children with coding skills and creating a platform for 5,000 entrepreneurs in Ethiopia through ACC and Solve IT campaigns and workshops to be her greatest accomplishment.

Betlehem also works with scientists and innovators from all over the country helping them showcase their inventions, from football playing robots to racing simulators.

She also hopes that these young people will one day follow in her footsteps and leave their fingerprint in the technology. “I feel very happy because it is not only inspiring

them but it also inspires me to do more. So, that is my motivation to continue seeing that they are able to do and what they are able to achieve through this program. So I think it is necessary that I inspire others so that it will help me grow and innovate more,” she remarked.

Currently, Bethlehem heads a number of nationwide programs run by robotics lab iCog Labs, including Sophia the robot, the humanoid robot that came about with collaboration between iCog Labs and Hong Kong-based Robotics Company.

Bethlehem, the CEO of iCog Anyone Can Code (iCog-ACC), hopes to create a platform in which children throughout Ethiopia can have the same opportunity as she had when she was a kid — and the iCog-ACC is a product of that vision.

Her and her team has impacted over 25,000 Ethiopian children and young people, primarily from government schools. The majority of her works are centered on ensuring that individuals outside of Addis get access to this platform.

Betlehem has been featured on prominent websites such as Wikipedia, CNN, and UNICEF. While CNN named her “the youngest pioneer in Ethiopia’s fast emerging tech scene,” other sources referred to her as Ethiopia’s leading youth technology entrepreneur.

In 2019, she was named one of the young African innovators to watch by Quartz Africa. Bethlehem’s legacy showed its peak when she had the chance to meet Twitter founder and CEO Jack Dorsey. Dorsey stated about Bethlehem on his Twitter page, “Likely the most incredible soul in the entire world. Pure joy. Appreciate you!”

She also delivered speeches and shared her experiences at various important national and global platforms, including at the Women in Tech2020 (#WITsthl2020) – conference organized by Women in Tech Sweden, the Association of Women in Boldness (AWiB) Women Of Excellence (WOE2022) in which she was awarded; and at the Ethiopian Business Women Dinner, and UNICEF.

As she once stated to UNICEF in relation to her success at her young age, Bethlehem said, “I do not feel that I have achieved all my goals yet. I still have big dreams. The things I have done so far are only processes and roads that will take me there. For example, I want to open a large Centre of Excellence and a school. My vision for the future is always evolving. Whenever I am exposed to something bigger and better, it changes completely.”

According to her, her family’s contribution, especially her father’s role in success is immense. “My family has been very supportive since I was a child.

She also believes that it is vital to demonstrate the caliber of African talent hence; she is working untiringly to expand her businesses even further and reach more countries.



# Society

## Scaling up family planning to save lives, promote gender equality

BY MENGISTEAB TESHOME

In a country where access to quality family planning (FP) services is not ensured, citizens will face and experience a number of social, economic and health-related challenges.

Absence of quality family planning, apart from exposing women to unintended pregnancies and unsafe abortions and limiting their potential, affects the social, economic, physical and mental wellbeing of women and the entire family, widen the gap in gender inequality by limiting women's rights to education, their capacity to engage in income-generating activities, realize their potential and hampering the countries' progress towards development.

It is clear that ensuring family program services to the country help in managing population growth, promoting women's potential, empowering them socially, economically, politically as well as their physical and mental wellbeing and leading to positive community development.

Demographic reports of a number of countries confirm that countries, which are experiencing rapid population growth, could go through hard times owing to strained resources and infrastructure as well as increased demands for social services such as health, housing, education, energy and water transportation services, welfare and other similar privileges. Rapid population growth can contribute to environmental damage.

No one argues that exercising controlled population growth programs could play a vital role in preventing such challenges by ensuring that the available resources are utilized efficiently and effectively and promoting inclusive social, economic and political progress.

Experts in the health sector advocate that implementing family planning programs at the grassroots could contribute to social development by promoting gender equality and paving ways to empower women as well as improving maternal and child health that leads to building strong and resilient societies.

From this perspective, number countries are engaged in exercising the family planning services through allocating huge resources, supported by advanced technology and trained skilled human power.

*The Ethiopia Herald* approached Motuma Bekele, Productive Health, Family Planning, Adolescent and Youth Health Expert with the Ministry of Health to share his insights on how the nation is dealing with the provision of family planning service nationwide.

The Ministry, joining hands with development partners, is working committedly to access the services at the individual, family and at the broader

**E**nsuring successful FP services require a multi-faceted approach that involves education, accessibility, policy support, and community engagement in coordinated fashion

societal level in accordance with their freewill and choice.

The Ministry provides advanced services and gives counseling towards creating informed society about family planning through developing communication strategy.

Awareness creation takes the epicenter because the program involves the conscious decision-making actions taken by individuals or couples to decide the number of children; and child spacing, that is reached on concrete understanding.

In a society where male dominance evolved and religious and cultural practices are high, the sole means to get out of the problem and address the ascribed challenges, implementing effective family planning awareness programs is instrumental.

According to him, family planning services are currently more available throughout the nation and these days, it has reached 72% coverage. "We are working to decrease the fertility rate that was 4.1 in 2019 to 3.2 in 2023. To this effect, we are working in collaboration with development partners for the reason the success would be realized with the cumulative efforts of various stakeholders."

"In my view, the efforts to increase access to education in the urban and rural areas and applying effective family planning policy and strategy that promote the use of controlled family planning play a vital role to increase the coverage and shore up the performance."

He underlined that achieving universal



access to sexual and reproductive health care services, including family planning by 2030, is considered as one pillar activity to enhance the efficiency of the policies and programs.

He said that it is high time to balance between the working-age population and the dependent population in a bid to foster a demographic dividend and ensure economic development.

FP service is one the rights of women; and the Ministry is working to ensure the right to each because it has a significant contribution in preventing unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortions to reduce maternal mortality.

According to him, applying FP is instrumental in reducing the rates of mothers' death because of pregnancy and birth related complications and reports, including, the Ethiopia Demography Health Service (EDHS) confirms that the nation has reduced maternal deaths significantly.

He said that implementing productive family planning services could help mothers not to have too many children. If women learn to give birth in space, with more than two years between pregnancies, they could reduce child and mother deaths by 50 percent.

It is clear that access to family planning empowers women by giving them control over their reproductive choices. This empowerment is linked to increased educational and economic opportunities for women, contributing to gender equality. Not only that, family planning also lets families plan their financial expenditure more effectively. With fewer dependents and better-spaced children, families may have more resources available for education, housing, and other essential needs.

Despite some challenges related to skilled human power and resources, the Ministry is exerting efforts to supply easily accessible and affordable FP services to the community such as providing contraceptives, counseling, and educational resources and services with the aim to let individuals and

couples make informed choices about their reproductive health nationwide.

Commending the government's effort because the nation has reached above seventy percent coverage, he said that if pertinent stakeholders keep on working in more organized fashion than before, the nation could provide FP service to all in a short period of time.

Since FP has a number of returns to the community in managing their family size that means it can contribute significantly to poverty reduction, efforts should be strengthened in providing quality services to the communities in the hinterlands in a more organized fashion.

Early marriage is still practiced in various parts of the nation and even these days several girls are exposed to forced marriage at their early age. Thus, stakeholders should act committedly to curb the challenge joining with pertinent stakeholders and the law enforcement bodies.

If the strategy is implemented effectively, it could lead to positive outcomes for both individuals and the broader society. Each awareness creation effort should be involved in tailoring educational materials and outreach efforts to address specific religious and cultural considerations in mind.

Ensuring successful FP services require a multi-faceted approach that involves education, accessibility, policy support, and community engagement in coordinated fashion.

The Ethiopian health sector adopted a national guideline for family planning Services with the purpose to strengthen the level of FP integration with Primary Health Care (PHC) services. The Ministry of Health (MoH) also developed a Family planning service integration national guideline, which provides direction for initiating, supporting, and sustaining FP integration and demonstrates the government's commitment to scaling up high-impact practices, such as integrated FP services.





# Published Weekly in Collaboration with Haramaya University

## HU free legal services to 35,910 penurious people saving in quarter

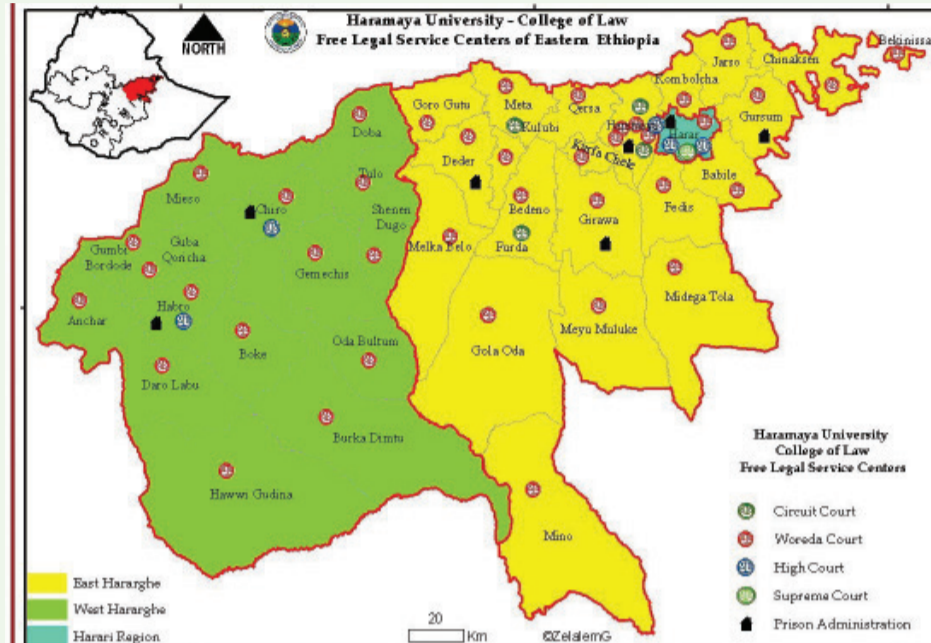
BY DIRRIBA TESHOME

Haramaya University (HU) College of Law Free Legal Aid Program provided free legal services to 35,910 people in the second quarter of this fiscal year.

The free legal aid services were provided to the poor, marginalized and vulnerable members of the community which included women, children, physically disabled, the elderly and those with serious long-term illnesses in the East and West Hararghe Zones, and Maya City, of Oromia State, as well as the Harari People's National Regional State.

These legal services included legal advice, the preparation of pleadings, court representations, prisoner follow-up, as well as legal awareness through its popular HU FM 91.5 "Law and Community" program.

All services were provided by licensed lawyers in the Haramaya University College of Law Free Legal Service Centers established in all district courts, and circuit courts, as well as in the respective State High Courts, prison administrations, and offices of women, children and youth affairs. More than sixty full-time lawyers were engaged



in providing free legal services across the two states which provide comprehensive coverage in all districts.

Recently, the college has also opened Free Legal Aid Centers in all Sub-City Courts in Maya City- Ganda Muude, Adele, and Awaday in addition to the Maya City High Court Center in Awaday.

Cases are also routinely taken on appeal from the First Instance Courts in the Oromia State, and the Harari People's State to the respective state High Courts and Supreme Courts; and even up to the Cassation Bench of the FDRE Federal Supreme Court.

The estimated saving to the community was 7,515,200 ETB in the second quarter of 2016 EC when estimated using the current market to

recruit a private lawyer. This allowed the most vulnerable community members access to the formal court system, which ensures that their constitutional rights were protected and justice was secured. As many of the most defenseless members of the local community often cannot read or write due to chronic poverty- as a result could not afford an attorney, it becomes an insurmountable hurdle for them to properly access the formal justice sector without the provision of free legal aid services.

Therefore, without the Haramaya University College of Law Free Legal Aid Program, many of the most vulnerable members of the community would face injustice, persecution and increased marginalization which have severe ramifications for community harmony, stability and social cohesion.

In a nutshell, the Haramaya University College of Law Free Legal Aid Program helps to reduce these risks by providing access to justice and legal awareness for the most impoverished members of society and supports the justice sector by ensuring the constitutional rights of its citizens are protected. (Source: Partially paraphrased from Haramaya University Public and International Relations Directorate Report)