



The Ethiopian Herald

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Photo: Dagne Abera

Gov't gears up for establishing startups Nat'l fund

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

ADDIS ABABA – The government has planned to establish a national fund designed to empower successful technology startups and entrepreneurs, Ministry of Finance (MoF) said.

The Ministry has made the announcement yesterday during the inaugural of “Startup Ethiopia” exhibition that will stay opened for the next 20 consecutive days at Science Museum.

On the event, MoF State Minister Eyob Tekalign (PhD) expressed that his organization devised incentive for startups in accordance with taxation, finance administration and related issues.

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Council calls on faithful to uphold peace, support needy

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

ADDIS ABABA – The Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council (EIASC) has called on the faithful to observe Eid Al-Fitr by

maintaining a contribution to peace building and supporting the needy.

Eid Al-Fitr (festival of the breaking of the fast) is among the major festivities celebrated by Muslims in Ethiopia and worldwide to mark

the end of the fasting month of Ramadan.

In a message he delivered in connection with the holiday, EIASC President Sheikh Haji

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Towards One African Market

Ethiopia on brink of AfCFTA entry

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA – Ethiopia is finalizing preparations to penetrate Africa's free trade area through fulfilling conditions and signing agreements, Ministry of Trade and

See Ethiopia on brink...page 3

Premier wishes happy Eid Al-Fitr

• Urges faithful to maintain togetherness to ensure prosperity

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA – Extending his best wishes to the Muslim faithful on the 1445th Eid Al-Fitr, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) stressed the need to foster the spirit of unity and togetherness to overcome challenges of the day.

In his social media post, the Premier stated that utilizing the lessons and experiences from the fasting season, the Islamic teaching and values are highly critical to maintain and ensure Ethiopia's journey to prosperity.

The PM further noted that this year's Ramadan was uniquely entertained with peaceful coexistence, helping the needy.

“During the month of Ramadan, Ethiopians with different faiths have shown national unity persistently and this would be a real lesson how to tackle challenges in unison and it is bacon of

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African cultures, languages in the long journey to integration and unity

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UN and humanitarian partners seek USD 46 billion for humanitarian assistance

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Abbay Dam: Near to completion to illuminate Africa

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News



Abebe Demisu

Foundation says working for inclusive, equitable education

• Celebrates 40th anniversary in Ethiopia

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA - Pestalozzi Children's Foundation (PCF) stated that it is tirelessly working towards improving inclusive, equitable and quality education for children and girls in Ethiopia.

Approached by *The Ethiopian Herald*, Country Representative for Pestalozzi Children's Foundation Ethiopian Country Office, Abebe Demisu said PCF has aimed at working towards achieving inclusive and equitable and quality education for all children thereby advancing their life at a sustainable manner and creating a safe environment.

He said currently the foundation is supporting over 65,000 students in 39 schools in Addis Ababa and Southern Ethiopia State by building capacity and providing teachers with training revolving around child life, teaching methodology and how to make active participant in teaching learning process so as to improve students' performance as well as improve the quality of education through different trainings.

"We have many intervention mechanisms to improve quality of education in the areas where we are working such as capacitating schools with different pedagogical, laboratory and library materials to improve the quality of education through this approach in engaging areas of Ethiopia," he added.

Moreover, PCF is improving school infrastructure by rehabilitation and construction classroom blocks and health facilities like toilet that gender separated and children to learn in a safe environ. It has implemented a lot of projects and impacted the life of children and different communities in the last 40 years in Ethiopia.

As to him, the PCF has also planned to engage in education in emergency where schools which are demolished because of the conflict to restore education activity.

Previously, it had been working in Amhara, Oromia SNNPs, and Addis Ababa, and currently it is working in Southern Ethiopia state and Addis Ababa to improve students' performance in exam through different trainings and increase their promotion rate via focusing on their physical, emotional and psychological development.

He said promotion rate in schools we are working is increasing as the promotion is a bit difficult at this time specially for regional, gender ration is getting equal and national exams grade 8 and 12 students aren't passing to the next grade.

PCF is working under the motto, "equity, quality and equality for all."

PCF marked its 40 years anniversary in Ethiopia commemorating its achievement and project impact on marginalized community last Monday with stakeholders.

Sudanese War obstructs AU's regional integration vision

• Regional intervention becomes critical

BY YESUF ENDRIS

ADDIS ABABA- Continental and regional organizations should renew commitment to facilitate resolution mechanisms for the Sudanese Civil War that has been obstructing the African Union's vision of regional integration, an expert in the issue said.

Speaking to the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), African and Asian Affairs Researcher Kidus Gezahagn stated that the continental vision of regional integration could not be materialized while Sudan is under turmoil. "We cannot integrate the continent while countries notably Sudan are being ravaged by civil war with immense destruction and loss of lives."

Recalling Sudan's past peaceful times, Kidus noted that the country is strategically vital to the East African economy. "The inflation and shortage of supply is exacerbated because of the instability and almost 40% of the Sudanese people are facing food shortage."

Because of Sudan's instability and subsequent trade cut, Ethiopia lost significant foreign currency and it has complained that the former is falling short of expectations to settle payment for electricity service. In this regard, Ethiopia's effort to integrate the Horn of Africa region through power export is facing tackles.

The instability causes inability to exchange service and goods in trust and Ethiopia would



not supply more services unless Sudan settles payment for the previous one, he added.

"Both Ethiopia and Sudan should reach a mutual consensus to address the problem by themselves and shun third parties' pressure and intervention. Though the African Union is mandated to facilitate peace in such cases, it has not discharged what is expected from a continental body and now the Sudanese War is becoming the forgotten one."

The Russo- Ukraine War and the War in Gaza are receiving the global media's prime attention because of their respective continental organizations and the AU has failed to do so the same, Kidus further argued.

Noting the separate attempts of IGAD and Kenya to mediate the conflict, he highlighted the presumed biasness to one side of the conflict. "Ethiopia's stance concerning the Sudanese War is becoming clear and the government understands how the case is difficult to mediators."

According to the expert, Ethiopia still has the potential to mobilize continental and international organizations to reinstate the agenda and to seek the resolution to the ever-complicating situation in Sudan. "The political dynamics that have happened in the past years in Sudan is complex and all neighboring countries should recognize how the instability should be resolved through Sudanese own effort."

New forest proclamation addresses major gaps, promotes private sector

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

ADDIS ABABA- The new draft regulation of the Forest Development, Conservation and Utilization is instrumental in filling the existing proclamation's limitations and propelling the private sector's involvement, experts in the issue said.

Approached by the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), Natural Forest and Climate Change Research Director at the Ethiopian Forestry Development Abeje Eshete (PhD) stated that the proclamation defines the powers and duties in respect of forest management and conservation.

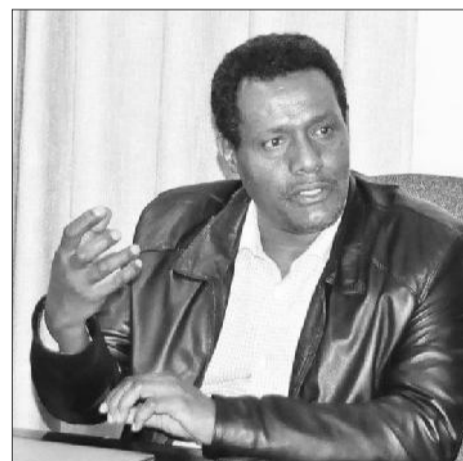
Abeje also noted that proclamation also identifies the four types of forest ownership for state, community, private and associations while stipulating the rights and obligation of the aforesaid owners.

However, the need for the new regulation came with further elaboration on the issues that have not been described in the current proclamation.

"The present proclamation failed to clearly stipulate the rights and obligations of forest owners for both internal and external bodies particularly on carbon trade. However, the new regulation has ensured the ownership of carbon within their forest territory as well as their right of carbon trade."

The other area that the new regulation addressed is the right to transfer carbon ownership to another body, the expert said, adding that it offers the owner full right on carbon trade. Thus, 15% of carbon trade would go to state administration, 80% to forest owners while the remaining 5% would go to the federal government.

Owing to the existing proclamation's failure to



Yitebetu Moges (PhD)

include the above facts clearly, international carbon traders' desire to know ownership, share and other issues about the carbon trade was not met.

Though providing numerous incentives for investors who wish to take part in forest development and conservation, the regulation also lacked clarity when it comes to preconditions. Hence, the new directive includes the necessary preconditions and incentives, Abeje elaborated.

Despite the fact that most of Ethiopia's landmass is covered by forest, the involvement of investors is very limited which makes the government a major owner. Nonetheless, conserving this amount of forest might be difficult for the government.

"Cognizant of this fact, the new regulation allows both the private sector and government to develop and benefit together."

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church Christian Charity Commission Deputy Head Gebreselassie



Abeje Eshete (PhD)

Atsebeha on his part indicated that the new draft regulation ensures forest ownership of state, community, associations and private sector. "It also directs how these stakeholders could benefit from the forest market."

Not only encourages forest conservation and private sector's involvement, but the draft also gives due emphasis for forest development while ensuring all parties involved remain beneficiaries.

For Ethiopian Forestry Development National 'Red Plus' Program Coordinator Yitebetu Moges (PhD), the new proclamation has introduced new ways that allow the private sector's engagement in forest development.

The regulation has also given emphasis on how and who needs to be engaged in carbon trade. Moreover, it depicts the rights of shared (individual and government) benefit from forest development, the expert remarked.

News

Ethiopia to host Africa's regional forum on sustainable dev't

• *Schedules to be held 23-25 April 2024*

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA –UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) announced that Ethiopia will host the 10th Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD-10).

Natural Resource Management Division of the ECA, Nassim Oulmane, pronounced the 10th ARFSD is scheduled to be held in Addis Ababa from 23-25 April 2024 at the African Union Commission's headquarters. "ARFSD-10 is a timely opportunity to address shortcomings and capitalize on emerging opportunities to ensure robust, accelerated and timely implementation of the SDGs and Agenda 2063. In addition, participants will play a key role in mobilizing Africa's inputs for the Summit of the Future to be held in September 2024," she said.

Nassim stated that African member states are midway through implementing the 2030 Agenda, but progress on most Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is slow or below 2015 baseline. Achieving the SDGs by 2030 requires ambitious solutions and action.

Nassim said, "For Africa, integrated



ECA

implementation of the SDGs and the Agenda 2063 is essential; and we need actions and solutions at scale to achieve both. ARFSD-10 will be key messages comprising specific issues of importance, and a declaration, which will inform the forthcoming global UN High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development later in the year."

According to ECA data, participants will include high-level policy makers and experts from ministries and agencies responsible for finance and economic development, social affairs, environment and natural resources management, statistics, agriculture and food security, science, technology and innovation and other ministries from the 54 ECA

member States.

Several pre-events and side events aligned with the theme and subthemes of the Forum will precede ARFSD-10 from 17 April to 22 April. The Forum aims at assessing progress and exchange knowledge, best practices, and policy solutions to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in line with regional priorities. ARFSD is one of the three mechanisms mandated to follow-up, review and catalyze actions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by UN Member States in September 2015, it was stated.

Ethiopia on brink...

Regional Integration (MoTRI) announced.

Ministry's International Relation Expert, Tesfaye Tadesse told The Ethiopian Herald that Ethiopia has submitted the document to the secretariat of the African Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA) and is carrying out the rest of the technical works to delve into the continental market shortly.

As to Tesfaye, awareness is being created among all business community, manufacturers, research institutions and other stakeholders in a way they can make the necessary preparations to be competent as required by the Continental Free Trade Zone system.

"Though establishing common customs is part of the framework of the Continental Free Trade Area Agreement, but it has not yet been implemented," he said.

He noted that Ethiopia has so far signed 20 bilateral trade agreements, three border trade agreements and several commercial cooperation documents.

Among these accords, three are special trade agreements and the others are trade cooperation agreements with Sudan, South Sudan and Kenya whilst the agreement allows taking measures to help expand and grow trade, he stated.

As to him, neighboring countries such as Somalia, Djibouti, Sudan, and Kenya were the Ethiopia's major foreign trade partners between 2018 and 2022 as the country exported fruits and vegetables, coffee, and livestock while importing edible oil, fuel, rice, spare parts, and stationery items from these nations.

Apart from the neighboring countries, Tesfaye noted that China has also given a free market opportunity to developing countries including Ethiopia. The China-Ethiopia trade and bilateral economic cooperation has seen a remarkable growth during the past three decades.

The two countries have made a 4.22 billion USD average trade transactions from 2018 to 2022. Of this, Ethiopia exported 135 million USD while importing a 4.1 billion USD products, he said, adding that China is the best destination of Ethiopian products such as oil seeds, quality cotton thread and the likes.

Likewise, the European Union (EU) has given developing countries the opportunity to import using "Everything but Arms" duty-free market mechanism. However, it is observed that the products of many developing countries, including Ethiopia, face many challenges in meeting the quality standards and requirements of EU member countries which makes it difficult to the developing countries to utilize the chance, he indicated.

According to a report obtained from Custom Commission, coffee, flower, root, plant products, grains, textiles, and leather products were Ethiopia's major export items in which Belgium, Italy, France, and Spain were the main destinations between 2018 and 2022.

Council calls on faithful...

Ibrahim Tufa stressed that the good deeds that have been exercised during Ramadan need to be internalized into Muslims' personality and in their day-to-day lives. "The fasting period has highly contributed in fostering fraternity, empathy, kindness and sharing bread with a disfavored and it is crucial to keep these virtues."

The president also advised Muslims to uphold their collaboration with the government and fellow Ethiopians in safeguarding their peace and keeping the country's much-cherished unity and coexistence.

"The faithful should give Zakat al-Fitr (charity given to the poor at the end of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan) to enable the

needy to celebrate the holiday along with the rest of Muslims."

According to him, the newly-elected EIASC leadership has been accomplishing major tasks in fostering the Muslim community's unity, and it is also working to strengthen these efforts.

Since the spread of HIV/AIDS is an alarming rate, it requires taking cautious measures towards disease prevention and accepting the advice of health professionals. Enduring peace and stability via tolerance and cooperation is also something expected from the Muslim faithful, and it is crucial to understand the reform government's achievement in ensuring the equality of all religions.

Political actors and other groups should come to the understanding that differences needed to be resolved via negotiation and in round table discussion, Sheikh Ibrahim Tufa emphasized.

For his part, Addis Ababa Islamic Affairs Supreme Council (AAIASC) President Sheikh Sultan Aman said that the religion orders the faithful to uphold the support and empathy they have shown for the needy during Ramadan, which also would have a role in strengthening Ethiopian culture of sharing with the poor.

Individuals, organizations, associations, and other stakeholders positively responded to councils' call to support those who are in need in the eve of Eid al-Fitr, he remarked.

Premier wishes happy...

our prosperous journey."

Quoting the proverb "A wise person keeps Ramadan throughout the year," Abiy emphasized the need to utilize the blessings and spiritual power nurtured during the fasting season to defend Ethiopia's enemies thoroughly with determination.

As the country is on the right path to prosperity, standing in unity is dearly important, he said, adding that Ethiopians can take the next heights by joining hands and supporting one another.

Therefore, the PM underscored that: "The values of the holy month of Ramadan should be kept and sustained until Ethiopia ensures prosperity."

"It is peace, kindness and blessings that sustain our nation, the Prime Minister said, calling on the Muslim community to give hands to the needy and keep open hearted during the holiday. Also, synergy is our path and prosperity is our destiny."

Moreover, these core values would be valuable weapons to withstand any challenges and vehicles to reach the country's eternal prosperity.

Gov't gears up for establishing...

According to him, the government has designed a mechanism to fund startups and entrepreneurs via banks especially through the Ethiopian Development Bank.

He stated that the country has been largely witnessing successful engagement of the youth in the technology sector to overcome continental and global problems.

Recently, the youth entrepreneurs have been joining engineering, modernization of finance sector, health, agriculture, construction and in other sectors that operate assisted by technology, Eyob said.

He also called on investors to participate in these sectors considering the feasible and lucrative nature of the industries.

Explaining that successful businesses are the outcome of concrete ideas and finance, the State Minister added that investors would benefit themselves and others if they invest in creative ideas by allocating enough



Photo: Hadush Abrha

Eyob Tekalign (PhD)

budget.

As to him, Ethiopia has a fertile ground for technology based startup investors though it requires investing on creative ideas and collaboration among stakeholders to contribute to the overall growth of the country.

Opinion

National Dialogue: Issue of all

BY GETACHEW MINAS

Dialogue is a conversation between two or more persons in which ideas or opinions about particular issues are exchanged. It is an interchange of thoughts or conversation or exchange of information to settle issues. Dialogue among elders may focus on daily life including change of weather, fast spinning of the world each passing season. They conduct dialogue on chaos and harmony that do persist. They accept that the old ways may fade, but the essence of their wisdom remains.

Wisdom is indeed their guiding light in the middle of turbulent times. The Ethiopian elders worry that the young ones may not heed their advice. The youth may forge their own destiny blindly without guide of the elders. Some of the youth, however, listen, some stray, but all must learn in their own time and place. In this situation, patience and resilience have always been the virtue of Ethiopian elders. They could weather storms that would break their souls. These elders could stay guardians of knowledge, virtues, and peace in the country.

The Ethiopian youth should maintain the light of peace that is inherited from the elders. It should never be extinguished, to keep darkness of evil, vice, immorality and ignorance at bay. Ethiopian elders must ensure that their voices echo through time, guiding the youth who come after them. The wisdom of these elders is the base upon which the future is built. And with each passing day, the elders will ensure that the future becomes brighter for the next generation.

However, the youth have the heavy duty of carrying this mission with honor, and discover their own wisdom along the path. The elders advice the youth or the next generation to speak, listen, and continue to illuminate the path of knowledge forward. The success of these efforts lies in the unity and strength of the youth to carry the legacy. Thus, wisdom of the elders lies in their investment in the generations to come. Ethiopian parents are, therefore, responsible to invest in the youth that inherits their country, with the proper knowledge of its history. The inheritance, development and prosperity of the motherland require proper skill, dexterity and proficiency in conducting dialogue among people.

The national dialogue has long been proposed as a means of solving political, economic and social problems in Ethiopia. Thus, the parliament decided to form a National Dialogue Commission to promote national unity and integrity in dealing with the country's prevalent and widespread challenges. It has been contended that the Ethiopian national conversation, on the other hand, brings both opportunities and challenges.

For the people, the current national dialogue represents an opportunity to build a new path toward peace and political tolerance. It also contributes to national unity, political and

economic equality, with a common destiny. Experts have recommended that the parties concerned must use their perspectives to keep the peace and unity of Ethiopia. In this respect, the National Dialogue is seen by many scholars and peacemakers as a positive step in resolving controversial issues. The national dialogue may reverse the diminishing pattern of fraternity and solidarity between ethnic groups.

National dialogue refers to a process of communication and negotiation between different groups within Ethiopia. The country has several types of communication and some of these are verbal, non-verbal, visual, and written. Whatever is communicated, concerned persons start by thinking about what other participants may think, feel, and do once they have accessed the message. With these messages, negotiators typically aim at resolving conflicts, addressing grievances, and fostering understanding and cooperation.

The values associated with national dialogue are numerous and include an element of unity. It seeks to encourage and foster a sense of unity among diverse groups within a nation. These groups may engage in hostility that leads to conflicts, skirmishes, and fights. The hostilities may arise from slight misunderstanding among group leaders or neighbors. These people raise the level of conflict from personal to communal instead of resolving them easily without much ado, argument and commotion. If unresolved in time these petty differences among individuals may involve the whole community, society and even the country at large.

Unity is the basis of national dialogue that emphasizes the commonalities that bind the Ethiopian people together despite their petty differences. If unresolved in time petty issues become major causes of conflicts that challenge the unity of people. It is said that a stitch in time saves nine. The sooner the social conflicts are resolved in time the better. The elderly Ethiopians have immense reserve of skills and knowledge in cooling and, therefore, removing petty conflicts before they grow into a higher level.

The elders apply the method of inclusivity where all parties to a conflict are involved in the conflict resolution process. They give high values to inclusivity by ensuring that all relevant stakeholders have a voice in the dialogue process. This is done regardless of background, ethnicity, religion, or political affiliation. In the dialogue, the background of persons engaged in conflict is unknown or discarded for facilitating open discussions. The ethnic affiliation of those persons involved in a conflict is completely disposed of and abandoned as it may hamper the process of dialogue.

Similarly, religious affiliation is irrelevant to the discussion conducted by elders with persons in conflict. Persons having different religious membership, attachment and connection have to forgo these factors during dialogues conducted for conflict resolution. The conflicts may be based on ownership

of undefined boundaries or villages that have nothing to do with religious beliefs. Also, elders engaged in conflict resolution normally discard the political association of persons that are party to a conflict.

Partisanship is a major obstacle to open and fair discussion carried out in the presence of elders. Related to these factors is respect for persons engaged in dialogue as they do represent a group, cluster or assembly of people. Respect for the dignity of representative of people is a primary condition for conducting dialogue. In the process of dialogue, it is of primary importance to appreciate and revere the rights and perspectives of all individuals involved in discussions of issues. Admiration and high esteem for groups participating in discussion is a fundamental requirement of national dialogue.

The national dialogue also includes respect for cultural affinity and differences thereby recognizing the validity, legitimacy and weight of diverse viewpoints. Respect for the opinion of participants paves the way for successful dialogue. Experts have asserted that national dialogue aims to promote peace by providing a peaceful means for resolving conflicts. In this process, it is crucial to identify openly and clearly the causes and effects of grievances of parties in a dialogue.

The identification of causes comprises half of the solution to a problem. Those entities managing social conflicts have the cardinal duty of identifying the real causes of conflicts. In a similar manner, they should identify and understand the effects on the concerned entities of the causes of conflicts. This and other means of conflict resolution help in preventing violence and promote reconciliation among concerned parties. This process helps in the pursuit of justice, fairness, and equity through national dialogue. Participants in a dialogue have to openly address past injustices committed by those in power. This ensures accountability for wrongdoing thereby promoting equality and equity under the law.

Open and sincere dialogue promotes empathy, understanding and compassion among participants. This avails the opportunity to see deeper into controversial issues. It also widens the perspectives of those engaged in the process of discussions. As more information is obtained, it allows participants to recognize each other's humanity, compassion and sympathy in a transparent manner. Transparency is a key factor in facilitating the dialogue process, with principled, decent and ethical inputs. It is enhanced through open communication and access to information.

In the dialogue process, nothing should be hidden from the participants that represent various interest groups. It is absolutely essential for building trust among participants. If the participants are not fully informed they fail to reach a consensus. Supplying partial information is an intrigue designed to impede the process of dialogue. This process is also impeded if some of the participants are denied crucial information

related to the topic of discussion. All these negative factors hamper the outcomes of the national dialogue.

In a dialogue, all participants that are equally informed need not come to a compromise. They have to accept the principle of "give and take" for the success of the dialogue. One need not take all and leave the rest denied of what they deserved to access. In other words, a national dialogue often involves finding compromise, cooperation or concession on thorny issues. It should, however, be noted that time is precious and it need not be wasted on trivial matters. In the process of compromise, therefore, critical and thorny issues that determine the survival of a nation should be carefully selected. This process creates a common ground among divergent interests.

Adamant participants have to be reined, restricted and harnessed if they purposely impede the progress of the national dialogue. They have to be willing to seek solutions that are acceptable by all parties involved. From the outset, they have to understand the goal, target, object and aspiration of the mission of the national dialogue. It is understood that some participants are unfortunately misunderstood every time they raise questions or suggest alternative approaches. In this case, experts advise tolerance.

Another concern in a national dialogue is the sustainability of peace, law and order for the transition to democracy. The dialogue aims to achieve lasting solutions to underlying conflicts and grievances within Ethiopian society. They have to be addressed fully without any reservation or delay. Short term solutions lead to temporary fixes that do not address the concerns of aggrieved citizens.

The dialogue process has to give high values to sustainable peace. Without peace, law and order, it is difficult to achieve the goals of development for the benefit of the people as well as the future generations. It is also critical to adopt democratic principles for the conduct of the national dialogue. It is usually based on democratic standards, including freedom of speech, respect for the rule of law and democratic participation. It also strengthens democratic institutions and processes within Ethiopia.

Generally, the significance of national dialogue is its capacity to promote communication, acceptance, collaboration and peaceful coexistence among the diverse ethnic groups within the country. It ultimately leads to the prosperity, stability and welfare of Ethiopians. This, however, requires that the National Dialogue Commission is given its due respect and attention in the fulfillment of its objectives and duties.

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

Editorial

Ethiopia's religious coexistence: Exemplary model for global society

Ethiopia is a nation known for its rich history, cultural diversity, and religious pluralism. For centuries, it has been a melting pot of faiths, where followers of Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and indigenous beliefs coexist in harmony, fostering a unique tapestry of religious diversity. Its religious landscape is as varied as its geography, with different regions of the country being home to distinct religious communities.

Interestingly, Ethiopia stands as a testament to the variety of cultures, languages, and religions. The nation presents a unique example of religious coexistence and harmony. This diversity is not merely a feature of the past but remains a vibrant aspect of Ethiopian society today. Christianity and Islam are the dominant faiths, but relatively smaller communities, such as Jews and animist groups, also contribute to the country's religious landscape.

Ethiopia's religious harmony has been sustained by a foundational principle of mutual respect and tolerance among its diverse religious communities. Over the course of history, Ethiopians have united in celebration of religious festivals, exchanged cultural traditions, and coexisted peacefully. This ethos of tolerance is entrenched within the nation's constitution, which upholds the freedom of religion and prohibits discrimination on religious grounds. Upholding this sense of unity requires a collaborative effort from religious leaders, governmental bodies, civil society organizations, and the populace at large to reaffirm their dedication to religious coexistence. Continuous dialogue and engagement serve as vital instruments in fostering empathy and forging connections between different communities.

Undoubtedly, religious leaders are pivotal in advocating tolerance and fostering peace. With their moral influence, they can positively shape the perspectives of their followers and challenge misconceptions and biases. Initiatives such as interfaith dialogues, collective prayer sessions, and collaborative social projects serve as effective means to cultivate mutual respect and unity among diverse religious groups. These activities, along with others, are imperative for nurturing harmonious relationships within our community.

Moreover, education plays a crucial role in fostering religious tolerance and addressing prejudice. Implementing curricula that highlight the importance of diversity, empathy, and the appreciation of various religious beliefs can imbue these values in the youth. Educational institutions should serve as environments where students from diverse backgrounds have the opportunity to learn about and respect each other's cultures and traditions.

Moreover, it is essential for government authorities to maintain secular principles and guarantee equal treatment for all citizens irrespective of their religious beliefs. They should establish and enforce legislation safeguarding religious freedom and imposing penalties for instances of discrimination or violence stemming from religious animosity.

Civil society organizations also hold a vital responsibility in advancing religious coexistence. They can facilitate interfaith discussions, offer venues for mutual comprehension, and champion policies promoting inclusivity and acceptance. A notable facet of Ethiopia's religious harmony is the prevailing spirit of mutual respect and tolerance. Over time, Ethiopians have embraced diversity, recognizing it as a unifying force rather than a divisive factor. Instances like interfaith marriages, joint religious celebrations, and cooperative community projects are frequent, showcasing the profound social integration among various religious communities.

Ethiopia's commitment to religious freedom is enshrined in its constitution, which guarantees the right to practice any religion and prohibits discrimination based on religious beliefs. This legal framework, coupled with a tradition of secular governance, has helped safeguard religious liberties.

As Ethiopia progresses and advances on its journey of prosperity, preserving its long-standing tradition of religious coexistence becomes paramount. Upholding principles such as tolerance, mutual respect, and open dialogue will allow Ethiopians to embrace their religious diversity as a cornerstone of strength and unity. In doing so, they can inspire hope for peaceful coexistence in a world frequently marred by religious divisions.

In summary, Ethiopia's heritage of religious harmony stands as a source of national pride and resilience. Through nurturing dialogue, advancing education, and steadfastly championing principles of equality and tolerance, Ethiopians can perpetuate their legacy of religious coexistence and emerge as an exemplary model for the global community.



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The Ethiopian Herald

Opinion

Achievements, challenges and prospects for Ethiopian manufacturing industries

BY SOLOMON DIBABA

The manufacturing sector in the Ethiopian economy dates back to the late 1950s and early 1960s in which foreign investors started establishing the first factories which focused on textiles, leatherworks, food processing industries and chemical plants that were mostly concentrated in Addis Ababa and nearby towns.

One of the earliest manufacturing industries in Ethiopia owned by foreign investors was the textile and garment sector which included Cottoni in Dre Dawa, Ethio-Japan Nylon Textile Factory. European companies, particularly from countries like Italy and Germany, established textile mills in Ethiopia to produce clothing and textiles for both domestic and export markets. Some of these companies operated as early as the 1920s.

Brewing and beverage production is another sector that saw early foreign investment in Ethiopia. These included among others, Saint George Brewery European breweries, such as Heineken and Castel Group, entered the Ethiopian market in the mid-20th century, establishing breweries to produce beer and other alcoholic beverages for the local market.

Foreign investment in food processing industries like HVA Wonji Sugar Factory owned by a Dutch company, such as flour milling, edible oil production, and dairy processing, also played a significant role in Ethiopia's industrial development. Companies from Europe and other regions invested in food processing facilities to meet the growing demand for processed foods in Ethiopia.

The cement industry saw early foreign investment in Ethiopia, with companies from countries like Italy, France, and India establishing cement manufacturing plants to supply construction materials for infrastructure projects and real estate development.

The leather and footwear industries like Darmar, Asco Shoe Factory (now Black Lion) Chipolini in Asmera attracted foreign investment in Ethiopia, particularly during the mid-20th century. European companies set up tanneries and shoe factories to produce leather goods and footwear for domestic and export markets.

Ethiopia's manufacturing industries have seen notable achievements, faced various challenges, and hold significant prospects for future growth and development.

Ethiopia has made significant investments in the development of industrial parks, particularly in sectors such as textiles and garments, leather and footwear, and agro-processing. These industrial parks aim to attract foreign investment, promote export-oriented manufacturing, and create employment opportunities.

Ethiopia's manufacturing sector has contributed to export diversification and growth, with increasing exports of textiles, garments, leather products, and processed agricultural goods. The country's export-oriented industrial strategy has helped to strengthen its position in regional and international markets.

The expansion of manufacturing industries has led to the creation of jobs, particularly in urban areas where industrial parks are located. This has helped to absorb labor from the agricultural sector and reduce unemployment rates, especially among youth and women.

The government has invested in infrastructure development, including transportation networks, energy supply, and industrial zones, to support the growth of manufacturing industries. Improved infrastructure enhances connectivity, reduces production costs, and increases the competitiveness of Ethiopian products in domestic and international markets.

Foreign investment in Ethiopia's manufacturing sector has facilitated technology transfer, knowledge exchange, and skill development. Collaboration with international partners has enabled local manufacturers to access advanced technologies, improve production processes, and enhance product quality.

Despite improvements, Ethiopia still faces challenges related to inadequate infrastructure, including unreliable electricity supply, poor transportation networks, and limited access to water and sanitation services. These infrastructure constraints can hinder the growth and competitiveness of manufacturing industries.

Access to finance remains a significant challenge for Ethiopian manufacturers, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Limited access to credit, high interest rates, and a lack of financial services impede investment, innovation, and expansion in the manufacturing sector.

There is a shortage of skilled labor in Ethiopia's manufacturing industries, particularly in technical and managerial roles. The education and training system may not adequately align with the needs of the manufacturing sector, leading to mismatches between available skills and industry requirements.

The business regulatory environment in Ethiopia can be complex and bureaucratic, with cumbersome administrative procedures, inconsistent enforcement of regulations, and legal uncertainties. Streamlining regulations, improving transparency, and enhancing the ease of doing business could facilitate investment and growth in the manufacturing sector.

Ethiopian manufacturers face challenges in accessing international markets due to trade barriers, competition from low-cost producers, and limited export infrastructure. Diversifying export markets, improving trade facilitation, and enhancing product quality and standards could help overcome these challenges.

Ethiopia's strategic location in the Horn of Africa presents opportunities for regional integration and trade. Strengthening trade relations with neighboring countries and participating in regional economic initiatives could expand market opportunities for Ethiopian manufacturers.

The government of Ethiopia continues to offer investment incentives and support measures to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and stimulate industrial growth. Promoting investment in high-value-added sectors and supporting domestic entrepreneurship could drive further expansion of the manufacturing sector.

Embracing digitalization, automation, and Industry 4.0 technologies could enhance productivity, efficiency, and competitiveness in Ethiopian manufacturing industries. Encouraging innovation, research and development (R&D), and technology adoption could drive sustainable growth and value creation.

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

Business & Economy

Endeavoring for bolstering energy sector in Ethiopia

BY MENGESHA AMARE

Ethiopia is endowed with huge hydropower potential cascaded from its many rivers. Being a landlocked country with no known fossil fuel resources signifies the importance of water resources, indeed! Despite some recent successful efforts to use these vast water resources for its development, the country has not been able to use this enormous resource fully for bolstering its economic development.

It is strange that the country has an underperforming power sector with supply shortages, reliability issues, and poor access to electricity, while sitting on an enormous potential to produce hydropower. Adequate supply of power with acceptable quality is a precondition for any nation to modernize its economy and to sustain economic growth.

As learnt from the Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP), World Bank finances 500 million USD to support energy sector. It has also finalized to launch 14 new projects. The World Bank Group has financed more than 500 million USD budget to support Ethiopia's energy sector.

EEP Director General Ashebir Balcha told *The Ethiopian Herald* that there are different organizations and countries that have been financing to support Ethiopia's energy sector. The World Bank and the African Development Bank are partners in supporting country's energy sector.

"The World Bank has recently funded over 500 million USD. Accessing this budget, EEP drafted to launch some 14 new power generation and transmission as well as distribution projects across the country. The fund would contribute highly in overcoming power accessibility problems and others. Hence, there are public queries to build substations and fulfill power accessibility and others. The realization of these 14 projects would address the problem," he added.

According to him, the country has been working to rehabilitate hydropower projects to boost power generation. As a result, electro mechanical components should get rehabilitation after 20 years service provision. Currently, there are projects that need rehabilitation. For instance, efforts are underway to rehabilitate Tekeze hydropower project to boost power generation.

Currently, all of energy sources have been yielding 5250MW. The Abbay Dam project construction completion would double the current energy capacity. Hence, the construction of Koisha hydroelectric power project completed 65%. Currently, shortage finance especially foreign currency exchange has been challenging the project.

However, the government has been eyeing various alternatives to address the problem. And the EEP has been allocating its foreign currency revenue for it. Furthermore, it will commence power generation after three to four



Renewable energy is significantly useful in coming up with eco-friendly power

years, he underscored.

Ethiopia has been exporting electricity to neighboring countries after fulfilling its local power demand. Currently, it exports only 10% of it to neighboring countries and uses 85% of it for its local consumption, he expressed.

The greatest benefit out of hydropower program is the abundant low-cost energy the projects contribute to electric power grids. Because hydroelectric power plants burn no fuel, operating costs are low and are immune to rising fossil fuel prices. In addition, most of these projects were built years ago, when construction costs were low. As a result, these plants are playing a significant role in keeping electricity costs affordable for consumers, creating a positive impact on the economy.

As to him, in most parts of the country, hydropower plants can only meet a portion of an area's power needs. Ethiopia strives to use this limited amount of energy in a way that will keep the overall cost of electricity to consumers as low as possible. This is often done by generating as much energy as possible during peak demand hours of the day.

"Hydropower development is a controversial topic as it potentially has significant environmental and social impacts. However, hydropower has received favorable consideration recently due to its potential to mitigate climate change. It uses a computable general equilibrium model to examine the macroeconomic impacts of expanding Ethiopia's hydropower potential," he added.

In the long run, hydropower generation expansion increases domestic incomes, lowers real domestic energy prices, significantly alleviates poverty and provides insurance against oil price increases. Moreover, Ethiopia has potential to significantly contribute in providing environmental services to the east African region by delivering clean, renewable energy while mitigating climate change, he opined.

True, properly designed and implemented

multipurpose water infrastructure projects also offer other development opportunities such as irrigation, fisheries, and domestic and industrial water supply for developing nations like ours. Hydropower avoids the use of carbon-intensive energy sources such as coal, oil, and gas and also helps integration of other intermittent renewable energy-based power generation sources such as solar and wind power into the main grid, moving economies toward a low-carbon development path.

A call for a renewed role for hydropower nationally, regionally and even continentally needs to be well intensified. True, hydropower dams are too costly to build to deliver positive risk-adjusted returns unless suitable risk management measures are imbedded in project designs. In the long run, hydropower generation expansion, together with the necessary transmission infrastructure development, will significantly increase national income and make, domestic energy cheaper. It also reduces poverty more effectively than electricity subsidies. Moreover, this study shows that Ethiopia has a potential to significantly contribute in providing environmental services.

According to Ashebir, the energy sector plays a very important role in economic development and evidence shows that expanding the electricity sector contributes to economic growth in many countries. The underperforming electricity sector in the country, with inadequate and unreliable supply of poor-quality electricity, was a major development constraint.

It is believed that the recent improvements in electricity supply to the industrial and service sectors have contributed to better economic growth. This trend in electricity sector growth is expected to continue along with rapid urbanization and a growing number of energy-intensive industries.

Hydropower has the potential to play an important role in Ethiopia, which faces growing demand for clean, reliable, and affordable energy. However, environment

and social impacts raised serious concerns about hydropower during the 1990s, and many development agencies reduced their support for hydropower. Growing concerns about climate change has renewed interest in hydropower, he added.

Hydropower can thus deliver remarkable advantages compared to solar energy and wind power, for example in terms of regional value creation and employment, since the share of locally and regionally sourced civil work is typically noticeable higher in total project costs of hydropower.

Additional key aspects for social acceptance are the type of ownership, the degree of local job creation, the level of participation in the planning and decision-making process as well as the amount of financial benefits for communities and cantons from hydropower construction and operation.

A focus on storage hydropower to support the integration of volatile renewable energies would be also advantageous for the country, if site and topographical conditions allow. Undoubtedly, hydropower will remain an important pillar of the Ethiopia's renewable electricity. Generally, the strategic need for additional hydropower development should be defined in an overall power system planning process.

In fact, the electricity generation from fossil fuels is getting reduced by the increasing share of renewable energy sources. Energy system-related effects refer to additional costs or benefits of renewable energies compared to a "conventional" power or energy system without an increased share of renewable.

Large hydropower tends to be the better option both from an energy-economic as well as environmental and social view. However, there is generally not a linear relationship between size and impact of concrete hydropower projects and possible mitigation measures. Besides, small hydropower plants should be subject to the same environmental regulations as large hydropower plants and need to be included into long-term coordinated planning and assessment at basin-scale. Additionally, renewable strategies and promotion schemes in the country should consider the true environmental and social costs and benefits of small hydropower.

Generally, the expansion of electricity generation from renewable energies is considered to be a major lever for the transition to a more sustainable power system. Furthermore, the expansion of hydropower has caused increasing environmental and social concerns because new hydropower capacities frequently affect river stretches of high ecological value. A robust and climate-resilient generation mix calls for portfolio diversification. Stronger focus on non-hydro renewable technologies and storage hydropower could diversify a country's generation portfolio and make it less vulnerable to fluctuations of water runoffs.

Art & Culture

African cultures,

languages in the long journey to integration and unity

BY MULUGETA GUDETA

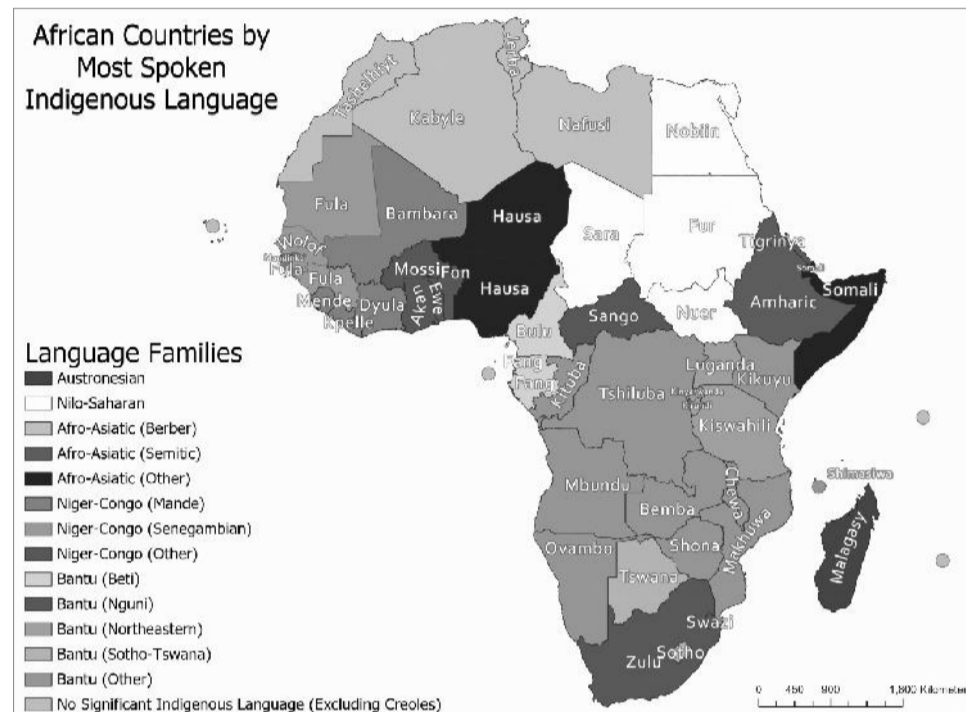
How many cultures and languages are there in Africa? Studies suggest that there are more than 3000 spoken and/or written languages in Africa although they may not be fully investigated or explored. It is generally believed that languages, cultures and trade play a pivotal role in the process of the integration and ultimate unity of Africa as a whole. Economic integration or trade may look the most important factor of the three; but upon closer observation culture and/or language is more important than trade in the integration process. Language is obviously the most active factor that can expedite or retard regional integration or Africa's ultimate unity.

People in Africa engage in cross-border trade via the vehicle of language. Most Africans sharing common borders speak languages that are spoken on both sides of the borders. According to one study, more than 70% of trade in Africa is promoted through cross-border linguistic and cultural interactions. Unfortunately, culture and language are often given little attention and are seldom considered defining factors of trade, economic integration and African unity.

Africa cannot of course wait until the majority of Africans speak one or two common languages. This would be an unrealistic expectation because language and culture take longer time to grow, spread and become a common tool of communication for peoples of various regions. That is why the various projects of African regional economic integration have so far failed to progress at a faster tempo failed to bear the expected results. And this is in turn bound to retard the realization of the ideal of African unity to which the African Union (AU) is deeply committed.

Would the alternative of working harder for Africa's political unity before the integration process consumes itself in the context of the failed scenario of regional integration? Like regional integration, African unity is also seemingly facing many hurdles as reports of progress in this area tend to be disheartening of not encouraging at all as it was made obvious during the recent AU Summit in Addis Ababa. Pan-Africanism is particular was portrayed as an almost forgotten or dysfunctional agenda because sufficient attention was given by the major players, namely the AU and its economic integration projects.

Theoretically speaking, "The idea of African Unity and its organization, the African Union (AU) is a manifestation of the African vision for an Africa that was united, free and in control of its own



destiny." Practically however, this ideal is not only far from becoming a reality. It is actually regressing back in time when the continent was not even recognized as a geographic concept. The notion of African unity still remains an ideal or an unattained vision more than seven decades after it was recognized on paper.

The ideals of Pan-Africanism likewise remain distant dreams whose manifestations look like mirages. "In its narrowest political manifestation, Pan-Africanists envision a united African nation where all people of the African Diaspora can live. Yet, Africans from the Diaspora are still scattered all over the world and those who stay at home still live in existential limbo.

If we look the matter from the point of view of objective reality, all Africans are inhabitants of one continent thus they are one people. Africa is sometimes considered one country even as some people call it in the media nowadays. Unfortunately, we have been forced to think of Africa not as one whole but as 54 entities simply because we allowed our separators to sell their dividing agendas without we could realize it's devastating consequences. Before colonialism and slavery, Africans lived as one people in one continent. After colonialism and to this day, they have been atomized, fragmented, collectively alienated and culturally obscured.

African unity has remained an urgent agenda since the 1960s simply because Africa is one single continent, one culture embracing oneness amidst diversity and one people inhabiting and sharing one destiny, one culture and one consciousness that had been challenged several times in the past decades and won the day every time.

Africa is too big to be enclosed in a single framework. It is also too diverse, although

organically united. Africa is a myth and a reality, a problem and a solution, an unsolved puzzle and a clear and simple essence. Africa, despite its contradictions, has always been one and the same despite the failed attempts to dismember it spiritually and geographically. Africa is even too big for us to see or feel how close we are or how we are one people. Africa is therefore a land of many contradictions. Grasping its contradictory nature and resolving it are two different tasks.

The argument often forwarded by the fierce advocates of Africa's total integration and holistic unity is that Africans are one people living in one continent that had been fragmented by historical events like colonialism. According to them, the most urgent task is to return Africans to the times of their integrated existence and integrated consciousness without which no genuinely African and a modern civilization can be built. "Back to the Roots!" is a slogan cherished by most advocates of African unity now or never. Nkrumah's old call was and is often reverberating in discussions among more radical African politicians these days.

Europe, or any other continent based on their common identities and on a united perception or a common consciousness to achieve a higher level of economic development. Africa too should come together and restart its journey to total unity earlier rather than later. African unity now! was the slogan of the unifiers of the 1960s. It still remains valid to this day. Perhaps one should find a balanced approach to African unity that takes both the slow process of regional integration and the more radical option of unconditional unity.

This voice had been stifled for decades and a similar voice has started to echo in the minds of hundreds of millions of Africans. The earlier pioneers of Africa unity warned that if we are separated we

would fall and if we are united we will stand. This call is still fresh in the minds of the generations that came and went after them. It is still strong, powerful and urgent. Why? Because we have failed to achieve the ideals of the total liberation of Africa by embracing the political, economic and cultural legacy of colonialism.

It is true that geography defines culture and shapes its evolution. But, culture cannot only be defined by geography. Geography gives different shapes to different cultures but it cannot define their essence. There are moment when different cultures survive under different geographic conditions without altering their defining substance. African culture continues to survive under European, American and Latin American geographic conditions without losing its basic substance. That is why, despite the end of colonialism, the common features or the fundamental essence of African culture continues to survive in Europe or in other continents.

Tens of millions of people were deported from Africa to the US and forced to work in cotton plantations as slaves. In addition to the culture they brought to their new home, African slaves had also developed cultures that were unique to their blackness and to their new condition or experience as slaves in touch with white American culture. This is a culture that we know call Diaspora African culture which is part and parcel of the universal culture of black people everywhere.

What we now call African culture is not the fragmented and isolated cultures of its constituent parts but the sum total and unified culture of the people of Africa. Africa is one country and Africans are one people and African culture is basically one culture with shared features and superficial differences. The feeling of cultural fragmentation that emerged in the follow up to the long centuries of colonialism is not an authentically African feeling or sentiment but one imposed by the colonizers in order to facilitate their domination of Africans.

In pre-colonial times, Africans used to live without consciousness of their particularities let alone their fragmentations. True, they were living in distant places separated by mighty rivers and seas, mountains and lakes. Yet, they had almost similar cultures born of their common past and indicating their common destiny. By the same token Africans need to consolidate their cultures and traditions and use their common languages as tools of communication until the ideals of regional integration or total unity become palpable realities. They should also learn from successful integrative or uniting experiences and use them critically in such a way that they can advance these ideals.

Global Affairs

UN and humanitarian partners seek USD 46 billion for humanitarian assistance

Funding humanitarian programs will continue into the New Year, but the funding cuts of the previous year may impact the prioritization of the most immediate and most life-threatening needs.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) released the Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO) for 2024. This annual assessment of the global humanitarian sector provides insight into the humanitarian action undertaken by the UN and its partners and reviews current and future trends in this sector.

Major crises have been the result of violent conflicts or global climate disasters. The economic impact of these crises has been a contributing factor to the increasing humanitarian needs in places like Afghanistan and Syria, or indicative of greater economic instability. The need for food, water, shelter, and health services, have also contributed to the assessment of needs among affected communities. As a result of these crises, 1 in 73 people have been forcibly displaced. Over 258 million people have experienced acute food insecurity. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, has remarked that the international community has not been “keeping pace with the needs” brought on by these crises.

For this year, there was a reported decrease in funding from the year prior. In the previous year, in spite of efforts and repeated calls from UN officials to increase funding, the UN received only one-third of the requested USD 57 billion for 2023. In 2024, the UN and its humanitarian partners are calling for USD 46.4 billion to assist 180.5 million in 72 countries. The North Africa and Middle East region, which includes the Palestinian Territory, Syria and Yemen, will require USD 13.9 billion, which is the largest amount being asked. East and Southern Africa is next, requiring USD 10.9 billion, followed by Central and West Africa requiring USD 8.3 billion, and Asia and the Pacific, which is calling for USD 5.5 billion.

The current plans from the UN and its humanitarian partners, as indicated by the report, will be to prioritize the communities dealing with the most life-threatening needs, and therefore require urgent action. The response plans that have been formulated promise a more stream-lined approach that will take into consideration the realities of the organizations’ capacity to deliver humanitarian assistance. Given that funding—or the lack thereof—was a particular concern over the last year, and resources were quickly dwindling, this pragmatic approach is founded.

Even with this focus on immediate needs,



CARE Somalia, a UN partner, could provide emergency services to drought-affected communities through humanitarian funding. Credit: OCHA-Yao Chen

We need to get better at acting on gender-specific analyses that strengthen our ability to meet the diverse and distinct needs of all the people we serve

the predicted funds required for certain regions would suggest that protracted crises with long-term impacts are among the issues that will be addressed. The tragedy of humanitarian work seems

to be that with multiple situations and escalations to address, attention and assistance are only further divided between today’s disaster and yesterday’s crisis. The crisis may not have been fully resolved.

For instance, under the Rohingya Joint Response Plan, which will be led by UNHCR and IOM, USD 872.7 million has been requested to fund this plan that will provide ongoing humanitarian support to the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. It is six years since the Rohingya refugee camps have been set up. The need for food, shelter, and protection, and the pressure to keep these camps running have only exacerbated and may continue to do so the longer it persists. The prolonged presence of the camps, and the number of people still seeking refuge by crossing the border, will only leave them more vulnerable to the risks of abuse, exploitation, disease, and other security issues that developed within the settlements.

The GHO attests that humanitarian organizations will aim to deliver better results. This will include acknowledging and supporting local and national humanitarian groups through funding, increasing accountability and people-centered responses, and engaging in humanitarian diplomacy. There is also a call to promote inclusive responses that acknowledge the unique, intersecting, and complex needs of vulnerable peoples, including those from marginalized communities.

Women and girls, for instance,

are particularly vulnerable during humanitarian crises. OCHA Director, Coordination Division, Ramesh Rajasingham, remarked on this during a high-level event in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. He stated that women are fourteen times more likely to be killed during climate disasters. Women and girls are also at a greater risk of gender-based violence; only 53 percent were able to access GBV services through groups like UN Women. Women and girls also face barriers in receiving life-saving healthcare, especially when it comes to reproductive health. Humanitarian organizations, and the international community that supports them, should be expected to improve their response to the gender-specific needs.

“We need to get better at acting on gender-specific analyses that strengthen our ability to meet the diverse and distinct needs of all the people we serve,” he said. “We need far greater investment in protection and other services in humanitarian settings that are tailored for women and girls.”

What is evident in the GHO is that the compassion and urgency to help those in need remain a driving force for the UN’s humanitarian actors. Yet, one cannot help but lament at the adjusted funding request, which is lower than last year’s. When it is now, more than ever, that millions of people are living through dire situations, through conflict or displacement, and many more are at risk of falling.

(SOURCE: INTER PRESS SERVICE)

Law & Politics

Abbay Dam: Near to completion to illuminate Africa

BY EYUEL KIFLU

Ethiopia, the country with the fastest growing economy in Africa, is on the verge of completing its mega electric power generator project, which is set to revolutionize energy production in the region. The construction of the largest dam in Africa, known as Abbay Dam (the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, GERD), is nearing its final stages, bringing a promise to light the nation and move Ethiopia and the entire continent forward.

The GERD's construction represents Ethiopia's determination to utilize its own resources for the greater good of the nation and the region at large, without posing a threat to riparian countries. By harnessing the power of the Abbay, the dam will generate much-needed electric power to fuel up Ethiopia's rapid economic growth. With an expected capacity of 5,250 megawatts, which doubles the current electric power production of the country, Abbay has the potential to transform Ethiopia into a regional powerhouse and a net exporter of energy.

The Abbay Dam, with its massive scale and grand vision, is expected to have multifaceted benefits that extend far beyond generating electricity. One of the key advantages of the dam is the creation of an artificial lake through its reservoir that has a potential to be a springboard for various economic activities such as fishing, tourism, and water transportation. The vast water body will be the magic bullet to create a source of sustenance and livelihood for local communities, and also attract visitors from far and wide, boosting the country's tourism industry.

The tourism expert Ayalew Sisay has shed light on the immense allure of the Abbay Dam, an upcoming hydroelectric project in Ethiopia. Covering an extensive area of 1,740 square kilometers, the dam stretches an impressive 246 kilometers and boasts nation's water capacity to 74 billion cubic meters. Once completed, it is set to create a collection of 70 islands, each spanning over five hectares, transforming the vicinity into one of the world's most enchanting tourist hotspots.

"The Abbay Dam site will undoubtedly rank among the most breathtaking destinations worldwide," remarked Ayalew, emphasizing that the project holds far more significance than just a dam. Historical symbol of civilization and culture, the Abbay River's association with the dam will provide a gateway to introduce this remarkable feat of engineering to the world. Ayalew envisions tourists across the globe flocking to Guba, where the dam is situated, to rejoice the area's natural splendor and immerse themselves in its

rich cultural heritage.

Ayalew further explained on the potential attractions surrounding the dam, noting its capacity to facilitate river cruises and offer awe-inspiring views of unspoiled landscapes. To fully capitalize on this opportunity, he advocates for the development of captivating tourist destinations in the vicinity of the dam. By leveraging the deep-rooted historical significance of the Abbay River, the construction of the dam as an additional tourism asset, will bolster Ethiopia's appeal as a must-visit destination.

"The Abbay Dam's completion will not only enhance Ethiopia's tourism sector but also provide an additional source of income," Ayalew affirmed. He stressed the importance of encouraging tourists to explore the country's cultural heritage beyond the dam, ensuring they return home with lasting memories. To achieve this, Ayalew emphasized the need to create internationally renowned water-based activities, construct top-tier hotels, and ensure ample parking facilities. Additionally, guaranteeing the security of the dam and maintaining peace and tranquility in the country emerged as vital responsibilities.

Ayalew also highlighted the multifaceted role of the Abbay Dam, underscoring its significance beyond tourism. In addition to irrigation, fishing, and transportation, the dam will play a crucial role in preserving wildlife and maintaining ecological equilibrium in the region.

Also, the completion of the GERD underscores Ethiopia's commitment to regional integrity and cooperation for stability and economic development. The dam serves as a symbol of Ethiopia's willingness to leverage its own resources to drive progress and prosperity, without posing a threat to its riparian neighbors. Utilizing the electric power of the Abbay Dam, Ethiopia aims to strengthen its ties with other countries in the region and contribute to the overall well-being of Africa. The country's electric power export to the neighboring countries will even stretch to South Africa after full completion of the dam.

Having stayed with Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), Yacob Arsano, an Associate Professor at Addis Ababa University, discussed on the widespread support and involvement of Ethiopians in the construction of the dam. He highlighted the contributions of individuals - skilled in various fields including: international law, water management, and dam construction- have provided valuable insights and ideas throughout the process of construction and negotiations. The government's determination to see the project through, despite all the external pressures, has been instrumental in overcoming challenges and driving the dam's progress.

The completion of the Abbay Dam will mark a significant milestone in Ethiopia's journey towards becoming a regional powerhouse, driving economic growth and improving the lives of its citizens

Yacob expressed confidence in Ethiopia's ability to navigate external pressure challenges, drawing on the experience gained from the GERD and the country's diplomatic skills. As the first of many large-scale dams planned for the future, the lessons learned from the Abbay Dam will inform and direct Ethiopia's approach to upcoming projects, opening doors for improvements regarding management and mitigation of potential concerns.

Looking ahead, Yacob emphasized the importance of organized diplomacy at the national level to bolster Ethiopia's position on the international stage. Thanks to its proactive engagement in regional and global affairs, Ethiopia's strength and influence are poised to grow in the future, he highlighted. By leveraging its diplomatic capabilities, Ethiopia aims to address any grievances or misunderstandings that may arise from its dam projects, fostering greater cooperation and understanding among all stakeholders involved.

The GERD project serves as a testament for Ethiopia's commitment to regional integrity, stability, and economic development. Developing its own resources, Ethiopia aims to emancipate its people from poverty and contribute to the progress of the African continent. The completion of the Abbay Dam will mark a significant milestone in Ethiopia's journey towards becoming a regional powerhouse, driving economic growth and improving the lives of its citizens.

In conclusion, Abbay Dam represents a transformational project that will not only illuminate the nation but also empower Africa as a whole. With its enormous capacity for electricity generation, the dam will reinforce Ethiopia's economic growth and award a potential high rank position to Ethiopia as a key player in the African energy landscape.

Furthermore, the GERD's potential for fishing, tourism, and transportation will create additional opportunities for economic development and regional integration. Ethiopia's unwavering determination and diplomatic prowess will enable it to address concerns and foster cooperation, ensuring a brighter future for the nation and the continent. As the Abbay Dam nears completion, Ethiopia's beacon of progress shines ever brighter, illuminating the path towards a prosperous and interconnected Africa. With the lessons learned from the GERD and its diplomatic prowess, Ethiopia is well-equipped to address concerns and foster cooperation as it embarks on future dam projects. As the light of completion shines through the GERD, Ethiopia paves the way for a brighter and more prosperous Africa. It is known that the construction of the dam is on its 13th year anniversary this year.

Planet Earth

Killing two birds with one stone

BY FIKADU BELAY

Banana cultivation in the Central Ethiopian State has gained significant attention in recent years due to the numerous benefits it offers to farmers by replacing eucalyptus tree with banana. This shift has sparked a positive transformation in the region, impacting various aspects of the economy, environment, and livelihoods of local communities.

In Ethiopia, banana cultivation has its own economic benefit apart from the advantage it provides for the growth and development of other crops. Bananas are a highly marketable crop with a significant local and international demand. The region's favorable climate and fertile soils make it suitable for banana production, allowing farmers to earn a sustainable income and improve their living standards. The profitability of bananas compared to eucalyptus trees has attracted many farmers to shift their focus to banana cultivation, leading to increased economic activity in the area.

Jamal Hasan, Agriculture Office Head of Eastern Silti wereda, told Ethiopian Press Agency the impact of eucalyptus trees and the efforts being made to shift to banana production.

Jamal emphasized that farmers or growers are able to generate income from eucalyptus trees only once in ten years. As a result, the living standard of the society is remained poor. In response to these challenges, the agriculture office is aggressively working with agricultural research institute with a vision of replacing eucalyptus trees with other fast yielding cash crops like banana.

Jamal stated the collaborative efforts between government bodies, research institutions, and local farmers brought about positive change. The dedication of high caliber agricultural experts who has been conducting research and come up with practical solutions showcases their proactive approach to addressing the challenges posed by eucalyptus and capitalizing on the opportunities presented by banana cultivation.

Ahmed Rashed, a farmer in Gerbi-ber Kebele of the stated Wereda, appreciated the support provided by the Agronomists in their pursuit of self-sufficiency and poverty alleviation. Through offering training and fulfilling the dare need to the farmers, the bureau has empowered them to be self sufficient and improve their economic by generating an income.

In the region around Silti Abaya Lake, a significant initiative has taken place. Around 20 hectares of eucalyptus trees have been uprooted to make way for banana plantations, he said. Through this process, about eight hundred farmers in the area are being benefited. Drawing a lesson from the



best practices of these farmers, the bureau has replicated to other parts of the wereda, Ahmed mentioned.

Moreover, the value chain of this new trend such as planting, harvesting, processing, and marketing has created jobs for the locality. The initiative by the bureau has also become a source of income for numerous individuals. In short, the program has immense contribution for poverty alleviation and backwardness, he remarked.

In addition to the economic advantages, banana cultivation in central Ethiopia has significant environmental benefits. Eucalyptus trees are growing fast and adapt variable agricultural conditions. Though it is also highly water-intensive, the tree can deplete groundwater resources. On the other hand, banana requires less water when compared it with eucalyptus trees, this make it suitable for water-scarce regions. Applying the program, farmers are also contributing their share to water conservation efforts and promote the efficient use of resources.

According to Jemal, the prevalence of eucalyptus trees in the zone has had significant consequences, particularly in receding the size of Lake Abaya. Eucalyptus tree has extensive root systems when compared with other plants for nutrients and

moisture. As the fertility of the agricultural land decreases, it discourage farmers to be effective by producing other agricultural products. This has had a profound impact on the local community, he said.

In contrast, bananas have a shallow root system that allows for better soil aeration and nutrient retention. The cultivation of bananas helps maintain soil health and fertility as well as ensures the long-term sustainability of agricultural practices in the region.

Beyond the economic and environmental benefits, bananas provide nutritional value to the local population. Banana is rich in vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber that contributes to a balanced diet and improved health outcomes. The availability of home grown bananas has reduced the dependence on imported fruits and promoted food security in the region. Additionally, bananas can be processed into various value-added products, such as banana chips, banana flour, and banana puree, creating opportunities for diversification and enhancing the value chain.

The transition from eucalyptus tree plantations to banana cultivation has also had social implications. Farmers who have shifted to bananas have experienced improved social cohesion and community development. Collaborative efforts in

banana farming, such as sharing knowledge, resources, and experiences, have fostered a sense of unity among farmers. This collective approach has proven to be more effective in addressing common challenges and maximizing the benefits of banana cultivation.

It is important to note that the shift to banana cultivation does not imply the complete eradication of eucalyptus trees. Eucalyptus still holds value in certain contexts, such as for timber production or as windbreaks. However, the diversification of agricultural practices through the integration of bananas provides a more sustainable and balanced approach to land use. Moreover, environmental benefits, such as water conservation and soil fertility improvement, contribute to sustainable agricultural practices. Additionally, bananas enhance food security, provide nutritional value, and promote social cohesion in local communities. The shift to banana cultivation represents a significant step towards a more resilient and prosperous agricultural sector in the region.

In the East Silti wereda, significant progress has been made in this regard. A total of 105 hectares of land in the Wereda alone have been dedicated to banana cultivation, leading to the engagement of more than 262 thousand farmers in this endeavor. This demonstrates the scale and importance of the transition, Jemal noted.

Looking to the future, Ahmed stated that the farmers have a desire to have a market center which help distribute the produce to other parts of the country. So, the farmers face a crucial challenge in terms of having infrastructural facilities. They have urged the government to curb the challenge they faced so far in relation to infrastructural developments. The improvement of transportation networks help them to manage the distribution of agricultural products and pave the way for overall economic growth and development.

Jemal further stated that the agriculture office is working diligently to address the challenges faced by farmers. Efforts are being made to provide improved seeds, develop essential infrastructure, integrate the market for agricultural products, and tackle other related bottlenecks. As the measures taken so far with a vision of creating a favorable environment for farmers to be continued as it thrive the banana cultivation sector and enhance their overall livelihoods.

The agriculture office's commitment to supporting farmers in the transition from eucalyptus to banana cultivation highlights the recognition of the long-term benefits associated with this shift. By diversifying agricultural practices and embracing a more sustainable approach, the local community can improve their economic prospects, preserve the environment, and ensure food security, he remarked.