



# The Ethiopian Herald

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## Addis Chamber to make businesses ready for AfCFTA

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

**ADDIS ABABA-** The Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations (AACCSA) and the government are readying businesses for the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

The chamber organized pannel discussion yesterday under the topic “AfCFTA and Business Readiness in Ethiopia” that highlighted the necessity of the private sector, the government and other stakeholders’ readiness to remain competitive in the AfCFTA.

In her opening remark at the panel, AACCSA President Mesenbet Shenkute said that chamber is preparing a discussion platform for business to create a conducive environment as well as help them to remain competitive with international counterparts in the AfCFTA.



See Addis Chamber ... page 3 Mesenbet Shenkute

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## Stakeholders express conviction in youth’s major role in Nat’l Dialogue

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

**ADDIS ABABA-** The youth’s active participation in the National Dialogue not only allows them to reflect their best interests but also contribute share in resolving Ethiopia’s contentious problems, stakeholders in the issue said.

Speaking to local media, Jimma University Legal Administration College Dean Rahel Assefa (PhD) stated that the youth are expected to exert their responsibility by actively engaging in the National Dialogue.

According to Rahel (PhD), the National Dialogue would be

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Photo: Hadush Abreha

Mekdes Daba (MD)

## MoH, affiliates join Clean Ethiopia movement

BY YESUF ENDRIS

**ADDIS ABABA-** In parallel with their main duties, the Ministry of Health (MoH) and institutions under its auspices announced their participation in Clean Streets-Healthy Lives movement.

In an event held here yesterday, Health Minister Mekdes Daba (MD) underscored the dire need for enhanced sanitary infrastructure to combat prevalent health issues stemming from poor sanitation practices. “With many individuals suffering from preventable diseases due to inadequate

See MoH, affiliates ... page 3

## Ethiopia exports over 815 tons of tea in nine-month

- Signs 200 mln. USD coffee contract

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

**ADDIS ABABA -** Over 815.6 tons of tea was exported to the global market in the past nine months of the current fiscal year, the Ethiopian Coffee and Tea Authority (ECTA) said, mentioning the 204 ton increment from last year’s same period.

When compared with last year’s same period’s performance, the country has registered a significant increment in the volume of tea export, ECTA Deputy Director-General Shafi Umer told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA). In the reported period, Ethiopia secured 1.67 million USD from tea exports.

Mentioning the insignificant number of actors in tea production, Shafi indicated that only East Africa PLC and Gumero are functioning in the business.

Accordingly, the authority has been exerting maximum efforts to put the Gambella Tea Farming Industry to be operational and enhance productivity in the sector. Besides, it is currently streamlining committees, setting focus areas to expand tea plantations cultivation in Jimma, Ilubabor and Buno Bedelle.

See Ethiopia exports ... page 3



# News



Abera Tola

## Society to recruit 20 mln members in two-year

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

**ADDIS ABABA** – The Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) has been working on expanding its current fee-paying members and volunteers from 6 million to 20 million in the coming two years.

ERCS President Abera Tola told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the society has been paying heed on increasing the number of fee-paying members and volunteers thereby augmenting domestic resource mobilization.

The ERCS has several key responsibilities including; providing assistance to vulnerable citizens affected by natural and man-made disasters, rehabilitating displaced, supporting environmental initiatives and others, he said.

The youth has 80% share from the total 120 population. Accordingly the number of youth members is too low. It has been performing various activities to make all youths ERSC member. However, awareness creation activities are not yet took place to increase the number of members, he added.

Responding to recurrent natural and manmade disasters, he said that the society has been facing challenges with the current number of members. Hence, the association is recruiting new members across the country having new organizational structure.

Furthermore, it has been digitalizing members' data by restructuring new communication and media teams. It also strived to increase the number of volunteer youths to practice volunteerism.

“It will hugely support country’s overall economic development and growth if there is no conflict, desertification, internal displacement and others in the country.”

Moreover, it has been supplying drugs with affordable price across the country to overcome the shortage, but foreign currency exchange has been challenging to facilitate additional tasks, he noted.

## Newly introduced initiative to address water scarcity in HoA

**ADDIS ABABA (ENA)** - A new initiative called the Africa Groundwater Access Facility (GaFa) was commenced yesterday in Somali State to help address water scarcity affecting millions of people in the Horn of Africa (HoA).

The HoA is a region characterized by significant water scarcity, resulting from a combination of factors including limited surface water, heavy reliance on inconsistent rainfall patterns, rapid population growth leading to overexploitation of water resources, and increasing climatic variability.

This scarcity transcends environmental issues, intersecting with public health, economic stability, and regional security.

Addressing these multifaceted challenges requires innovative solutions that extend beyond conventional water management strategies.

The new initiative is believed to address this persistent challenge by tapping into the region’s unexploited, millions of cubic km deep groundwater reservoirs as a sustainable development solution.

The initiative will also create a platform for IGAD member states to collaborate on ground water mapping, data sharing and other related activities that bring dividends for communities living in borderland areas.

Ethiopia’s Minister of Water and Energy, Habtamu Itefa said the HoA region is currently affected by the adverse effect of climate change such as drought and floods.



He added that Ethiopia has been exerting maximum efforts to improve the livelihood of vulnerable communities by increasing access to clean water.

In this regard, GaFa will help the region to identify the potential of ground water resources and use for commonly development.

Minister of Uganda, Kenya, Djibouti and South Sudan highlighted the importance of addressing the multifaceted challenges that requires innovative solutions extended beyond conventional water management strategies.

They also said the new initiative will foster relations among neighboring community

and enhance water availability for them.

It will also help as a key platform for coordinated sustainable use of ground water in the region.

It was indicated on the occasion that investments in water, particularly the untapped wealth of groundwater, can be catalytic interventions, especially for borderlands where scarcity of resources is often a source of cyclical conflict for communities.

Several partners, including them World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO, FAO, OCHA, and UNDP, are engaged with IGAD and member states on the GaFa initiative, it was learned.

## State striving for tourist stay extension

- *Records over three million visitors in nine-month*

BY MENGESHA AMARE

**ADDIS ABABA** - Sidama State Culture, Tourism and Sports Bureau stated that tourists are expected to extend their stay as it is working on boosting the tourism sector.

Having a stay with the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), the Bureau Deputy Head, Abebe Marima said that the state was visited by above three million visitors over the last nine months and the number of tourists is on rise from time to time.

Abebe, who is also State tourism department chief, said the state was also welcomed 20, 000 local tourists and foreign tourists and garnered 1.5 billion Birr.

As to him, constructing a number of attractive destinations has been focused on to help tourists extend their stay in the state and let them stay for eight days on average modifying their current stay for three to four days.

He said, “The destinations in the state right now include Hawassa and its environs, Yirgalem city and its environs, religious festival hosting locations, Wondogenet,



which has endemic birds and spring water, and it has also two premier league clubs, and a certain tourist destination is being around Geraba, which is located around 90 kilometers away from Hawassa. A number of tourists would come to the state upon completion of this tourist destination, too.”

He said as the federal government has attached due emphasis to road infrastructure, which is the backbone of tourism promotion,

it has been constructing two asphalt roads. This would contribute a lot to the rise of tourist inflow to the state.

He further stated that the state this time does have some 16 star rated hotels, and this number will rise when the star hotels under construction are completed. Inviting all Ethiopian and other foreign visitors, he said all will be welcomed following the local treatment culture called ‘Dae Bushu.’

# News

## Ethio-China all-weather strategic partnership to further deepen

**ADDIS ABABA** - The outgoing Chinese Ambassador to Ethiopia Zhao Zhiyuan expressed his hope for the continued deepening of the China-Ethiopia all-weather strategic partnership.

A farewell ceremony was held on Sunday night at the Ethiopian Airlines VIP Lounge for the departing Chinese ambassador.

High-level Ethiopian officials, including State Minister of Finance Semereta Sewasew, Oromia State Chief Administer Shimelis Abdisa, Ethiopian Federal Police Commissioner General Demelash Gebremichael and Ministry of Foreign Affairs Protocol Director General Melaku Bedada, gathered to bid farewell to the ambassador and discussed the strong ties between the two nations.

In his parting remarks, the ambassador

told ENA that he had worked hard to strengthening China-Ethiopia relations during his over three and half years tenure.

“Today, I am leaving for China to complete my mission. My feeling is very complicated. Everybody knows I have worked hard for Ethiopia and China—for bilateral relations—for more than three and half years.”

Ambassador Zhao emphasized his affection for Ethiopia and its people. “I love Ethiopia. I love the people of Ethiopia. We all know that Ethiopia has great potential.”

He expressed his hope for the continued deepening of the China-Ethiopia all-weather strategic partnership. “I hope that our all-weather strategic partnership will further deepen.”

The ceremony underscored the enduring

partnership between Ethiopia and China, and paves the way for continued collaboration in the years to come.

He thanked the government and friends from every communities for their support to his successful work in Ethiopia.

The contribution of the ambassador in strengthening the relationship between Ethiopia and China is commendable.

China’s support for Ethiopia’s membership to the BRICS family is also another landmark in the longstanding relations between Ethiopia and China that decorates the ambassador’s tenure in Ethiopia.

During the Ambassador’s tenure in Ethiopia, various development projects were completed with the support of the Chinese Government.



Amb. Zhao Zhiyuan

## MoH, affiliates join Clean Ethiopia...

sanitation facilities, the campaign takes on added significance in its mission to improve public health and well-being.”

The Minister also noted that the campaign, which was initiated by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD), has been praised for its holistic approach to address both environmental and health challenges. Beyond the infrastructural improvements to urban landscapes, the Clean Ethiopia initiative holds the potential to revolutionize access to essential health services for communities across Ethiopia.

Highlighting the urgency of the situation, Mekdes(MD) mentioned the high rate of communicable diseases in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Ethiopia, is attributed to poor sanitation. “The

initiative aligns with the World Health Organization’s (WHO) global agenda to curb hygiene-related diseases by 2030 through the expansion of vital sanitation infrastructure.”

The WHO has a plan to address hygiene-related communicable disease by 2030, by expanding toilet and hygiene infrastructures. Ethiopia is one of many countries having a long-aged poor hygiene culture. Toileting in the field is still challenging public health and roads in several places are not clean. So, this initiative will be critical to overcome all these problems, she emphasized.

“Ethiopia is struggling with inadequate hygiene practices, compounded by insufficient sanitation facilities and the

situation has posed significant public health risks. The movement aims to address these pressing concerns by constructing modern public toilets in key locations, including roadsides and public areas.”

According to the Minister, over 30 health institutions operating under the MoH are set to engage in implementing the Clean Streets-Healthy Lives movement.

Premier Abiy (PhD) unveiled the Clean Streets-Healthy Lives movement with the aim of building modern, clean, and dignified public toilets across roads and public areas.

## Addis Chamber..

According to the president, the private sector needs to prepare before AfCFTA comes into effect since agreement requires some changes in economic policies, tax deduction, and other major changes in the economy. The Addis Chamber wants more investment to be created and more jobs to be created due to the agreement.

The AfCFTA comprises 54 countries and connects together 1.3 billion people and can create an aggregate GDP of 3.4 trillion USD to achieve Agenda 2063.

“AfCFTA helps African countries to get additional products from one another by bringing an informal trade into formal and to create a stable market in the continent.”

AfCFTA also helps 50 million Africans who live below the poverty line and helps them to have better lives and achieve economic progress, Mesenbet elaborated.

During the event, an expert Martha Belete (PhD) presented a research paper titled: AfCFTA Benefits and Challenges for Business.

The AfCFTA overcomes the barriers of flow of goods, capital and people across borders, she added.

The expert pointed out that the direct benefit of regional integration is boosting trade, expanding markets, increasing foreign direct investment and ensuring regulatory stability.

## Ethiopia exports over 815 tons of tea...

Moreover, he cited the extensive activities that are being undertaken by the Oromia State President’s Office and Oromia Agriculture Bureau to broaden the tea farming activities in the area. Similarly, support is also being given to farming communities in South West Ethiopia State in a bid to enhance product and productivity.

Apart from serving as the platform to experience sharing, coffee exhibitions are becoming the major sources of business networking thereby attracting about 1,000 international coffee buyers in February of this year, “Leading coffee firms from U.S., Europe and other parts of the world have attended the exhibitions and the ECTA signed a two million USD coffee

contractual agreement.”

The exhibitions have also created great opportunities to display Ethiopia’s coffee plantations and production process on the spot, facilitated cultural exchange and many other related things in connection with the sector, the director general remarked.

## Stakeholders express conviction in youth’s major...

instrumental not only in allowing the youth to express their concerns, but also paving the way for them to play a major role in supporting Ethiopians to reach national consensus.

“The National Dialogue would be expected to make the generational gap closer. The agenda is not supposed to be merely emanated from the past; instead the new generation needs to actively take part in streamlining their agenda.”

Prosperity Party Youth League Deputy President Obang Kumedan for her part said that the National Dialogue would bring about a huge opportunity for the nation. “It is not feasible to incorporate the whole population in the process and this is the reason to pick representatives from every segment of the society including the youth.”

Obang urged the youth to put extra effort in raising their concern while playing a major role in making the National Dialogue a

success.

Since the National Dialogue is believed to resolve the longstanding challenges and narrow major differences on pressing issues, adequate preparation needs to be undertaken, Worku Jifara (PhD) from Adama Science and Technology University (ASTU) stated. “Each citizen, particularly the youth, has to sit around a table and discuss with positive energy to build a better country for the coming generation.”

On the other hand, Wondimu Wodajo, from South Ethiopia State’s Prosperity Party Branch Office highlighted that the youth are part of the major segments of the society that need to take part in the National Dialogue.

The youth could play a pivotal role in informing the community, publishing research, taking part in panel discussions, and other activities concerning the National Dialogue, Wondimu added.

# Opinion

## National Dialogue for triumphing over the shaky path

BY MENGESHA AMARE

Discussing circumstances and/or facts potentially result in dispute, disparity and disagreements, is the best remedy, though doesn't work all the time, and either individuals and groups or organized entities or government, are expected to employ this viable weapon to settle upheaval, confusion and commotion.

Cognizant of the fact that close talks, genuine discussions and round table conversations upon problems and disputes can prettily attract consensus, build trust and fraternity, the Ethiopian government has since recently been devising solutions to the long-heaped local, national and regional problems from which the nation is still suffering intermittently or recurrently.

Of the most preferable mechanisms to get the roots of all enmity, inconsistency and contradiction is the establishment of the National Dialogue Commission. This national entity is duty bound to devise myriads of methods to redress a range of peaceful aspects via overcoming multifaceted hurdles.

True, National Dialogue is an increasingly popular tool for conflict resolution and political transformation. It can also broaden debate regarding a country's trajectory beyond the usual elite decision makers, but a careful means has to be well employed in order not to be misused and manipulated by leaders to consolidate their power. The principles of the National Dialogue to strengthen unity, fraternity and social cohesion need to be well strengthened to help the nation and its people breathe a sigh of relief coming out of the shackles of multifarious problems born to disagreements and rivalry.

A National Dialogue on which Ethiopia has embarked to solve its problems is becoming increasingly a popular tool for conflict resolution and political transformation, of course. Over the past several months, National Dialogue has been proposed and/or carried out among a diverse group of segments of the society and revolved around a range of circumstances.

It is well recognized that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to solve every problem as handling, manipulating and managing it matters the most. The National Dialogue in Ethiopia will have a higher likelihood of success if it incorporates inclusion, transparency, public participation and far-reaching agenda, credible moderator and lucid procedures.

It is also important to make the current National Dialogue in Ethiopia fruitful by helping it have critical scrutiny of the necessary conditions like the issue of unity, human rights respect, equal treatment of citizens, wider public participation in the discussions and lucrative talks among participants. Ethiopians have to work in unison and listen to one another/each other as there might be a number of circumstances

under which a National Dialogue is likely to be inappropriate, but making the unthinkable possible is quite promising.

Unequivocally, widely publicized National Dialogue is instrumental in bringing about peaceful means to the fore as a tool for breaking political deadlock and transforming complex disagreements and conflicts, be they are irregular or recurring. Yes, the National Dialogue has continued to gain toehold.

The very important thing here is the process, initiated through political pacts, civil society activism, internationally-brokered peace agreements, or other mechanisms, has been used to address a wide variety of situations thereby coming up with peace and, and even lasting one, if possible within the shortest time possible.

No doubt, since the concept of an inclusive and holistic national conversation has gained popularity, the concept National Dialogue has been used to describe an increasingly heterogeneous set of processes.

Bearing in mind that the national inclusive public discussion held in different parts of the nation must be adapted to national contexts and changing conflict dynamics, a National Dialogue in Ethiopia has been holding should incorporate the concrete political transformation and peace shipment. Basically, an effective National Dialogue convenes a broad set of stakeholders for a deliberative process. All key interest groups should be invited to participate; including women, youth, and other traditionally excluded groups to maximize the dialogue's potential to address the real drivers of conflict and disagreements. As before the process begins, an inclusive, transparent, and consultative preparatory phase sets the foundation for a genuine National Dialogue, a range of segments of the society are being widely contacted.

For instance, women have been consulted and their role in peace building is told to help them discharge their respective duties and responsibilities. What regional states are doing in relation to this is a case in point. For instance, as to Benshangul Gumuz State, the National Dialogue is a process of rescuing Ethiopia and leaving the age-long difference and challenges that held the nation for too long behind. The National Dialogue allows women to take part and contribute their immense share in resolving Ethiopia's pressing problems in peaceful manner.

It is also said that women's National Dialogue participation would also enable them to speak their mind with the sense of belongingness about core national issues. It is crystal clear that women are mostly vulnerable during unrest and they have been subjected to various types of challenges including gender-based violence and sporadic skirmishes.

As engaging women at the National Dialogue is of paramount importance in addressing a range of problems, the

country has been employing dialog and consultative approaches to end sufferings and capitalizing on entire society's naturally gifted behavior of peaceful resolution.

As was learnt from Afar State Women, Social Affairs Bureau, too, the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission has put commendable efforts to embrace women at the National Dialogue since its establishment. Not only has the commission played a major role in changing the societal perception towards women's role in peace process but it has also stimulated communal sense of perception. As part of the community that is deeply harmed by conflicts, women need to get space to take part in the dialogue using their naturally gifted character of persuading people, indeed!

Undeniably, women need to engage in national issues with the sense of ownership. They also need to add their ideas which they believe would resolve the problem and myriads of disputes. Undoubtedly, through active participation, women have to engage in setting their agenda, ideas and perception for better realization of the National Dialogue. The initial decision on the shape and structure of a National Dialogue, particularly the youth and other segments of the society, who is invited to participate, can be as intensely political as the dialogue itself. The preparations are carefully and transparently undertaken by the commission that is inclusive of all major groups.

While Ethiopia's National Dialogue is generally heralded as a success, it is important to note that the dialog has to be inclusive of all stakeholders, groups and even individuals. The dialog has to entertain, transparency and public participation, too. Since a dialogue that includes all major interest groups would lose legitimacy if there are not sufficient opportunities for the public to remain informed about and feed into the dialogue, every citizen has to be well informed about the National Dialogue and close talks.

Besides, these methods are of significantly useful in bringing about peace and peaceful coexistence. Without a shadow of doubt, the broad public participation can be achieved by linking local dialogue processes to the National Dialogue, as well as through public consultations, regular outreach, and coverage in the media. Needless to state, the National Dialogue seeks to reach agreement on key issues facing a country, and fuel efforts geared towards boosting institutional reform, unity, cohesion, among others.

A National Dialogue's agenda should provide all participants with a substantive conversation around the most key issues. Most importantly, the National Dialogue deserves the attention of all citizenry as a tool with the potential to facilitate peaceful political transformation, but it is no magic bullet.

Even in the most successful instances,

National Dialogue is but one step along the long and arduous path of building a peaceful society. These processes consume enormous resources and political energy, sometimes resulting in the government neglecting its basic responsibility to govern and deliver services. National Dialogues can also veer off course or produce suggestions that are never implemented.

As the National Dialogue offers the opportunity for meaningful discussions about the underlying causes of conflict and how to effectively address these issues in a comprehensive approach, by extending the conversation about a country's destiny beyond the typical circle of citizenry, it has to be well capitalized on.

Certainly, Ethiopia is a country with a proud history of continuing statehood and a magnificent record of anti-colonial struggle against external domination and aggression. It is also an iconic nation for its perpetual legacy as a cradle of human civilization and the leadership of the Pan-African movement. Hence, this country has to solve its internal problems internally, indeed!

To that effect, the dialogue has to address the root causes of the conflict the country has been grappling with for over years now to deal with its painful scars in a sustainable way.

In a nutshell, since National Dialogue has been used to refer to process that is the antithesis of political transformation and peace, it needs to be thrown towards the means bolstering democratic process and lasting peace. It is likely that National Dialogue will continue to be a prevalent tool in the years to come.

It is also an increasingly popular technique for conflict resolution and political reform capable of extending discourse with regard to a country's trajectory beyond the archetypal influential decision-making bodies, and national conversations have been discussed and conducted over the past few months among a variety of citizens and viable settings.

This noble initiative needs to be as inclusive as possible in order to address the political differences underpinning the root causes of the violent confrontation and its consequent carnage. The intended dialogue for the national consensus in Ethiopia needs to be well consolidated and accompanied by a transitional, restorative justice strategy and means of social cohesion. No profound, lasting peace and reliable and trustworthy understanding can be garnered unless a just, heartily and accountable dialog is held.

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

# Editorial

## Keys to correct what went wrong!

Ethiopia is going all out to ensure stronger and more reliable economic growth and promote peace and stability. Over the past three or four years, the nation has been investing hugely and working untiringly to ensure peace and security throughout the country and accelerate the country's path to prosperity.

Mainly, following the government's homegrown economic reform program, concerted efforts have been made with the aim to lay the groundwork and advance the country's path to development and prosperity by investing hugely.

Equally important, it has done and is still setting the table for peaceful dialogue to discuss disagreements and differences and arrest conflicts through roundtable discussions.

In turn, regardless of the challenges, impressive growths are registered in all areas. It was made possible to expand infrastructure, undertake mega projects and advance the telecommunication, road, energy, tourism, agriculture, and health and education sectors.

In a similar manner, owing to the government's willingness to work together for the common good, it was made easier in bringing different actors with different views together.

However, despite the progresses made thus far, a number of challenges, primarily issues related to peace and security, are impacting the country's forward progress and impeding it not to advance at the desired level.

It is clear that resolving disagreements and inconveniences that have lingered for a long period is not a simple task and cannot be solved overnight. Rather, it is a more tiring undertaking that demands more time, energy and especially the readiness and commitment of all actors.

The government has openly shown commitment and made every possible effort to hold successful transitional justice and national dialogue processes with all parties to rectify Ethiopia's historical shortfalls prevent further conflicts and disagreements and even to avert them before they occur.

By establishing the National Dialogue Commission and putting in place transitional justice policy, the government is striving to address the challenges thereby creating national consensus, fostering unity and understanding, building lasting peace and facilitating Ethiopia's path to sustainable peace and development.

These days, both the transitional justice and National Dialogue processes of Ethiopia are receiving appreciation by many.

Interestingly, it has been hoped that the National Dialogue is instrumental to overcoming past grievances and setting Ethiopia on a better trajectory.

Both the initiatives are also getting support from development partners, international organizations, including the European Union, UN agencies, international actors, and different countries for the reason, both the National Dialogue and transitional justice are crucial mechanisms to correct historical wrongs, reach national consensus, and ensure peace and development by closing the chapter of disagreements and conflicts.

It is clear that National Dialogue and transitional justice are becoming important tools to sustain peace and security, promote justice and human rights and at the end of the day achieve lasting peace and development.

Mostly, countries where peace, security and stability are at risk due to emerging and persistent challenges, implementing National Dialogue and transitional justice is becoming practicable to end conflict, promote peace, security and development.

The African Union Agenda 2063 also underscores the importance of these ideals as part of the drive towards the 'Africa-We-Want'.

Currently, Ethiopia has laid the foundation and it is on the right track to hold a successful National Dialogue and transitional justice process. By making the initiatives a success, it will achieve lasting peace and sustainable development.

# Opinion

## Opportunities, challenges in allowing foreign wholesale and retailers

SOLOMON DIBABA

Allowing wholesale and retail sales for foreigners, as well as the operation of foreign banks in Ethiopia, can potentially offer several advantages for the country. However, one of the main reasons for not allowing the participation of foreigners in the country's whole sale and retail trade as well as banking sectors is the fear of competition as many of the local merchants and companies do not have strong capacity and experience as foreign ones.

Hence, while allowing foreigners to take advantage of their experiences and capital, it is also important to make sure that they operate under a system that enables fair play between the local and foreign ones.

Allowing foreign wholesale and retail sale as well as foreign banks into Ethiopia could bring various challenges, including the following.

Foreign companies with significant resources might dominate the market, squeezing out local businesses and potentially leading to monopolistic practices. This could stifle competition and innovation in the local economy.

Heavy reliance on foreign wholesale and retail chains could make Ethiopia economically dependent on external entities. This dependency could become problematic if there are fluctuations in global markets or if foreign companies decide to withdraw from the country.

Introducing foreign retail chains might lead to a homogenization of culture and consumption patterns, potentially eroding local traditions and customs. This could have social implications and impact local identity.

Local businesses, especially smaller retailers and wholesalers, might struggle to compete with the resources and efficiency of foreign companies, leading to job losses and increased unemployment rates.

If foreign banks are allowed to operate in Ethiopia, there is a risk of capital flight, where profits earned by foreign banks are repatriated out of the country rather than reinvested locally. This could worsen Ethiopia's balance of payments and hinder economic development.

Regulating foreign wholesale, retail, and banking sectors requires robust legal frameworks and effective oversight mechanisms to ensure fair competition, consumer protection, and financial stability. Developing and enforcing such regulations may pose challenges for Ethiopian authorities.

The entry of foreign companies could exacerbate income inequality if wealth generated from these businesses disproportionately benefits foreign investors or a small segment of the local population, widening the gap between the rich and the poor.

The influx of foreign businesses may strain existing infrastructure such as transportation networks, utilities, and urban services, leading to congestion, increased demand for resources, and potential environmental degradation.

Local retailers and wholesalers may resist the entry of foreign competitors, leading to political and social tensions. This resistance could manifest through protests, lobbying efforts, or attempts to circumvent regulations.

Allowing extensive foreign presence in key economic sectors could compromise Ethiopia's sovereignty and control over its economy. It may raise concerns about undue influence from foreign entities in policymaking and national economic decisions.

To mitigate potential challenges associated with allowing foreign wholesale and retail investors and

banks in Ethiopia, the government can implement several measures:

It can develop a robust regulatory framework to govern the operations of foreign wholesale and retail investors and banks. This framework should include clear rules and regulations regarding ownership limits, licensing requirements, consumer protection, labor standards, and competition policy.

Implement policies that promote local participation and ownership in the retail and banking sectors. This could include requiring foreign investors to partner with local businesses or institutions, or setting quotas for local ownership in joint ventures.

The government needs to take measures to protect small and informal businesses from unfair competition from large foreign retailers. This could include setting limits on the size and location of foreign retail outlets, providing support and incentives for small businesses, and promoting local entrepreneurship.

In addition, it is important to promote linkages between foreign retailers and local producers to support domestic supply chains and value-added activities. This could involve facilitating partnerships between foreign retailers and local suppliers, providing technical assistance and training to local producers, and promoting locally-made products.

Strengthening consumer protection measures to safeguard the interests of consumers and ensure fair competition in the retail market could include regulations on pricing, product quality, advertising practices, and dispute resolution mechanisms.

Enforcing labor standards and workplace regulations to protect the rights and welfare of workers in the retail and banking sectors is equally important. This could include regulations on working conditions, wages, benefits, and employee rights, as well as mechanisms for monitoring and enforcement.

Strengthen prudential regulations and supervision of the banking sector to maintain financial stability and mitigate risks associated with foreign bank operations. This could include requirements for adequate capitalization, liquidity management, risk management practices, and stress testing.

Encouraging technology transfer and skills development initiatives to ensure that local workers and businesses can benefit from the presence of foreign investors and banks is useful to further develop the economy of the country. This could involve training programs, knowledge sharing initiatives, and partnerships between foreign and local institutions.

Fostering dialogue and collaboration among government agencies, businesses, civil society organizations, labor unions, and other stakeholders to ensure that policies and measures are responsive to the needs and concerns of all relevant parties is useful. Transparent and inclusive decision-making processes can help build trust and consensus around policy reforms.

By implementing these measures, Ethiopia can maximize the benefits of foreign investment in the wholesale, retail, and banking sectors while mitigating potential challenges and ensuring that the interests of local businesses, workers, and consumers are protected.

To mitigate these challenges, Ethiopia would need to carefully balance the benefits of foreign investment and competition with the protection of local businesses, cultural heritage, and economic sovereignty. This would require strategic planning, effective regulation, and targeted support for domestic enterprises.

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The Ethiopian Herald

# Business & Economy

## Safeguarding small, medium enterprises from finance deficit

BY BACHA ZEWDIE

In the existing financial and banking system in the country, banks provide credit services to large enterprises and industries that are able to provide collateral. On the other hand, microfinance institutions provide credit services to small and medium enterprises that have limited capacity and financial availability. Or in other words, they offer small loans. Therefore, while banks support investors and high enterprise that can provide collateral via lending money; microfinance institutions support small and medium enterprises in the same way.

In this center, a World Bank study indicates that neither the banks nor the microfinance institutions will lend or support them though the small and medium enterprises that are playing a major role in the country's transition from agriculture led to industry led economy and the growth of the country's per capita production because they do not have the collateral to get loans; because they do not meet the banks' requirements as a result of the criteria the banks set for giving loans are difficult; and because of microfinance institutions have limited capacity to lend to these institutions.

Thus, The establishment of the Small and Medium Finance Project in 2017 was with the aim of increasing production and productivity by supporting these neglected "missing middle" small and medium enterprises with financing, business development, project preparation and financial management training, Yemenzwork Grafe, Coordinator of the Small and Medium Enterprise Finance Project in Ethiopia Enterprise Development, said.

Yemenzwork said; "There are three institutions that mainly implement the purpose of the project". The first implementing institution is Ethiopian Enterprise Development. Since this institution manages and supports, etc., small and medium enterprises, the coordination office of the project has been organized under the institution. As a result, apart from the project is organized under the institution; it is going down to the administrative level of the Ministry of Industry. Support to fill the gap is provided from the state to the district level based on inquiries: Where are the small and medium enterprises? What is their shortcoming (market connection, financial, manpower and financial management, technical and professional deficiency)? What is the obstacle to their growth? etc. Because if the problems the training needs are not solved, the enterprise will not be effective or profitable. It will not grow just by getting money or credit.

The second operator is the Development Bank of Ethiopia. The bank will take the money received from the World Bank and



Financing small and medium enterprises enable them become effective in the nation's economic progress

**The main problem of the enterprises not getting a loan to start working is because they cannot get collateral. In order to solve this problem, it is facilitated for the enterprises to get equipment rental loans through the Ethiopian Development Bank**

other international financial institutions in the name of the project and distribute it to small and medium enterprises through various loan options. The other implementer of the project is the National Bank of Ethiopia. As this bank shapes the policies of banks, controls their procedures and manages banks in general; it creates a favorable credit environment for small and medium enterprises.

One of the most convenient conditions is a communication network or network where the information is accessible to the banks and micro finances while registering their collateral. By doing this, banks and microfinance institutions have gained confidence and enabled them to provide loans to small and medium enterprises.

Yemenzwork pointed out that the project focuses on supporting small and medium enterprises engaged in the manufacturing sector, agricultural product processing, construction input production and the tourism sector. The main problem of the enterprises not getting a loan to start working is because they cannot get collateral. In order to solve this problem, it is facilitated for the enterprises to get equipment rental loans through the Ethiopian Development Bank, which is implementing the purpose of the project.

According to the proposals submitted by the enterprises, the feasibility will be studied and the equipment will be purchased and given to them. They repay the loan while using the machine as a rental. After paying off the debt, the equipment will eventually become the private property of the enterprise. Accordingly, when the bank lends and the enterprise borrows, there is no question of collateral. Therefore, the project has solved the bottleneck of the alarmed guarantee of the enterprises.

There are two windows where the Ethiopian Development Bank provides loans to enterprises. The first is the capital goods lease finance window. In this window they offer direct and indirect equipment rental loans. While the direct equipment rental loan is given from 10 to 30 million Birr through the head office and branch offices of the Development Bank of Ethiopia; below this, revolving loans starting from 2.5 million Birr are provided by regional equipment rental companies to small and medium enterprises. These organizations provide loans with the money they get from the development bank. Therefore, through the equipment rental loan window, enterprises have the opportunity to obtain both direct and indirect loans published every 15 days in cooperation with Ethiopian Enterprise Development.

The second window in which the bank offers loans is the working capital loan window. If the enterprises have only equipment and no operating funds, they will not be able to start operations. So they have to get operational money. The bank will take the money received from the World Bank and other international financial institutions in the name of the project and provide it to banks and microfinance through the second window.

Banks and microfinance institutions also lend to enterprises to operate. Based on this, it is a project designed with the belief that "enterprises will receive equipment rental loans on the one hand and operational financing on the other hand to continue their work in an efficient and effective manner." Yemenzwork said that it is a project that aims to solve the basic problems of small and medium enterprises and to support them in all fields.

# Art & Culture

## Decoding messages encoded in Gondar's grooving style

BY DAGMAWIT HADEGO

My first exposure to Gondar befell during my undergraduate studies at the University of Gondar. This initial encounter with the city left a profound impression on me, as I discovered a place of immense beauty and cultural depth.

During my exploration, I delved into Gondar's rich past, discovering local folklore and witnessing vibrant cultural expressions. This experience deepened my appreciation for Ethiopia's diverse heritage and the enduring legacy of its imperial history.

Gondar city was founded by Emperor Fasiledes in 1636 and holds a pivotal place in Ethiopia's rich history. There are various legends about the foundation of the city. However, legend has it that the emperor's choice to establish Gondar as a capital was influenced by its strategic location and fertile surroundings, fostering the city's growth as both a commercial hub and a center of religious importance.

The era from Fasiledes' reign through the mid-19th century is commonly referred to as the Gondarian period. This period is distinguished by impressive architectural accomplishments, including the iconic castles, palaces, and churches that remain standing today as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

During this period, Gondar flourished as a vibrant cultural and political center, attracting artisans, traders, and religious scholars from across the region. The city's architectural legacy reflects a unique blend of indigenous Ethiopian styles. This period represents a significant chapter in Ethiopian history, displaying the country's artistic and architectural achievements during a time of political stability and cultural exchange. Today, Gondar's historic sites continue to captivate visitors, offering a window into Ethiopia's rich past and the enduring legacy of its imperial heritage.

One notable aspect of Gondar's cultural heritage is its traditional folk dances. The most renowned is *Eskesta*, a rhythmic dance originating from the Amhara region.

Author Hailemariam Ephram defines *Eskestain* in his book "Dib Anbesa" as a dance characterized by the graceful up-and-down motion of the shoulders, emphasizing fluidity and expression through precise movements.

This dance style is deeply rooted in Ethiopian culture and history, serving as a means of storytelling, celebration, and communal expression. Its significance extends beyond mere movement, embodying the spirit and identity of Ethiopian folk culture.

Hailemariam Ephram's definition captures the essence of *Eskesta* as a dynamic and engaging dance that conveys emotions and



narratives through the nuanced articulation of the body, particularly the shoulders. The rhythmic swaying and controlled movements of *Eskesta* reflect the cultural richness and vibrancy of Gondar and its people.

During *Eskesta* performances, dancers often adorn themselves in traditional attire that reflects Gondar's cultural heritage. These adornments carry personal and collective meanings, conveying stories, beliefs, and social status within Ethiopian society.

Men typically wear full-length garments like JANO or JUBA, sometimes paired with shorts and knee-high socks, creating a distinctive and dignified appearance. These adornments symbolize the warriors, farmers, the royal families during the Gondarian period, and other routines of their ancestors.

On the other hand, female dancers' costumes feature the iconic Gondar dress, the "Tilf," a beautifully embroidered garment that exemplifies Ethiopian craftsmanship and artistic expression. Hairdos, such as "Shuruba," incorporate culturally significant design. This paired with intricately styled beads, and other adornments like cultural jewelries and accessories, carry deep cultural symbolism of their wisdom, beauty.

This folkdance choreography consists of various types that can be broadly categorized into two main groups: men's and women's dances. The women's dances specifically portray ideals of feminine virtue, wisdom, culinary skills and historical narratives, often reflecting the characteristics of a "good woman" as perceived within the community.

These performances not only celebrate the rich history of female warrior but also embody the cultural wisdom and values that passed down through generations.

Conversely, men's dances frequently depict themes of hunting, bravery, and warrior traditions. These performances often emphasize strength, agility, and prowess, showcasing skills necessary for hunting or warfare.

Folk dances often draw inspiration from nature, incorporating movements that reflect the behaviors of animals, the growth of plants, and the rhythms of the natural world. These dances encapsulate timeless wisdom, cultural narratives, and environmental consciousness through the artful interpretation of nature's wonders.

Among this "Doro weha siteta" and "sekesekek" are two prominent folk dances that intricately mimic the movements and behaviors of animals within their respective cultural contexts. "Doro weha siteta" is a captivating performance that symbolizes the action of a chicken drinking water. Female dancers skillfully portray the natural behavior of a hen through graceful and expressive movements. As part of the dance, the dancers elegantly crouch down, embodying the posture of a hen, and delicately gesture as if drinking water, showcasing the artistry and storytelling embedded in this traditional choreography. On the other hand, "sekesekek" is a traditional dance that beautifully captures the essence of great white pelicans as they hunt and consume fish. This captivating performance involves

female dancers emulating the graceful movements of the pelican, portraying the bird's hunting technique with precision and artistry. Through rhythmic gestures and choreographed sequences, "sekesekek" transports viewers into the world of nature and wildlife, reflecting the community's deep connection to their environment and the animal kingdom.

In addition to this there are other well-known female dances in the Gondar society such as "Desek" "Qebe menat" "Enzert" "Manterter" "guch guch" and "Wancha lekkeka" to illustrate

The other kind of dancing is "Guch Guch" dance; the dancers showcase a dynamic and lively expression of movement. Either they squat in a circle formation, using synchronized gestures and footwork to convey cultural narratives or rhythmic patterns, or they might walk rapidly while forming a circular pattern.

Moreover, the dance style "Wancha Lekkeka" embodies the joyful and rhythmic celebration of traditional drinks like "Tella" and "Tej" using a chalice. During this dance, female dancers gracefully place their hands on their hips and sway their necks gently from side to side, mimicking the motion of drinking from a chalice. The movements are fluid and deliberate, symbolizing the enjoyment and communal spirit associated with sharing these beverages. The dancers' gestures evoke a sense of conviviality and relaxation, as if savoring the rich flavors of the drinks and embracing the festive atmosphere.

Choreographies like "Mentek," "Anbesa Geday" and "Abarosh" exemplify the valor, hunting prowess, and warrior traditions of the community, predominantly performed by men. "Anbesa Geday" stands out as a dance that vividly portrays the ancestral hunting techniques with swords, spears, and bows.

In "Anbesa Geday," dancers skillfully mimic the hunting scenes of their forebears, displaying precise movements that depict the art of wielding weapons for hunting and combat. The choreography unfolds like a visual narrative, illustrating the agility, strength, and strategy employed in traditional hunting practices.

The other dance known as "Abarosh," dancers perform dynamic movements that simulate running or jumping, characterized by coordinated motions of the limbs. Specifically, the dancers synchronize their right hand with their left leg and their left hand with their right leg, creating a compelling visual impression of motion and agility.

Gondar's historic landmarks, cultural traditions, and vibrant folk dances provide a captivating glimpse into Ethiopia's rich past and the enduring legacy of its imperial heritage. These dances not only entertain but also serve as a living testament to the community's identity, wisdom, and artistic expression.

# Global Affairs

## We should aim to be at peace with nature

In a world faced with habitat loss and species extinction, climate change, and pollution, it's crucial that countries develop their national action plans and create a society that lives in harmony with nature, says David Cooper, Acting Executive Secretary of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), in an exclusive interview with IPS.

And in a year where more than 4 billion people across the globe are expected to participate in elections, Cooper believes that politicians should put biodiversity on their manifestos.

Since taking the reins from the previous Executive Director, Elizabeth Mrema, Cooper has been at the forefront of steering the CBD towards the implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework.

Later this year, world leaders will gather in Cali, Colombia for the 16th Biodiversity Convention of the Parties (COP16) slated for October 21 to November 1, 2024 for which preparations are currently underway.

Cooper gives insight into the core issues that will be on the top of the COP16 agenda, the current status of biodiversity finance, including the newly operationalized biodiversity fund, the upcoming meetings of the scientific and technical bodies of the CBD, the current status of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAP) and what is likely to unfold in the coming months in Digital Sequence Information (DSI).

David Cooper, Acting Executive Secretary of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

### Biodiversity finance: On track but at slow pace

The UN Biodiversity Convention aims to mobilize at least USD 20 billion per year by 2025 and at least USD 30 billion per year by 2030 for biodiversity-related funding from all sources, including the public and private sectors.

However, the current situation with biodiversity funding shows that while progress is happening, it's not fast enough. Some countries and groups are trying hard to give more money to projects that help nature, but overall, it's still below expectations, and there are unfilled promises, Cooper acknowledges.

"We need to see a serious road map," Cooper says, "All countries, in particular the donor country community, have to see how we are going to achieve at least that USD 20 billion by 2025 because that's imminent."

He called on big donors to honor their commitments.

"It's really important that the big donors who promise money actually follow through and give the money they said they would. We need everyone to work together to make sure there's enough money to protect our plants, animals, and the places they live," Cooper says. "Certainly, we need to see all countries put efforts behind all of the goals and targets of the framework and that, of course, includes those on financial resources."

Cooper welcomed the decision by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to establish a new fund, the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund. He said the CBD secretariat was working closely with Carlos Manuel Rodriguez, the GEF CEO, and his team.

"We then saw a number of contributions to that fund coming. The contribution from Canada is a significant one of 200 million Canadian dollars. Other significant donations came from Germany,



Credit: USDA

Bee-harvesting in an urban setting. Preparations are underway for the 16th Biodiversity Convention of the Parties (COP16) in Cali, Valle del Cauca.

Spain, Japan, and most recently, Luxembourg. Actually, the contribution from Luxembourg, if we look at its pro rata, given the size of the Luxembourg economy, is also quite generous, even though it's only USD 7 million in total."

### National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs)

It's not only about funding, Cooper says, but countries showing their commitment to their agreements, including developing NBSAPs. He acknowledged that very few countries had submitted so far.

"It's only a few countries so far, and Spain, Japan, China, France, Hungary, and Ireland have submitted their NBSAPs, as well as the European Union," says Cooper.

While he is optimistic that all the countries will develop their targets, he recognizes that it's a complex process.

"I think most countries are in the process of developing their national targets, which is the first thing they're supposed to do. But this is a process that is also supposed to engage all the different sectors of the economy and all the different parts of society, with the engagement of local communities, indigenous peoples, businesses, and so on."

The CBD supports the countries through the complexities.

"The developing countries in particular have been supported through the Global Environment Facility. We've also been organizing a number of regional dialogues so that countries can share their experience as they move forward," Cooper says.

At COP15, it was decided that all countries should submit their NBSAPs, if possible, before COP16.

"If they're not able to submit their full NBSAPs by then, then at least they should provide their updated national targets. So, we do expect many, many countries to have progressed on their NBSAPs by COP16. Immediately prior to COP16, there will be another meeting of the subsidiary body on implementation to also take stock of where we are on that."

### COP16: What's In, What's Out

The core focus of CBD COP16 is likely to revolve around the adoption and implementation of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. This framework sets out the global targets and goals for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use for the next decade and beyond. Key aspects of the framework may include targets related to halting biodiversity loss, promoting sustainable resource management, enhancing ecosystem resilience, and ensuring equitable sharing of the benefits derived from biodiversity.

"I think I can highlight four key areas for COP 16," says Cooper. "The first is that we have to see, and we have to have demonstrated progress in terms of implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework. That means national targets are set. That means NBSAPs developed in at least a majority of countries. That means funds are flowing, which means, as I said before, a credible path towards this USD 20 billion by 2025 target. It also means the Global Biodiversity Framework Fund should be receiving more funds and supporting more projects."

The second core issue will be the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the use of Digital Sequence Information (DSI) on genetic resources. There was an agreement made at COP15 to establish this mechanism, but no details were fleshed out at that time, so those details are now being negotiated in an intergovernmental working group.

"Of course, the establishment of such a mechanism with a fund would give another major boost to the Convention because it would bring in another source of funding."

The third area would be finance, he says.

"The fourth area that I would highlight is the need to further strengthen the role of indigenous peoples and local communities as key actors."

He also points out that there's a number of other issues, such as the issue of biodiversity and health and synthetic biology, that need to be managed, including looking at a risk assessment and risk management for, for instance, gene-edited mosquitoes.

"They've determined that the theme of the COP will be peace with nature, which is a broad theme that will include many, many issues," he reveals.

### Plastic Pollution Treaty and CBD's Role

The fourth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-4) on plastic pollution in April 2024 at the Shaw Center in Ottawa, Canada, aims to develop an internationally legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, to end plastic pollution by 2040.

Ending plastic pollution is also one of the biodiversity targets, Cooper says, adding that the CBD is actively involved in the logistical organization of INC-4.

"Also, the reduction of waste from plastics and pollution from plastics is one of the elements of target 7 of the Kunming Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. So, we are seeing the success of INC-4 negotiations as hugely important for the implementation of the Framework," he says.

### What to watch out for between now and COP16

Although all eyes will be on the COP16 negotiations, there are a number of global events taking place in the next few months that will contribute to the agenda and determine the level of the world's preparedness for the conference.

"The most important ones are obviously the SBSTTA (Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical, and Technological Advice) and the SBI (Subsidiary Body on Implementation), then this working group on Digital Sequence Information that will take place in August," Cooper says.

Like the SBI, SBSTTA is a subsidiary body established under the CBD. While the SBI specifically assists in reviewing progress in the implementation of the Convention and identifies obstacles to its implementation, among other functions, SBSTTA plays a crucial role in ensuring that decisions made under the CBD are informed by the best available scientific evidence and technical expertise.

"Then we have the G7 and G20 processes coming up, which are important processes to show leadership. The CBD COP itself will be followed by the COPs of climate change and desertification, making the linkage between these. Also, we expect Colombia and the indigenous peoples will host just before COP, a pre-cop focusing on indigenous peoples and local communities and their roles," Cooper says.

Finally, as a record 64 countries across the world hold their elections this year to elect a new national government, does this provide a unique opportunity to speak about biodiversity and should biodiversity, like climate change, be made an election issue?

"Definitely," says Cooper.

"If we look at many of the extreme events that people suffered from, particularly last year, whether these be fires, wildfires, droughts, storms, or floods, you know, these are largely attributed by the media to climate change. Climate change is increasing the probability and severity of these events, but these events are also happening because of ecosystem degradation because we haven't been managing biodiversity and ecosystems well. So, I think we all have an opportunity to make this message and these links clearer. Politicians have a particular responsibility to do so, and I hope more of them will do so as these various elections in various parts of the world pan out."

SOURCE: INTER PRESS SERVICE



# Law & Politics

## Spreading development through IDA financing

BY EYUEL KIFLU

The International Development Association (IDA), an organization that provides development financing and cross-sector support to address global challenges and enhance development outcomes, held its summit in Nairobi, Kenya. As a part of the World Bank Group, the IDA offers financial and technical assistance to the world's poorest countries.

The summit focused on highlighting the crucial priority areas for development financing in Africa to IDA donors and other partners. The Office of the Prime Minister, Ethiopia, urged donors to consider increasing funding for the IDA21 cycle.

On April 19, 19 African leaders and 32 finance ministers gathered to discuss ambitious economic reforms aimed at accelerating the continent's development. Co-hosted by the government of Kenya and the World Bank, the summit comes at a critical moment for Africa as it seeks to make significant strides in development.

Africa is making progress in utilizing its human and natural resources for development, and the IDA plays a crucial role in fuelling this progress. The IDA provides support to fragile and conflict-affected states in Africa, helping them rebuild institutions, restore basic services, and promote peace and stability. Given the current global crises, Africa faces significant challenges in its development, making the support of the IDA even more important.

Ethiopia stands out as one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa, setting an example for others. However, the country faces challenges that hinder its development, such as conflict, job creation, and macroeconomic reforms. During the International Development Association (IDA21) Heads of State Summit, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed expressed Ethiopia's commitment to overcoming these hurdles and reducing poverty.

The premiere addressing in the summit and urged the IDA to enhance its financial capacity and funding models, with a particular emphasis on increased support for crisis preparedness, response, and recovery. He also highlighted Ethiopia's resilience in the face of various challenges, including climate change, geopolitical tension, and rising global living costs.

The prime minister stated, "The Ethiopian government has navigated structural and macroeconomic reforms, focusing our attention on macro financial stability, productivity enhancement, and creating a favourable investment environment." He also emphasized the importance of dialogue and reconciliation in achieving peace.

Prime Minister Abiy outlined Ethiopia's goals, including the creation of over 2

million new jobs, accessible education, youth empowerment, universal energy access, digital transformation, and environmental stewardship through initiatives like the Green Legacy Initiative.

Collaboration and addressing challenges together are crucial for relieving the burdens faced by Africans, especially the youth who have migrated from the continent searching for good work and wages.

According to IDA report Africa is recovering from recent crises and holds tremendous potential with its young population, rapidly growing cities, abundant natural resources, and entrepreneurial spirit. Investment is essential, and the IDA has proven to be a reliable partner in Africa's development, providing grants, favourable loans, and supporting the creation of a skilled and healthy workforce as well as job-creating enterprises. Over 70% of IDA's resources flow to Africa, benefiting 39 out of the 75 nations it assists.

Recognizing the vital role of the IDA in Africa's transformation, the summit witnessed the establishment of a strong alliance among global youth, business, civil society, and leaders. This alliance advocates for increased donor support ahead of the upcoming IDA replenishment (IDA21), reaffirming its commitment to a robust, inclusive, and sustainable recovery. Kenyan President Dr. William Ruto expressed the leaders' impatience for change and their determination to transform the continent amid significant opportunities.

The IDA21, the 21st replenishment round since 1960, aims to create jobs, boost prosperity, combat climate change, preserve biodiversity, build resilient societies, accelerate digitalization, and develop the necessary infrastructure to support economic growth. It also places a special focus on improving the lives of women and youth, considering that 462 million people in Africa live in extreme poverty.

The summit's leaders issued a communiqué reaffirming their unwavering commitment to strengthen governance, unlock the potential of the private sector, generate employment, mobilize domestic resources, fulfil climate change commitments, prioritize energy and digital access, and enhance resilience to climate change and conflict.

In addition to urging increased pledges from the international donor community, World Bank President Ajay Banga reaffirmed the Bank's support for Africa's development. He stated, "We are united by a shared vision for the future of Africa a continent rich in diversity, culture, and potential, thanks to its young people and natural resources." The IDA has been a reliable partner in Africa's development, and this summit represents the collective dedication to driving progress. However, more efforts are needed from the IDA, the World Bank Group, governments, and the

business sector to achieve these goals.

Overall, the summit brought together 19 African heads of state in a historic display of unity, committing to focus on development aspirations across the continent. This ambitious agenda aims to significantly improve lives and create new opportunities, with the International Development Association (IDA) serving as a key pillar for success.

Beyond mere declarations, the summit witnessed the birth of a significant partnership a coalition joining civil society, foundations, the private sector, and young people. This coalition will champion a robust and ambitious replenishment of IDA's resources, driving Africa's development engine forward.

It is clear that in the face of an increasingly interconnected world grappling with a myriad of crises, the importance of unity and global cooperation cannot be overstated. Africa, the continent most significantly affected by global challenges, remains resilient and determined to confront these obstacles head-on. With the support of organizations such as IDA and other global initiatives, Africa is making strides in tackling both human-made and natural crises that have far-reaching implications.

The continent has long been a focal point for various crises, including armed conflicts, droughts, poverty, and disease outbreaks. However, the effects of these challenges are not confined to the continent alone. The impact of these crises reverberates beyond Africa's borders, affecting the global community as a whole. So it must recognize the challenge is not only surrounded in a single area.

Africa's vulnerability to crises extends beyond those that are self-inflicted. The continent is often disproportionately affected by global challenges like climate change that come from the global North. It is a stark reminder that solutions to these challenges must be pursued collectively, with developed nations acknowledging their responsibility to support those most affected.

As the global community collectively faces the urgent need for sustainable development and the mitigation of climate change, working in unity is more critical than ever. Africa's resilience and determination to confront challenges head-on serve as an inspiration, demonstrating the continent's commitment to a better future. By continuing to support initiatives like the IDA and fostering global solidarity, the international community can stand alongside Africa in its pursuit of a brighter and more prosperous future.

By recognizing Africa's vulnerabilities and working together in unity, the global community can contribute to a more equitable and resilient world, where the burdens of crises are shared, and the potential for collective progress are realized.

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**Africa's resilience and determination to confront challenges head-on serve as an inspiration, demonstrating the continent's commitment to a better future. By continuing to support initiatives like the IDA and fostering global solidarity, the international community can stand alongside Africa in its pursuit of a brighter and more prosperous future**

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# Planet Earth

## Capitalizing on regional cooperation to harness Nile Basin

BY GIRMACHEW GASHAW

Cooperation is the best alternative for Nile Riparian countries, in their endeavor to exploit and get the most benefit out of their resources. The resources that allow them to tie one another should never be a point of contention; they would rather be a cause of cooperation and development.

Indeed, these countries have established the Nile Basin Initiative, a regional intergovernmental partnership that came into being on February 22, 1999, to manage and develop the shared Nile Basin water resources in a cooperative manner, share substantial socio-economic benefits, and promote regional peace and security.

Before the commencement of this initiative, no one was allowed to raise questions related to equitable water utilization as Egypt and Sudan allocated water quotas, presenting the colonial treaty as a justified reason. Amazingly, Ethiopia, a country that contributes 86 percent of the Nile River, and other riparian countries do not have a viable right to use or build any projects using the river.

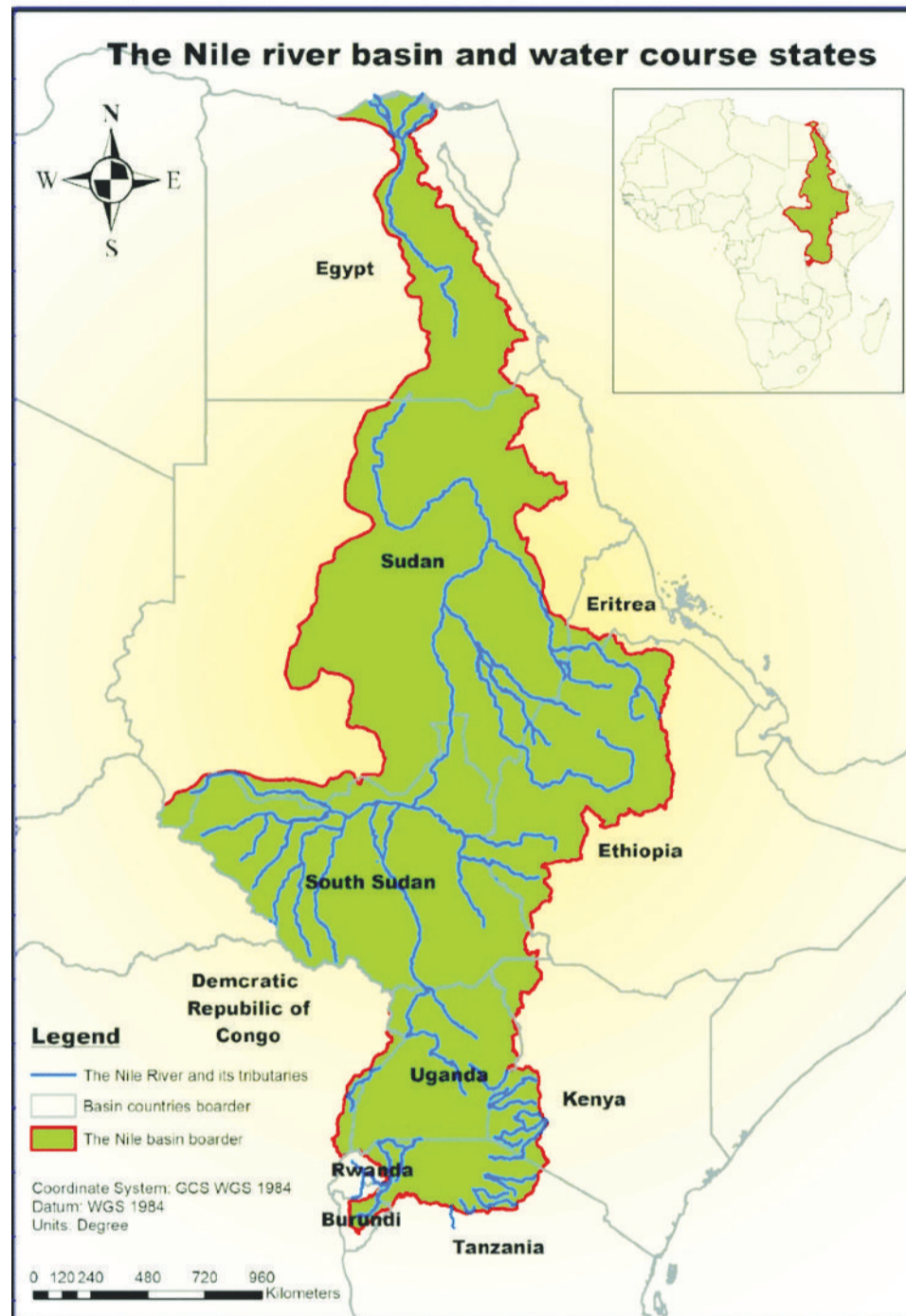
Over the past 13 years, the government of Ethiopia has been making relentless efforts for negotiations based on fair use among the Nile basin countries, besides building the dam. As the dam is built on a trans boundary river, extensive discussions and negotiations were held with the downstream countries.

So far, Ethiopia has been discussing the position of fair use of water in the negotiations. However, countries that use the Nile water, devising their own share, such as Egypt and Sudan, were arguing with the extreme idea that only we should use it. However, the position of these countries is against the international principle of fair utilization of waters.

During the negotiations, Ethiopia has done a great job in informing downstream countries that the dam will not cause significant harm and that it has full rights to use the water as the sourcing country for the river. The negotiations had gone through many conditions. Ethiopia has reached the final construction stage of the GERD without stopping the negotiations.

Next, the GERD should be used properly. It is necessary to generate an income by selling the electricity produced from the dam to neighboring countries for domestic consumption. If there is a demand for electricity on the Egyptian side, the door to Ethiopia remains open. It is good to strengthen the existing economic ties for mutual benefit.

Since November 2019, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt have held dozens of trilateral talks on the filling of the reservoir and the operation of the dam, which were supported and attended by the US and the World Bank



as “observers.”

As they are sticking to the 1929 and 1959 colonial treaties, Egypt and Sudan have not agreed with Ethiopia on an equitable Nile water share yet. Upstream states believe a new agreement must replace the colonial treaties, whereas Egypt insists that any agreement must recognize the colonial treaties and those they continue to be binding. On the other hand, Ethiopia asserts that there is no legal ground to stop Addis Ababa from equitably using the Nile waters.

Later on, some Nile riparian countries come up with the text of the Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA), which outlines principles, rights, and obligations for cooperative management and development of the Nile Basin water resources, and put their signatures on it. *Article 14 of the CFA requires the basin states to work together to ensure that all states achieve and sustain water security.*

For the CFA to come into force, it needs to be signed and ratified by at least six (6) riparian states. To date, it has been signed by six countries (Ethiopia, Tanzania,

Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, and Burundi) and ratified by four, i.e., Ethiopia, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Uganda.

Citing Burundi having signed the CFA during his tenure, Burundian Ambassador to Ethiopia Willy Nyamitwe recently told *The Ethiopian Herald* that this is a good move between Ethiopia and Burundi since we are sharing the same view in terms of sharing Nile waters. We need a Nile to benefit all Africans and the world as well. So, we are sharing the same views, he added.

The Nile Riparian countries should not only talk about equitable water shares; they should also talk about how they can sustainably use their resources, especially the Trans Boundary Rivers like the Nile. If they agreed on that, they also engaged in various environmental development tasks, as some of them are now engaged in.

Florence Grace Adongo is the Executive Director of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) Secretariat. She recently told the local media that the national environmental programs of the Nile riparian countries have been greatly contributing to the sustainability of the basin. She said that as environmental sustainability is one of the key pillars,

NBI has continued to push those riparian countries to reinforce the program at the national level.

“What we are doing is encouraging countries at the national level to continue their environmental re-afforestation and restoration programs. Ethiopia, for its commendable strides, has been executing various environmental programs, including the Green Legacy Initiative. “Ethiopia has done very well, and we appreciate that,” she said.

Similarly, other countries, for example, Kenya, Uganda, and Burundi, among others, have annual targets as well. Praising the efforts of countries at the national level, which are hugely impacting the sustainability of the Nile Basin, she said that we would want to appreciate nations for their contribution.

The Nile Basin Initiative secretariat is demanding resource mobilization to implement extra projects for the basin. As the secretariat continues to reiterate its commitment, we are also looking into resource mobilization and having projects going forward, Adongo further noted.

Pinpointing key pillars to manage and sustainably develop the common Nile Basin, the executive director indicated that some of them do not attract resources quite easily like others. “We are adapting an integrated approach. If we are working in one basin, for example, developing hydropower, we should also look at the catchment. If the catchment of that basin is not maintained, then the infrastructure that we have built will not be sustainable.”

Regarding the role of NBI in over 25 years of engagement, she said it served as the platform for dialogue, a catalyst for change, fostering regional integration, enhancing competitiveness, and unlocking the Nile Basin’s immense potential for Africa and beyond. NBI covers 10 percent of the African continent and is home to almost a quarter of the continent’s population.

In spite of their immense potential for massive development, Nile Basin countries face key development challenges related to water security, energy security, food security, and vulnerability to the environmental shocks that are rising from the negative impacts of climate change.

Acknowledging the aforementioned challenges, Adongo revealed that no county can manage them unilaterally. Therefore, she stressed that countries across the Nile Basin should come together to find a common solution for such common problems.

Unless the riparian countries manage their resources perfectly, they will pay a price, as any resource has its own limitations. Thus, we should begin water conservation tasks now and then parallel to wisely make use of the water for the benefit of all.