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Integrating Africa via leadership dev't

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

ADDIS ABABA-The African Leadership Excellence Academy (AFLEX) said it has been working to support the vision of African integration through creating visionary leaders with nearly similar leadership attitude and competency.

Approached by *The Ethiopian Herald*, AFLEX President Zadig Abreha stated that the academy has been working to create a platform to support the vision of African integration through leadership development training. The training aims to bring shared growth and development in the continent.

“In a bid to realize African Solutions for African Problems, AFLEX has been exerting efforts to expand the training and other services to other African countries.”

African countries have a keen interest to work with the AFLEX to excel leadership development via different training services. In this regard, the academy is working to make this initiative come true, he added.

Zadig further noted that the academy

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Zadig Abreha



Diriba Kuma

Authority working to address livestock export setbacks

BY YESUF ENDRIS

ADDIS ABABA- The Agriculture Authority said it has been partnering with relevant government agencies to overcome pressing challenges in Ethiopia's livestock export.

Speaking to *The Ethiopian Herald*, Authority Director General Diriba Kuma stated that low quality in livestock vaccines and medicines are significantly affecting the livestock export. In addition, contraband and absence of

See Authority working ... Page 3

Representatives emphasize women's Nat'l Dialogue contribution

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

ADDIS ABABA- Maximizing women's participation in the National Dialogue would ensure their role in resolving Ethiopia's age-old and contentious problems amicably, women representatives said.

Accordingly, Benshangul Gumz State Council's Deputy Spokesperson Alemnesh Yibas told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that 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. “Thus, the National Dialogue allows women to take part and contribute their immense share in resolving Ethiopia's pressing problems in peaceful manner.”

According to her, women's National Dialogue participation would also enable them to speak their mind with the sense of belongingness about core national issues.

Women are mostly vulnerable during unrest and they have been subjected to various types of challenges including gender-based violence (GBVs.)

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Ethiopia's fishing industry to produce 120,000 tons: EARI

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA – Ethiopia is working hard on producing 120,000 tons of fish per year employing technology and increasing public awareness, Ethiopian Agriculture Research Institute (EARI) disclosed.

EARI Fish and Aquatic Research Center Director and Senior Researcher Asechalew Lakew (PhD) told *The Ethiopian Herald* that the institute is carrying out various activities to maximize the fish production and productivity.

As to Asechalew, Ethiopia has a potential of producing an average of 94,500 tons of fish per year, according to a research conducted 2014. However, this number estimated to increase 120,000 ton fish due to persist of grand projects like Abbay dam.

He further stated that Ethiopia has some 200 fish species whilst merely seven species for consumption. In this regard, Gambella State has 20 fish species that are being available to commercial purpose.

Asechalew also said that the fish production



can be obtained from water bodies such as rivers, lakes and dams as well as from artificial fish farming. Hence the institute is providing awareness creation for the farming community about how to develop fish products in a sustainable manner.

“Compared to East African countries, Ethiopian towards fish development and edibility culture is low. For instance, Kenya and Uganda have better fish consumption

than Ethiopia. Of course, Ethiopian fish product is exported to Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) though the country imported from different countries,” he added.

He noted that the institute in collaboration with other sectors such as ministry of agriculture (MoA) is working hard to ensure fish resource development and obtain adequate benefit from the sector.

News

Axum Yohannes IV Airport restoration nears to completion

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA –The restoration of the Yohannes IV Airport, which serves the Axum town of Tigray State, is well underway and set to be complete for June 2, 2024, the contractor Nioud Construction Company disclosed.

The Company's Deputy Coordinator Fantahun Kidaye (Eng.) told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the airport, which is under restoration, would be open for service in the beginning of June. "Most of the airport maintenance work is completed and now we are moving to the asphalt carpet."

The Tigray State Infrastructure Cabinet Head Yalem Tsegaye on her part said that the restoration work is going properly and expected to be completed within the scheduled period. "Owing to the restoration of the airport, the tourist inflow to the historic town and the state at large is expected to intensify."

Recently, the Tigray State Culture and Tourism Bureau stated that various activities are being carried out to restore the tourist attraction sites. Because of this and other



related activities, close to 3,000 foreign tourists visited the state during the past nine months of the current fiscal year.

It is to be recalled that some 2-3 million domestic visitors and 80-90,000 foreign tourists visited the state prior to the

Tigray War. Due to the two-year war, tourism activities in Tigray were remained stagnant.

Addis to hold Big 5 Construct Ethiopia exhibition

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA- The 2nd edition of Big 5 Construct Ethiopia exhibition is slated to take place from May 30 to June 1, 2024 aiming at promoting the value chain of the construction industry.

According to the recently sent statement to The Ethiopian Herald, Big 5 Construct Ethiopia has returned for the 2nd edition solidifying continued business growth amid evolving construction sector opportunities, returning to Millennium Hall in Addis Ababa. It is a global event aimed at promoting the construction industry's growth and sustainability.

Infrastructure will be a new talk stream theme, alongside sustainability, project management, technology, engineering, and architecture and design.

The event is supported by the Ethiopia Construction Works Corporation (ECWC) and it attracts global enterprises to Ethiopia, offering products and services, and a shared vision for the future of the construction sector, it was stated.

The construction sector in the country is growing, leading to the Big 5 Construct Ethiopia event, which showcases ten diversified product sectors.

The event features 150 local and international exhibitors with over 9,000 construction professionals and potential buyers. From 19 countries, including first-time exhibitors like Jotun Paints, Germany's EJOT, France's Bostik, Saudi Arabia's Araib Factory for Industry, and



UAE's Roofing's Middle East.

Country pavilions this year will feature Ethiopia, Italy, Türkiye, United Arab Emirates and China presenting the latest in construction trends.

"Big 5 Construct Ethiopia 2024 has brought together thousands of exhibitors and visitors around the globe, enabling stakeholders to share experiences, widening marketing networks, and promoting the value chain of the construction industry as a whole," said Eng. Yonas Ayalew, Chief Executive Officer, Ethiopian.

"Ethiopia is currently home to major construction and infrastructure projects representing healthy activity in the built environment. Supporting this upswing in the industry, Big 5 Construct Ethiopia will unify the full spectrum of the construction value chain where regional and international companies showcase their expertise and tap into the country's considerable and wide-ranging opportunities," said Ben Greenish, Senior Vice President - Construction at dmg events.

"The event unites leading industry players by facilitating business and supporting the industry as it aligns with the nation's ambitious Vision 2025 goals," he said.

Consensus on major Nat'l issues ensures sustainable peace

ADDIS ABABA (ENA) - Reaching consensus on major national issues is the only solution for the Ethiopia's sustainable peace and development. Peace Minister Binalf Andualem said.

The minister made the remark at a training given to members of House of People's Representatives and Regional councils on nation building.

"Although a national consensus is critical for sustainable peace, the ways we followed to create national consensus did not follow the right direction," he noted, adding that this prevented the country from creating the national consensus desired.

According to him, it was not possible to create a lasting peace and national harmony in Ethiopia because of the political deadlock in the past.

The root of Ethiopia's political and social breakdowns is focusing only on the previous bad or good stories, Binalf elaborated.

Even if Ethiopia has a long history of government formation and an early civilization, the main secret of countries that are better than Ethiopia in terms of universal development is that they have learned from their past and made their future better.

"While Ethiopia boasts a rich history and ancient civilization, the ability to draw lessons from history and apply them to contemporary challenges is essential for progress and development."

This is what countries that have rapidly advanced in terms of universal development have often done by leveraging their historical experiences, both positive and negative, to inform their policies and strategies, the minister pointed out.

He stressed that there should be continuous



dialogue and mutual understanding among the entire society of the country in order to ensure lasting peace and development in Ethiopia.

Exerting maximum effort to ensure consensus on key issues pertaining to national identity, national interest, and national values is crucial, according to Binalf.

This emphasis underscores the importance of uniting the populace around shared values and aspirations, which are essential for fostering social cohesion and driving collective progress.

The minister believes that Ethiopia can strengthen its foundation for sustainable development and prosperity by prioritizing consensus-building on these fundamental pillars of nationhood.

In this regard, legislative bodies play a crucial role in nation-building, primarily through the enactment of laws and policies that shape the social, economic, and political landscape of a nation.

Binalf underscored that the development and growth of a country are guaranteed through continuous progress, driven by leadership at all levels and the cooperation of the people.

The half-day training was organized by the Ministry of Peace.

News

Ethiopia consults with dev't partners to diversify financing sources

ADDIS ABABA (ENA) -The Government of Ethiopia and Development Partners Group (DPG) undertaken a retreat on Tuesday in Africa Leadership Excellence Academy in the presence of State Ministers and Heads of Development Partners.

The retreat is a follow up event on the High-Level Development Forum (HLDF), held on the 14th of March in which the Government and the DPG renewed their commitment to work together on addressing the challenges on peace-building, resilience and macro-economic development.

In her opening remarks, Finance State Minister Semereta Sewasew asserted that strong alignment with the national development priorities, diversification of sources of finance and due emphasis on the humanitarian-development-peace nexus are important factors to gear the joint efforts of the DPG and the government in the desired direction of success.

The retreat was first guided by a presentation on the draft Medium-Term Development and Investment Plan of Ethiopia (MDIP 2023/2024-2025/2026) and followed by the draft Sustainable Financing Strategy.

The Ministry of Planning and Development expounded the three-year priority areas of MDIP which are derived from the Ten Year Development Plan and aligned with HGER 2.0.

The MDIP puts the expected growth of sectors of which industry is expected to grow more.

The DPG appreciated the preparation



of the MDIP in detail manner and also reflected the importance of focusing more on specific challenges that Ethiopia is currently facing.

The retreat also discussed the draft report of Ethiopia's Sustainable Financing Strategy (ESFS).

The strategy has been prepared with the leadership of the Ministry of Finance intending to come up with a financing framework providing diversified sources of financing for the growing development needs of the country.

The financing strategy identifies four sources of financing which are domestic public financing, international public financing (ODA), domestic private source and international private source.

As outlined on the presentation, Ethiopia's development finance for the past several years has been mostly dependent on local public investment which is not sustainable and insufficient.

The strategy recommends unpacking the

financing potential with the growing role of both local and international private sector and using the government investment as catalytic role.

In this regard, the strategy argues that there should be a new mechanism of financing several sectors in Ethiopia through attracting private investments which at the moment are being run by the government funding mostly insufficiently and inefficiently.

The DPG welcomed the draft financing strategy and appreciated the intent of pooling in more private actors in the economy in a new commitment and spirit.

Semereta also appreciated the idea of introducing crowding in commercial financing to ensure sustainable financing of the development needs.

The Co-Chairs of DPG, Semereta Sewasew, Ramiz Alkbarov (PhD), UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator and Phil Elks, acting development director, FCDO led the discourses, according to Ministry of Finance.

Integrating...

has been seeking to train and nurture African revolutionary leaders to contribute to address continental problems. As a result, the effort requires partnership with African ambassadors residing in Addis Ababa and collaborating with other organizations.

"Now, we are promoting the AFLEX mission and approaching embassies and other organizations to promote our mission. We have already established strong partnerships with several institutions and there are ongoing talks and negotiations with several organizations to work together."

Over the past two months, the academy has trained some 120 senior African leaders and it would assign the Vice President who would lead the Foreign Affairs Department from other African countries, out of Ethiopia.

Furthermore, the AFLEX finalized preparation to offer leadership development training for African women leaders drawn from each country (four from each country) to build women leaders capacity, the president remarked.

Authority ...

wariness are also contributing to low-quality drug distributions.

In this regard, the Authority has been working together with the Ethiopian Customs Commission and security agencies in fighting illicit trades of livestock drugs that are attempting to smuggle expired medicines into the local market.

According to Diriba, the widespread use of low-quality drugs in the livestock sector is really a concern for Ethiopia. Compared to its potential, the country's livestock export is insignificant and substandard medications are adversely affecting the competitiveness and quality of livestock products, ultimately affecting the revenue that is generated from the sector.

Authorities urge stringent measures to ensure the quality and safety of drugs used in animal husbandry to safeguard both animal welfare and consumer health.

Considering the problem, the authority general mentioned that a list of essential medicines and vaccines that could standardize medications have been adopted. In collaboration with NGOs and pharmaceutical drug importers, the government is also working to enhance medication quality in the livestock sector.

"Because of the absence of essential drugs standard, new and improved drugs used in several other countries are not available here in Ethiopia."

The government is supporting livestock pharmaceutical manufacturers that would help to bring desirable product quality and commercialization in the sector. The livestock medication process is undeveloped yet, but we believe that we are on the breakthrough stage since transformations are in the pipeline," Diriba remarked.

Representatives...

Alemnesh further stressed that through engaging women at the National Dialogue; the country could end their sufferings and capitalize on their naturally gifted behavior of peaceful resolution.

Afar State's Women, Social Affairs Bureau Women Participation, and Movement Director FatumaHamfere said that the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission (ENDC) has put commendable efforts to embrace women at the National Dialogue since its establishment.

Not only the commission has played a major role in changing the societal perception towards women's role in peace process but also it stimulates their sense of perception. As part of the community that is deeply harmed by conflicts, women need to get space to take part at the dialogue using their naturally gifted character of persuading people, she added.

For ENDC's Commissioner Belen Gebremedhin, women need to be engage on national issues with the sense of



ownership. "They need to add their ideas which they believe would resolve the problem."

Through active participation, women have to engage in setting their agenda, ideas and perception for better realization

of the National Dialogue.

Amongst the nine community members, at least women need to be represented by 30% and they are also being represented in other segments, the commissioner emphasized.



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Beyond The Sea

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2024

Editorial

Ethiopia's resilience is clearest indication to ensure its intended prosperity

Addressing the IDA21 Africa Heads of State Summit in Nairobi last Monday, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) said that Ethiopia's resilience amidst challenges is evident through structural economic reforms, prioritizing macro stability and productivity. He added that his country has been harnessing resilience in the face of a spectrum of challenges aggravated by external forces, such as climate change, geopolitical tension, and the soaring global cost of living.

It's certain that Ethiopia shines as a symbol of strength in the unpredictable realm of worldwide economics. Despite encountering various obstacles, including internal political strife and external pressures, Ethiopia's economy has shown impressive resilience and flexibility. This resilience doesn't just highlight the country's ability to endure but also underscores the coordinated actions and strategic plans implemented by its government and citizens.

One of the most striking aspects of Ethiopia's economic resilience is its ability to maintain steady growth amidst adversity. Over the past decade, Ethiopia has consistently boasted one of the highest GDP growth rates in Africa. This growth has been fueled by diverse sectors, including agriculture, manufacturing, and services, indicating a broad-based and sustainable economic expansion.

A key driver of Ethiopia's economic resilience lies in its commitment to diversification and industrialization. Recognizing the limitations of an agrarian-based economy, the Ethiopian government has embarked on ambitious industrialization initiatives aimed at transforming the country into a manufacturing hub. Investments in industrial parks, infrastructure development, and targeted policies to attract foreign investment have bolstered the manufacturing sector, creating employment opportunities and fostering economic stability.

Moreover, Ethiopia's emphasis on infrastructure development has played a pivotal role in sustaining economic momentum. Projects such as the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and the expansion of transportation networks have enhanced domestic connectivity.

Even with notable accomplishments, Ethiopia confronts a multitude of hurdles that challenges its economic durability. Yet, its economic strength is apparent in its capacity to maintain growth despite facing a multifaceted set of challenges. Over time, it has consistently achieved remarkable growth rates. This enduring growth is supported by a varied economic environment spanning agriculture, manufacturing, services, and flourishing fields like technology and innovation.

However, it is precisely in the face of these challenges that Ethiopia's resilience shines brightest. Rather than succumbing to despair or resignation, Ethiopia has demonstrated a remarkable capacity for adaptation and innovation. The government has implemented bold reforms to address structural weaknesses, promote inclusivity, and foster an enabling environment for business and investment. Initiatives such as the Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda exemplify Ethiopia's proactive approach to overcoming challenges and building a more resilient economy.

Furthermore, Ethiopia's emphasis on infrastructure development has played a pivotal role in sustaining economic steadfastness. Investments in critical infrastructure projects, such as roads, railways, and energy facilities, have not only enhanced domestic connectivity but also bolstered Ethiopia's competitiveness and resilience. These infrastructure investments have facilitated trade, attracted foreign investment, and promoted economic growth across various sectors.

As Ethiopia continues on its path of economic resilience, it is imperative for stakeholders—both domestic and international—to support and sustain these efforts. Collaboration, innovation, and inclusive growth must be the cornerstones of Ethiopia's economic agenda, ensuring that the benefits of resilience are shared equitably among all segments of society.

In conclusion, Ethiopia's economy stands as a demonstration to the power of steadfastness in the face of challenges. Through prudent policies, strategic investments, and unwavering determination, Ethiopia has demonstrated resilience and perseverance. As the nation confronts future challenges with resolve and resilience, there is no doubt that Ethiopia will continue to inspire and lead the way towards sustained economic prosperity.

Opinion

Roll back hate speech in Ethiopia to create a peaceful social order

BY SOLOMON DIBABA

The claim of preventing and suppressing hate speech and disinformation inextricably linked to the roots of contemporary international human rights discourse. Article 19(2) of ICCPR recognizes that everyone has the right to freedom of expression. However, freedom of expression can be limited on the grounds of hate speech and disinformation since they can cause harms to other human rights.

Accordingly, Ethiopia is under obligation by cumulatively looking at Article 13(2) of the FDRE constitution and Article 20(2) of ICCPR to confront any advocacy of national, racial and religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence by law.

Ethiopia has no comprehensive law regarding hate speech and disinformation though there are some provisions directly or indirectly related to them by analyzing the existing domestic laws. Hence, she has enacted hate speech and disinformation prevention and suppression proclamation No.1185/2020.

What is hate speech according to Ethiopian law? Under the law in Ethiopia, hate speech occurs when two conditions co-exist: 1. Deliberate incitement (English version says promote, which is less severe than incitement) of hatred, discrimination or violence; 2. Against a target group, a person or discernible group based on ethnicity, religion, race, gender, or disability. Accordingly, hate speech exists only when done knowingly. But violence is not a requirement: Under the law, if the two conditions exist, there is hate speech, regardless of whether the speech has or is likely to trigger public disturbances or violence against the target group.

How is hate speech manifested in the country? In order to answer this question, it is important to carefully digest the political and socio-economic profile of the country for over a half a century. Over the last several years, hate speech in social media in particular is manifested in the form of insults, disinformation, alarming wrong profiling of leaders of the country, defamation and counter defamation of particular ethnic groups and total and indiscriminate hatred on what the government is attempting to accomplish in the national development programs.

Hate speech in Ethiopia can originate from various social, political, and historical factors. Some of the key causes are mentioned below.

The country has undergone significant political changes in recent years, including the transition from authoritarian rule to a more open political system. Political competition and power struggles have intensified, particularly in the lead-up to elections, leading to inflammatory rhetoric and hate speech from politicians and their supporters.

The media, including traditional outlets and social media platforms, play a significant role in shaping public discourse and perceptions. Irresponsible reporting, sensationalism, and

misinformation can contribute to the spread of hate speech and incitement to violence, particularly during times of political unrest or conflict.

Ethiopia has a complex history marked by ethnic tensions, political repression, and human rights abuses. Historical grievances, unresolved conflicts, and perceived injustices can fuel resentment and animosity between different ethnic and religious groups, providing fertile ground for hate speech and intergroup violence.

Socioeconomic disparities, including unequal access to resources, opportunities, and services, can exacerbate social tensions and grievances. Marginalized communities may feel marginalized or discriminated against, leading to feelings of resentment and hostility towards perceived oppressors or privileged groups.

Weak or inadequate legal frameworks to address hate speech and incitement to violence can embolden perpetrators and contribute to a culture of impunity. Ineffective enforcement of existing laws and lack of accountability for hate speech can further fuel intolerance and polarization.

Addressing hate speech in Ethiopia requires comprehensive strategies that address the underlying causes, including promoting social cohesion, strengthening legal frameworks, fostering media literacy, and promoting inclusive governance and dialogue. It also requires collective efforts from government institutions, civil society organizations, religious leaders, media outlets, and other stakeholders to promote tolerance, respect for diversity, and peaceful coexistence.

Hate speech proofing Ethiopia involves implementing strategies to prevent and address hate speech, discrimination, and violence based on ethnicity, religion, or other forms of identity.

It is also important to conduct extensive researches on the objective and content of hate speeches and spell out their political implication.

Freedom of speech is mostly recognized in the constitution of many democratic countries across the world but that does not allow the proliferation of hate speeches at all. However, such rights are being abused in countries like Ethiopia under the guise of democracy with no regard to the rule of law that needs to be enforced and respected by all citizens.

Implementing these strategies requires collaboration and coordination among government agencies, civil society organizations, religious institutions, community leaders, and other stakeholders. It also requires long-term commitment, sustained investment, and a multi-faceted approach to address the root causes of hate and promote a culture of peace, tolerance, and inclusion in Ethiopian society. This is of critical importance for the country and its people. It might take time to redress the derogatory consequences of hate speech but the attempt to stop it needs to begin today.

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



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Opinion

IMF should consider nations' conditionality when providing loans

BY GETACHEW MINAS

When a country borrows from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), it has to meet the conditionality of adjusting its economic policies to overcome the problems that led it to seek financial assistance. These policy adjustments help to ensure that the country adopts strong and effective policies. These conditionality helps countries, including Ethiopia, solve balance of payments problems without resorting to measures that harm national or international prosperity.

In addition, these measures aim to safeguard IMF resources. This is done through guarantees that the country's finances will be strong enough to repay the loan. Such repayment allows other countries to use the resources if needed in the future. Conditionality is also designed in financing IMF programs with the aim of achieving the agreed policy goals. Member countries, including Ethiopia, that borrow from the IMF have a major responsibility for selecting, designing, and implementing policies that make their economic program perform well. The fulfillment of the objectives of the program depends on situations and circumstances of the country.

The IMF imposes conditions on developing countries when they request loans for financing their economic development programs. These programs comprise projects that are prepared to meet the needs of people in these countries, including Ethiopia. People may need employment to earn income for satisfying their basic requirements. These include food, health, education, housing, clothing, and other basic necessities. These needs are not easy to meet considering the size of the Ethiopian population living below poverty line.

The IMF has to consider such real needs the countries are striving to meet and ease imposes that add more burden to the countries. It should back their struggle against poverty and value the efforts they exert to become food self sufficient. Of course, it is essential to check the way countries use the fund they obtain from international financial institutions in order to fight corruption. Ethiopia has designed homegrown economic reform agenda aiming to make poverty history. To this end, it has taken various measures such as accelerating production and productivity that includes export standard products.

In the decades of economic development efforts, the proportion of those living below poverty line is being reduced through targeted development activities. This achievement is partially attributed

to external assistance provided by international financial institutions, including the IMF. Of course, these institutions set their conditionality for providing aid, external assistance or loans to the country. Poverty reduction is one indicator of the effective use of external resources in Ethiopia.

Experts have noted serious changes on conditions that have been made on restructuring the Ethiopian external debt. One of these conditions has been the signing of peace agreement between the Federal Government of Ethiopia and the TPLF forces in 2022. This agreement has ended the civil war lasted for two years in the northern part of the country. It paved the way for resuming negotiations, compromise and conciliation with international financial institutions. As a result, after requesting a debt restructuring under the G20 Common Framework, Ethiopia has been able to reach an agreement. This agreement was made on an "interim suspension" of its bilateral debt service. This was only a temporary relief which would be reinstated at a later stage. Yet, it was only the first step in the direction of debt settlement. Thus, the Ethiopian government must reach agreements with all of its external creditors. This is a major requirement to fully restructure the debt of the country. Before this, it must negotiate with the IMF in order to access its financial support.

The negotiation is done on condition of undertaking strong reforms. These reforms will initially lead to strengthening the country's external financial standing. This takes place on condition of settling conflicts in the country. These conflicts have been putting in danger the country's relations with its international collaborators. All these tended to slow the restructuring process. In fact, forecasts have been made on the highly likely default which forced the Ethiopian government to request a debt restructuring. At the time, external liquidity was declining to seriously low levels. Added to this was the ongoing extensive drought in the Horn of Africa. Despite these eventualities, the civil war that broke out in Ethiopia in 2020 disrupted and upset the negotiation process. It cut off its relations with foreign donors. Official Development Assistance (ODA), on which the country has been dependent, tremendously declined. Consequently, the foreign exchange scarcity intensified causing a fall in foreign exchange reserves.

The signing of the peace agreements between the Federal Government and TPLF was critical for Ethiopia to reach interim agreements on suspending its bilateral debt service. This resulted in interest payments deferred until 2025,

with the payment of the principal postponed further. Apart from the short-term external liquidity relief, these agreements enabled the G20 Common Framework to be launched again after a long period of inactivity. For the purpose of complying with this system, the Ethiopian government did not pay money on its outstanding debts. This was done to maintain the principle of "comparability of treatment" between creditors.

The MOF has informed the public that the public debt has been reliably contained, compared to the two countries when they defaulted. Also, one fourth of the external debt was owed to "private" creditors. This situation has, therefore, made the negotiations faster. First and foremost, the extent of the restructuring will not include domestic debt, as was the case for other African countries. Moreover, the restructuring is expected to be limited to extending maturities or repayment, with the aim of spreading repayments. Experts think that its spread over time reduces periods of liquidity pressure. They also believe that any such agreement should be relatively easier to negotiate with bilateral creditors which have traditionally been reluctant to accept debt write-offs. However, Eurobond debt will be more difficult to restructure. This has been indicated by the failure of the government and private bondholders to reach an initial agreement. Fortunately, Ethiopia has issued only one Eurobond with the scope of the debt to be restructured.

It is reported that any further progress under the G20 Common Framework depends on securing USD 3.5 Billion from IMF funding program. This measure would help release a similar amount from the WB. This, however, does not give chance to the Ethiopian government for maneuvering during negotiation on the conditions for funding. Without an agreement with the IMF by the end of the first quarter of 2024, bilateral creditors "reserve the right" to cancel their debt service suspension. However, the IMF indicated that it will demand tough reforms from the Ethiopian authorities. It is of the opinion that the government has delayed the reforms for many years. The major point in the negotiations is the gradual devaluation of the exchange rate. This was a reform launched under the previous IMF program, but abandoned later on. The National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE) has been managing the exchange rate, and the Birr has been largely overvalued for decades. Due to the foreign exchange shortage, the disparity between the official rate and the parallel market rate has gradually widened to nearly double.

Currently, Ethiopia is facing a strong

inflationary pressure. Devaluation of the Birr with the aim of bringing the official and parallel rates back together will be needed for the NBE to end the restricted access to the dollar. Experts think that one-third of currency transactions are thought to be carried out on the parallel market. This indicated the need for liberalizing the foreign exchange regime. The scale of the devaluation is being discussed by the Ethiopian government and the IMF. This was due to the need for a full correction of the overvaluation. This would obviously have a significant impact on inflation, which is already very high. This is corroborated by the continuous rise in consumer prices.

Experts are of the opinion that if the foreign exchange market were to be liberalized, this would need to go with a reform of monetary policy. Such a reform would help control inflation through the interest rate channel. At the present time, the NBE's main measures to tackle inflation involve capping bank credit growth for the current fiscal year. Also, reducing its direct advances to the government, the NBE will be reducing the fiscal deficit.

Considering the considerable and significant short-term financing needs of the Ethiopian government, direct advances by the IMF would be difficult to terminate. Moreover, the fiscal revenue of the government has gradually declined, as indicated by its ratio to the GDP in the previous years. But, spending increased widening the budget deficit. The government will, therefore, have to undertake fiscal reforms aiming to increase its revenue while "reducing" subsidies and social transfers. It is noted that these subsidies and transfers accounted for more than half of budgetary expenditure in previous years. Experts have noted that such measures may satisfy the requirements of the IMF, but they call for disasters on those poor people who are beneficiaries of these subsidies. Yet, further reforms will be needed in order to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and strengthen external accounts. Furthermore, other actions that may be required to secure the IMF financing include developing and liberalizing the financial sector. Added to this measure is the continuation of the program to privatize public enterprises, which call for the improvement of the business environment. Whatever measures are taken by the government to meet the IMF conditionality, they are bound to be the Task of Tantalus, hard to shoulder for all Ethiopians.

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

Law & Politics

The continued Diasporas' backing to Abbay dam

BY EYUEL KIFLU

Ethiopia is constructing a mega hydroelectric power plant, Abbay Dam, also known as the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), without relying on financial support from international or other countries. This ambitious project is a result of the cooperation and commitment of Ethiopians, from top officials to ordinary citizens, irrespective of their economic status. It is anticipated that the completion of this project will not only benefit Ethiopia but also have positive implications for Africa and beyond. However, the construction of the Abbay Dam has been marred by controversy and disagreements with certain entities over the years. Nevertheless, Ethiopians remain steadfast in their determination to see the project through to completion shortly.

The Ethiopian diaspora community around the world has consistently shown its unwavering support for the construction of the Abbay Dam. It is known that this massive hydroelectric project, situated on the Blue Nile River in Ethiopia, has been a subject of controversy and tension between Ethiopia and its downstream neighbors, Egypt and Sudan.

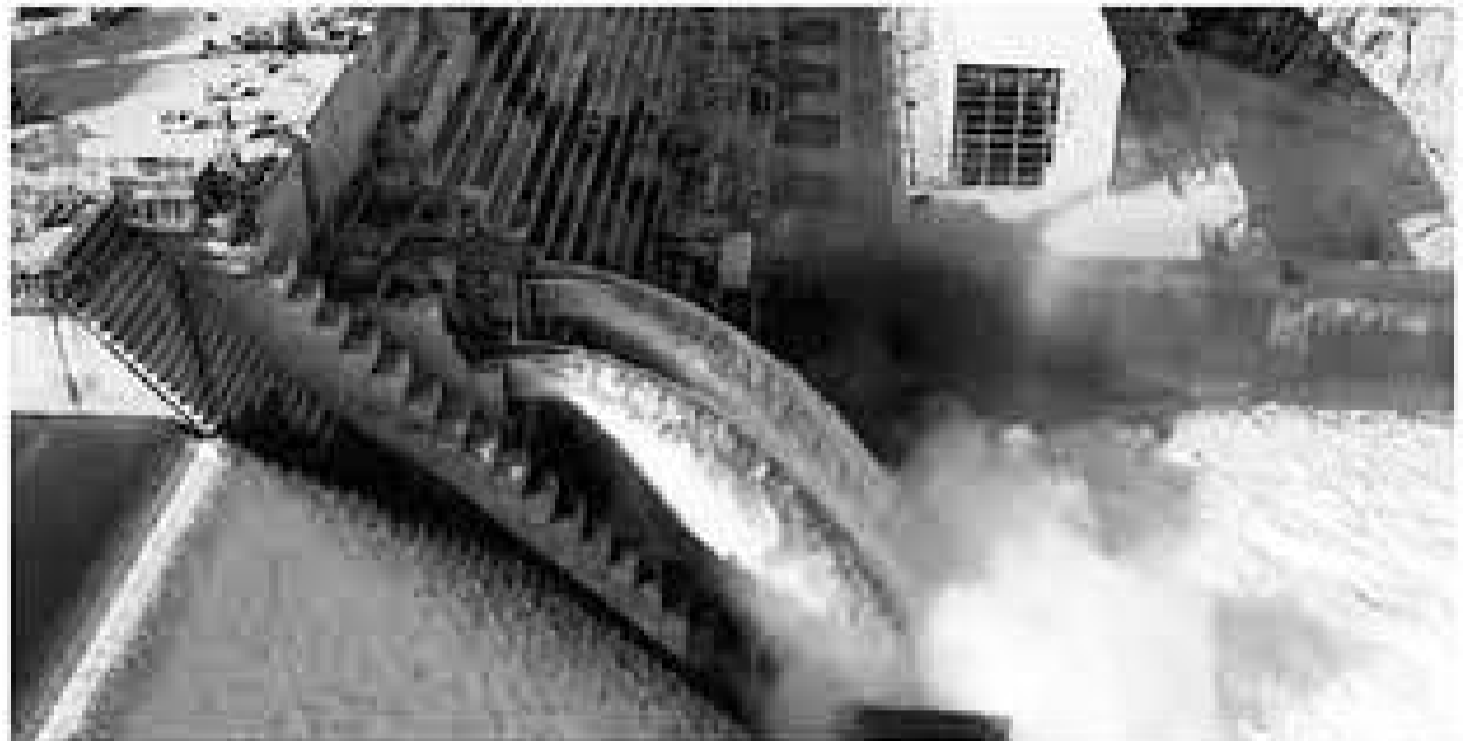
Despite opposition from Egypt, Ethiopians living abroad have vocally expressed their backing for the dam. They view it as a symbol of national pride and a crucial step towards economic development and energy independence for their homeland as well as for their other African brothers.

Ethiopian diaspora communities in Europe, North America, Australia, and other regions have organized rallies, fundraisers, and awareness campaigns to demonstrate their solidarity with the Abbay Dam project at different times. Their unwavering and continuing support is visible in what they are doing for the project.

Once completed, the Abbay Dam is expected to be Africa's largest hydroelectric power plant, with a capacity of approximately 6,000 megawatts. Despite facing numerous delays and setbacks since construction began in 2011, the unwavering support of Ethiopians, both at home and abroad, has brought the dam closer to completion.

As tensions persist between Ethiopia and Egypt regarding water rights on the Nile River, the solidarity exhibited by the Ethiopian diaspora community serves as a powerful reminder of their commitment to their country's development and prosperity. With their support, the Abbay Dam is poised to become a symbol not only of energy independence but also of unity and resilience for all Ethiopians.

In light of the 13th anniversary of the dam's construction, the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia recently announced an easier way for diaspora communities to provide financial support by accepting money transfers in any currency from anywhere. The Ethiopian Diaspora Association and Ethiopia Diaspora Service have played



indispensable roles in coordinating the efforts of the diaspora community.

The Ethiopian Diaspora Association recently stated that it will provide thorough support to guarantee that the Abbay Dam's construction is completed on time.

According to Abraham Tilahun, Executive and Public Relations Head of the Diaspora Association, "the Diaspora community has an unwavering commitment to back the construction of the Abbay Dam financially, professionally, through advocacy, and other means." He noted that from its inception, Ethiopians in the diaspora have given about 114 million Birr to the mega project and have played an important role in combating unfounded charges and external pressures from Ethiopia's historical opponents.

"For instance, Egypt has brought the Abbay Dam issue before the United Nations Security Council twelve times in an attempt to halt building progress.

However, the Diaspora community has countered these baseless and organized charges, firmly standing on the right side," Abraham added.

Abraham highlighted that Diaspora support will continue to grow until the grand project is completed, with an emphasis on unity and national interest.

Ermias Mekonnen, a Diaspora Board Advisor, said, "Despite Ethiopia's historical enemies working tirelessly to obstruct the construction of this iconic project, the Diaspora community remains committed to fighting against this irrational approach because it is a matter of national interest."

Egypt has undertaken substantial attempts to halt the construction of the Abbay Dam in a variety of ways, including hiring lobbyists to spread misleading information and confuse the international community, as well as seeking global support for its cause. However, the Ethiopian Diaspora population

The Abbay Dam is expected to be Africa's largest hydroelectric power plant, with a capacity of approximately 6,000 megawatts

in several locations throughout the world has revealed Egypt's lies, including the use of Arabic in pro-Egypt media sources.

Also, the Ethiopian Diaspora Service (EDS) recently announced plans to collect approximately USD 3 million from Diaspora community members around the world to help the Abbay Dam's remaining building work. Belayneh Atenaw, the Deputy Director of EDS, claimed to the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the Diaspora community has played an important role in the development of the dam, giving roughly 55 million USD since the beginning of the project.

EDS has created a strategy that divides the world's nations into regions, such as the Far East, America, and Africa, to raise the extra money needed for the last development projects. There have

been talks with the committee on how to make contributions easier by, if needed, interacting with diaspora communities back home. Belayneh added that donations may be made via different channels offered by different financial institutions.

With two turbines, the dam currently generates 540 MW; when it is completed, this capacity is anticipated to surpass 5,000 MW. Ethiopia's present capacity to produce electric power will nearly double as a result of the large growth in power generation. The project's advancement is evidence of Ethiopians' will to overcome challenges and outside impediments. Despite Egypt's attempts to disrupt the project, Ethiopia has remained resolute in financing the dam independently.

On April 2, 2024, Ethiopia commemorated the 13th anniversary of the launch of the construction of the Abbay Dam. As of now, the dam is over 95% complete, with civil work reaching over 98% and electro-mechanical work at 76%. It is a testament to Ethiopian resilience and their unwavering commitment to achieving this long-awaited goal.

However, still, some unwarranted smears about the dam are continuing, and Egypt is trying to turn its defeat on the dam into Ethiopia's sea access deal with Somaliland. Because the former's unwarranted statements about the dam are completely false, the country tries to play another foolish game with the latter to cover its internal problems by externalizing.

However, Ethiopians are never defeated by an ungrounded story, and they may show their commitment to the sea access alternative as they do to the dam. All are important for the country's development, so everyone must come to the table and negotiate what things must be done to get the country sea access, like what they did for the dam.



All African country's development plans refer to Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030 (SDGs)

Frederick Mugisha (PhD)

BY ZEKARIAS WOLDEMARIAM

As per the Agenda 2063, the Africa We Want initiative, the African Union (AU) member states align their development plans with the aspirations or goals indicated in it. Still, African countries are member states of the United Nations and are expected to apply the goals under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) or Agenda 2030. How are the member states pursuing their national development plans in line with the two regional and global initiatives?

Frederick Mugisha (PhD) is SDG Integration Advisor to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Regional Service Center for Africa, here in Addis Ababa. Mugisha leads UNDP efforts to integrate SDGs and African Union Agenda 2063 across the continent. He supports the design and domestication of the Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063, working with and in partnership with UNDP Country Offices.

Before this assignment, he worked with UNDP in South Sudan, Ghana, Eritrea and the Gambia as the Economic Advisor. He also worked with Uganda's Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, UNFPA Uganda, Makerere University in Uganda, and African Population and Health Research Center in Kenya among others.

Mugisha holds a Bachelor of Statistics from Makerere University in Uganda, a Masters in Health Services Research from Erasmus University in the Netherlands, a Master's in Business Administration from Moi University in Kenya, and a PhD in Economics from the University of Heidelberg in Germany.

The Ethiopian Herald had a brief stay with Mugisha on the sidelines of the 10th African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, which took place from 23 to the 25th of April 2024 here at the UNECA, Addis Ababa. Enjoy an excerpt from his exhaustive explanations.

Could you tell us the overall review of the SDGs, especially Africa's endeavour?

I think it is not only Africa. It is at a global level that we are having a problem of achieving the SDGs. Last year during the SDG summit only 15% of the targets were well on track. Some had reversed. If we think about Africa, I think the biggest challenge that Africa has is related to SDG 8, jobs. We have also a problem with having clean and affordable energy; we also have a problem with life on the land which is SDG 15.

It is not that we don't recognize that. If you look at all the development plans and of Africa, including the one of Ethiopia and you analyze them there are 3 things that they prioritize: 1 job, 2 is industry 3 is responsive of government, public services. So, it is not we don't know, but what we are struggling with as a continent is that we don't get the right information to use it in the right way. I'll give you an example. I want you to tell me whether there's any country in Africa, you know, that counts the number of jobs they have created every month. None. It's quite our biggest challenge that we need to address. So if you don't know how many jobs you have created, and from which sectors how will you be able to create jobs in other sectors? It will be very difficult to prioritize. But we have this information. It's not that we don't have it. Every year, every month businesses submit their tax returns to the tax authorities. And in that, they list the number of jobs, the number of people they have employed because of the pay. Yet we are not using that information

to create transformation. And that is a big challenge; so you can realize it's not that we are not progressing. It is also because we are not doing the right things for us to help us progress. There's a problem of making sure that we have implemented the plans effectively.

How is UNDP working to address this problem in the future?

The good news is that UNDP looks at it holistically. We were given by member states the opportunity to look at development holistically and make sure that we integrate this across the different sectors whether it is governance, poverty, or environment, we all bring them together and we have gotten this instrument called growth and plan which is an integrated tool/instrument.

UNDP is doing the following things to help accelerate this process. Number 1 is supporting National governments and local governments to improve things that are related to development. For example "How do you design and Improvement development plans?" "How do you establish the right governance so you can achieve this? How do you make sure you take advantage of the environment so that you protect the environment and take the communities forward? How do you make sure that this growth/ development is inclusive? So we are doing that with the partners to make sure that we support the member states to do exactly that.

Are there countries that you can mention as having an exemplary performance? What are they doing?



Rwanda is a good example. They have what they call Immihigo. In Kinya Rwanda this means "This is my commitment" If I don't fulfil that commitment, there are consequences. Every so often they go and say "You promised you would do this. Have you done that?" You should do this. Have you done?

They agree that "These are our priorities" and everybody has to fit into those priorities. So that is an example. There are less well-documented examples too like in Ethiopia. When coordination is happening, they make sure that we coordinate around achieving the priorities of the government of Ethiopia. Eswatini is also an example. All I'm trying to say is that if you look you can't fail to get the good examples. But we just have to look enough and bring those examples to the right light so that they can be shared and we have to move the continent together.

One of the major activities of UNDP is focusing on democracy, governance and justice issues. How do these topics really or in this development issues? And how do they affect development?

When you talk about governance, we are talking about SDG 16. And one of the critical elements in SDG 16 is Target 16.6 which talks about the responsiveness of Public Services. Whether that responsiveness is in the elections, whether it is in roads, justice and the rule of law, all ideas of governance are very important. So what we do at the moment is support elections, peace, justice and the rule of law. We support public

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All African country's...

administration to make sure that civil servants there to have the right capacities for them to move their agenda. And we do this not only in SDG 16 but also in aspirations, 3 and 4 of the African Union Agenda 2063 which is peace and governance.

How do you evaluate the activity or the contribution of the member states in Europe? What do you think are the challenges?

So let me say that if you look at it in a Time Horizon, long time, we are doing well. There are bumps like the recent change of government. But in the sense we have done a good job over time partly because maybe because of the internet but for example voice is much more than it has been at any one time.

Government being responsive to citizen's needs is better than it has been for a very long time. So I would say we are in the right direction. Can we do more? Probably! Because what we say is now like voice, like responsiveness or developments is not the same across the board. Even within the same country, you may find that some States regions, Districts counties are doing better than others. And what is important for me is that as we deal with these things we have to keep an eye on the progress we are making just to make sure that we know we are making progress and where we are not making progress. We can help people learn from where the progress is being made.

In interconnecting SDGs and Agenda 2063, could you tell us what it means and how the integration of the two grand goals is progressing so far?

UNDP is part of the technical working group on Agenda 2063. Now we have been supporting the articulation/formulation of the plan for the second decade. This plan was approved by the heads of state in February at the AU Summit. That's a very good milestone.

But one important thing that the leaders of Africa said is that they want to implement Agenda 2063 and the SDGs together using the same systems. The Executive Council's decision says that they want member states to domesticate Agenda 2063 alongside the SDGs.

In many countries now, the coordinator of SDG is the same coordinator with Agenda 2063. So many countries have one coordination mechanism. Uganda is one of them. The second is that we have had the Africa Report on Sustainable Development. They have now agreed since last year, but they are going to do 1 report for the 2 agenda.

Finally, for me whenever you are addressing maternal mortality or putting some more jobs is number 1 in Agenda 2063 and it is goal number 8 in SDG, but they indicate the same thing. In some countries what they have done and which we are supporting is that if you have 1 indicator, which is the number of jobs, then you indicate which of the SDGs goes to the targets and which of

the agenda 2063 Target again. The point is that we deal with an issue be it in the SDGs or Agenda 2063 it's the same issue. It is opening up Agenda 2063 in ways that we could not imagine. For example, almost all country development plans now refer to Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030.

About the implementation of one of the Flagship projects of Agenda 2063, the AfCFTA how do you integrate the indicated goals in the SDGs?

African Continental Free Trade Area in SDG is in Goal 17 which is looking at trade. However, within the African Union, the FTA is one of the continental frameworks that help implement Agenda 2063. So in your mind's eye, the way the second ten-year implementation plan is structured is that you have interventions; then there are 3 Pathways. One of the pathways is the Continental framework. And one of the Continental Frameworks is the FTA. That is how we can get the 7 Moon shots in the second 10-year plan.

How do you see the commitment of member states in taking the right steps to realize AfCFTA?

So first of all, it was ratified by all countries, except Eritrea. Number 2 countries have developed countries strategies for FTA and how they are going to deal with that. And number 3, countries could invest in operationalizing that particular one of the things that I have to say though is that its effectiveness will be made more if other things are also bad. Like for example free movement of people. Some countries are removing visa restrictions like Rwanda and Kenya; We are very grateful, but we need more.

The second is the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), which is about the cost of flying from Accra to Lome three times the cost of flying to Kumasi. But the distance between Kumasi and Accra is the same distance from Accra to Lome. The difference is that when you move from Accra to Lome, you are going to another country. If we could get away with making this a single African air space that would be great.

I think we also have a chance because the commodities we trade with each other are similar. We could get to an idea of having "One nation one industry" so that you get one Industry to be headed by 1 one nation and we all support it. For example, Ethiopia Airlines is big. It is in the aviation industry. "If we say Ethiopia you already do aviation. Why don't we support you as a continent so you can be our leader in aviation?" Then we can go to Kenya. Then "Kenya you are good in hospitality. Why don't you lead it? Not only in time in terms of training, in terms of standards and so on. We can go to Botswana for mining. There are enough industries to go around. Then the region will work very effectively.

How acceptable do you think would this plan be among member states? What do

But one important thing that the leaders of Africa said is that they want to implement Agenda 2063 and the SDGs together using the same systems

you expect from them as a response?

I have hope, some things have already been done and we have been doing them since different countries are stronger in those areas and if additional support can be given to them so that they focus that will be great.

Africa is already suffering due to climate change though it does not contribute to it significantly. What's UNDP doing in helping Africa to cope with this global threat?

Climate change has many dimensions. If you go to South Sudan, you'll find that conflicts are being fought because of cows moving for water. There is a conflict there. If you see rain now in Nairobi, it's terrible. Like in this city when it's real rains it's a big problem. Now we are doing many things. Some of them are to deal with mitigation if it happens, how do we help? Some are dealing with prevention. How do we make sure that we grow more trees and so on to make sure that this doesn't happen? But I think even as we do those. I sense that we may have sufficient technology right now to make sure that the impact of climate change is not as bad. For example, we produce food. Food in Uganda is a lot. But in other parts of Africa, it's not. There has to be a mechanism that we can also use trade to move food.

The way we designed our houses to design our roads there are many aspects that you can think about. So we are doing a lot

in support, especially for the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Now the first round is finishing they are planning the next, we are already doing a lot of supporting them. But I think It is not just 1 institution. It is a masted effort across several players. What is the design of houses and all this? Well, it has to go with those dealing with conflict, where it has to do that thing a disaster risk reduction. Everybody has space when it comes to climate action including jobs like green jobs.

How does UNDP work with African countries in ensuring food security?

We can ensure food security in many ways. It doesn't have to be one way. You can do science and technology food. But you can also do science and technology, jobs and then food.

So if you do jobs then cash and then they can buy. UNDPs work concerning food is real to help governance mechanisms for food; increasing goods for food, climate action for food, disaster risk reduction for food, technologies, and jobs. So our contribution is largely indirect in the sense that we provide the platform, the mechanism that allows food security.

So is there anything that you've observed from your intervention from this so in like the technology?

There are quite a lot. For example, in South Sudan, we know that food can be a problem. So through community security, we ask how we ensure community security; then buy some tractors for agriculture as a mechanism for food security.

People are grateful when it comes to food processing, like fish how do you make communities work together? Have a junior Factory that helps them process food. You are helping them with social cohesion. But it brings about food security.

Empowering women is an integral part of governance and everything. So what has been the approach especially this this

First of all, gender is one of our 8 signature solutions. We believe that empowering women is very critical for the transformation of the continent. We have a few programs with the most one that I would like to say is the gender signal.

So we want this government, now present with the private sector UNDP country offices to get specific results so they can either be graded as Gold, or Silver, through the gender seal gaining the private sector. And with that, we want to have been able to see that first of all many countries are increasingly embracing the idea of having a gender certification that allows them to show their credentials their actual supporting gender and women empowerment. One of the criteria for gender certification is the number of staff that you have men and women.

Thank you for your time

Thank you

Society

Easter: Festival of love, forgiveness

BY MENGISTEAB TESHOME

The celebration of *Fasika* or Ethiopian Orthodox Easter is an important religious celebration marked among the followers of Orthodox Christianity. It is a holiday that brings together all Christian denominations, including Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant, for a series of traditional services and activities.

The celebration of *Fasika* is marked following the end of close to two months of exuberant fasting known as Lent (*Abiy Tsom*).

Last Sunday, Orthodox Christians marked Palm Sunday or Hosanna, which commemorates Jesus's march into Jerusalem sitting on the back of a colt with Palm fronds laid before him and celebrated among followers of the Orthodox church; a week before the actual holiday, Easter.

Currently, they are observing each of the days of the Passion Week, also known as Holy Week- the week leading up to Easter Sunday and have a significant meaning for Christians because the days demonstrate Jesus's sufferings, willingness to sacrifice His Life on the cross in order to pay for the sins human beings committed.

Thus, the days are observed among followers of Orthodox Christians with greater devotion and enthusiasm.

Following the Easter festival, Ethiopians are extending a helping hand for the unfortunate ones to let them celebrate the festively happily and joyfully. While some are providing support in the form of money and kind, others are readying themselves to mark the upcoming Easter festival and spend time with the destitute members of the community.

As part of this commitment, last Thursday, May 2, 2024, President Sahle-Work Zewde shared food items with elders, low income earners and destitute residents of Addis Ababa.

As ENA reported, President Sahle-Work has shared food items with low income and destitute residents in Arada Sub-City of Addis Ababa for celebration of the upcoming Ethiopian Easter holiday.

Speaking on the occasion, President Sahle-Work said that providing support to destitute communities in the country should be a regular task of everyone. According to her, extending a helping hand on such occasions and in our day to day activity is of critical importance to lessen the burden of the needy ones. Hence, in all occasions providing support for the unfortunate ones, big or small, must be sought to make a difference in their lives. For this reason, she has pledged for a continued and enhanced provision of sustenance.

Stating that similar charitable deeds will



continue to grow in the future, the President urged the community to support one another in their daily lives. She also stressed the need to spend the upcoming Easter festival with destitute members of the community.

Beneficiaries of the assistance also expressed gratitude to the president for her charitable deed which they said will help them spend the holiday joyfully.

In similar manner, the Mayor Office of Addis Ababa has shared food for more than 255 thousands of low income earners and the needy in all sub-cities and city administration institutions to help them celebrate the festival happily.

Mayor Adanech Abiebie extended her heartfelt gratitude for those investors and volunteers who have taken part and offered support for their generosity.

“On behalf of our City Administration, I would like to express my gratitude to the generous investors and volunteers of our city who made sharing with their fellow citizens a tradition and provide support to the needy from what they have earned,” the Mayor said.

Meanwhile, ahead of the Easter holiday, religious fathers are extending their best wishes and offer Easter blessings to the people of Ethiopia and those celebrating the festival.

In his message in relation to the festival, the Ethiopian Catholics Church Cardinal Abune Birhane Eyesus Demrew Souraphiel said that Jesus crucified on the Cross for His love for all human beings. The sole path to undo our nation's problems is choosing peaceful approaches.

For Christians, Easter has the great secret that gives enlightenment and a congratulatory message to all human races

because it confirms that death is not the final end of humankind.

“The crucifixion of Jesus on the cross signifies and lets us know who the almighty God is and what the purpose of life is. It also lets us know the source of peace and truth. The Cross confirms how far the values like dignity of life, love serving others as well as generosity, justice, forgiveness. We should keep on praying, for peace diligently, God will help us and be on our side,” Abune Birhane Eyesus concluded.

President of the Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia, Pastor Tsadiku Abdo for his part said that “when we are celebrating the Easter holiday, we should draw a number of lessons from the deeds of Jesus- how far he was engaged in sincerity to save the lives of all humankind through his blood and join the eternal life.”

Jesus paid the entire price to reconcile man and the almighty through his blood. His deeds teach people how they should behave and act in various circumstances. “We should follow His steps and act in accordance with His commands and will.”

Though he knew by heart the plan of the disciple to passing him to the then leaders, he kept on serving and washed their feet, including the betrayer, Judas Iscariot, on the night before his death to demonstrate that love is above everything and it is the best way to win than being heartless.

No matter how severe the hurdles he faced were, Jesus won at the end of the day. By conquering death and making the impossible possible, he taught human beings the power of love.

Thus, while we are celebrating Easter, we should learn to love and forgive our enemies, stop harming others,” he remarked.

Following the Easter festival, Ethiopians are extending a helping hand for the unfortunate ones to let them celebrate the festively happily and joyfully

Art & Culture

BRICS Moscow Film Festival: When Culture Promotes Common Vision

BY MULUGETA GUDETA

This year's annual Moscow international film festival has taken place from April 19 to April 26, 2024. This film festival is called the BRICS Moscow international film festival because BRICS member countries were also invited at the festival this year. The Moscow international film festival is one of the oldest in the world. For the first time it was held in 1935 with the famous film director Sergei Eisenstein (who directed the classic film "Battleship Potemkin" among many others).

This year's Moscow film festival was also exceptional in that it has combined the regular annual festival with the BRICS film festival in one with the participation of more countries. Why is it called BRICS international film festival? At this point it is important to give a short highlight of BRICS which is roughly known as an economic cooperation forum.

According to Wikipedia, "The BRICS countries are considered the foremost geopolitical rival to the G-7 bloc of leading advanced economies, and implementing competing initiatives." The inclusion of non-founding members to the group has bolstered its influence with the aim of achieving global economic equity through a multilateral framework.

BRICS is an intergovernmental organization comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates. It was originally devised as a group of countries that came together to promote investment and economic development in their respective countries. However, it later on evolved as a kind of geopolitical alliance since 2009 where members meet every year at a conference that discussed issues such as multilateral cooperation and mutual benefits.

As a matter of fact, the BRICS countries are not only known for their economic achievements alone. Most of them have a rich film history and a remarkable growth in their respective film industries. Russia is one of the most advanced countries in the world for its film history and the contributions it had made to the growth and development of global cinema. From the 1930s to the 1960s, Russian cinema had witnessed a real boom as new and talented directors, producers, script writers and actors came to the scene and enriched what was then known as Soviet cinema. Sergey Eisenstein was among the most brilliant film makers of that period although there were also lesser known stars.

The other BRICS countries that have strong film traditions include India, China, Brazil, Egypt, Iran. In Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates, the film industries are less developed although Ethiopia has

a long history of filmmaking. Ethiopia's introduction to film goes back to the year the French Lumiere Brothers invented the modern film camera. However to many constraints and challenges, the film industry could not grow at a higher speed. It only started to blossom particularly between 2000 and 2020, while the current situation leaves much to be desired.

According to Wikipedia, "The cinema in India consists of motion pictures made by the Indian film industry and it has had a lasting effect on world cinema since the late 20th century." Indian cinema known as Bollywood, is now the second biggest film industry in the world by the number of films produced annually and by size of investment and turnover.

According to the same source, "China is home to the largest movie and drama production complex and film studios in the world. In 2012, the country became the second largest market in the world for box office receipt. China has also become a major hub of business for Hollywood studios."

Iran has also a strong cinema tradition. "The cinema of Iran refers to the film industry in Iran. In particular, Iranian art films have generated international recognition. Iran has been lauded as one of the best exporters of cinema in the world in the 1990s. Some critics now rank Iran as the world's most important national cinema, artistically with a significance that invites comparison with Italian neo-realism."

On the other hand cinema in the United Arab Emirates started relatively late, "with a number of feature films that were broadcast on national television since the 1960s. The Dubai International film festival was founded in 2004 and continues to be held to this day."

As indicated above, this year's Moscow international film festival was held together with the BRICS film festival and as a result of this, over 260 films were presented for competition. According to sources, "With the BRICS film festival running at the same time as the Moscow international film festival, it was expected that more films would be presented this year. Indeed, 260 feature films, documentaries, animated, short films, and multi-part works of art were presented"

The BRICS Moscow international film festival has come to an end in Moscow on April 26 after winners have been announced by the jury. According to sources, "the BRICS film festival as part of the Moscow international film festival program has announced the winners. The film "Hajjan" directed by Abu Bakar Shawky was produced by Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan was recognized as the best."

According to the same sources, the international jury included producer Aleksey Pimanov (chairman), South African actress Florence Masebe, Ethiopian producer Yirgashewa Teshome Amare, Chinese film critic Zhao Shuguang and the first female director of the United Arab Emirates Nayla alKhaja."A total of seven films from Russia, China and India, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, South Africa and Iran were presented in the competition, in addition, more than 20 films were shown at the festival's out-of-competition programs."

The BRICS Moscow international film festival was successfully completed and one of the main highlights of the events was a discussion organized by the business program and touching on various issues impacting the film industries in BRICS countries in particular. "During the business program, participants and guests of the event discussed the peculiarities of the national film industry and distribution, intellectual property rights in the creative industries of the BRICS countries, the impacts of festivals on the possibility of entering the film market and also talked to Russian film producers about possible co-production."

The BRICS Moscow international film festival can also send important lessons to the still nascent Ethiopian film industry that is struggling for its survival at this particular time. Economic difficulties may sometimes send the wrong message about the film industry by saying that film is a luxury item that has to be overlooked for the sake of other priorities. This is however a wrong message because many countries have practically demonstrated that the film industry in a country like Ethiopia can also developed together with the other sector of the economy as film making is basically an economic activities with great potentials for the overall development of the country. In the some African countries like Nigeria, the film industry is one of the biggest source of foreign currency and tax revenue and a most reliable sector that is not effected either by inflation or economic crisis. Economic difficulties are no reason for the slum in film production in Ethiopia. People still go to the movies if they are offered quality films that have also great appeal and strong themes.

It is not necessary to go back to the history of Ethiopian cinema in order to assess or understand why a once promising industry is now caught with paralysis to such an extent that it is almost going out of existence, let alone thrive and conquer the outside world as many African film industries are doing at this moment. To begin with, the modern Ethiopian industry started on a weak financial and knowledge bases. It's trajectory was not well-planned, studied and launched with the necessary insights or vision that could feed the

industry with creative alternative to ensure its long-term survival. Everything was done spontaneously without the necessary preparations and institutional support from government or the private sector.

The weakness of the Ethiopian film industry was evident at this year's BRICS Moscow international film festival. All the BRIC members have presented at least one film for competition. Only Ethiopia has failed to make her presence felt at the festival with no film presented by the domestic industry. Ethiopian filmmakers could at least make their presence felt by attending the discussion forums in order to gain experience from countries that have been successful in building vibrant film industries.

Unlike in countries like Egypt or Nigeria and South Africa, the Ethiopian film industry had no solid experience to build its future on. No doubt that there is a great deal of enthusiasm and energy among the new and young crops of Ethiopian film makers but that is not enough to run an industry because the film industry is above anything else about vision, skills, money and experience.

However, in an industry that need large financial infusions for its growth, the Ethiopian film industry could no grow and thrive by producing low-budget low quality video movies and cast and crew that are sweating on meager pays or starvation wages that barely cover their daily expenses. In the absence of awareness of the economic potentials of the film industry as employer, taxpayer and source of income for so many people, hopes are set to quickly turn into disappointments. This is what has happened to the domestic film industry at present.

The BRICS Moscow international film festival should serve as a clarion call to the Ethiopian film industry. Filmmakers will have to pay heed of the messages sent by this year's festival in order to come up with something commendable next year. They have to learn from the experiences of countries that have established successful film companies. One can learn these lessons within Africa, from Nigeria to Egypt and to South Africa, lessons in filmmaking and building the film industry abound.

There are co-production potentials even in Africa provided that they come up with acceptable film scripts that can attract domestic and foreign funding. They may also secure technical assistance, visits to the various foreign studios and scholarships from film schools and training institutions. The future of the Ethiopian film industry is not dark at all. There are hopes for a comeback but these hopes should be built on realistic foundations and strong commitment from all stakeholders to make this vision a reality.

Verbatim and Caption



All Ethiopians should join 'Clean Streets – Healthy Lives' initiative: PM Abiy

We launched the “Clean Streets- Healthy Lives” initiative aiming at creating clean and beautiful cities. The initiative targets constructing modern, clean and dignified public restrooms. As we embark on this new initiative, I call upon all Ethiopians to contribute their share in creating cities that are conducive for everyone.

We are colorful when we come together for a collective cause. I encourage you to join the Clean Ethiopia digital telethon today and in the days and weeks ahead. Together, we can make a significant impact.

Everyone is invited to join “Clean Cities- Healthy Lives” movement by participating in the digital telethon.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD)

Addis Ababa’s corridor development targets transforming the city: PM Abiy



The corridor development initiative underway in Addis Ababa is not just about construction, it is about transforming the city into a more livable, vibrant, and sustainable environment.

By enhancing the aesthetics, greenery, and infrastructure, we are striving to address not only public health concerns but also generating employment opportunities for the residents. These efforts will elevate Addis Ababa and truly establish it as a city that caters to the needs of all its inhabitants.

We conducted the corridor development review with the leadership of Addis Ababa City Government to delve deeper into our advancements on the corridor development.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) said this week after discussing with the leadership of the city for the second time to review the corridor development



Catholic Church pledges support to clean Ethiopia movement: Cardinal

Berhaneyesus

The Ethiopian Catholic Church supports the “Clean Streets- Healthy Lives” initiative by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD). Ethiopian Catholic Church is ready to contribute its share towards the success of initiative and to implement the projects in its institution.

We are on the side of the government in the ‘Clean Cities- Healthy Lives’ initiative which complies with the Christian teaching of cleanness. Dirty Materials and other wastes should be discharged in modern manner to keep the city clean since cleanness is happiness, health and wealth.

Cardinal Berhaneyesus Demerew, Ethiopian Catholic Church Archbishop

Ethiopia committed to accelerate regional integration, stability: Ahmed Shide

Ethiopia is at the forefront in acceleration regional economic integration and regional stability. Ethiopia is backbone of cooperation between the horn of Africa and with Arabia which is a rising partnership.

Regional integration and stability is the anchor of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s foreign policy. Ethiopia has been a leading country in Africa regional connectivity as well as the Ethiopian Airlines is playing a major role in bringing Africa to the rest of the world.

Ahmed Shide, Finance Minister remarked at the World Economic Forum in Saudi Arabia.



Ethiopia’s irrigation coverage exceeds 1.8 mln hectares: Minister

Ethiopia’s modern irrigation infrastructure coverage has surpassed 1.8 million hectares. Modern irrigation infrastructure shows a significant growth.

In the previous fiscal year, the total irrigation coverage stood at 1.5 million hectares. Currently, the coverage of irrigation has risen to 1.8 million hectares in just nine months. The expansion on the irrigation network helps to develop the employment opportunities in the agriculture sector

Engineer Aisha Mohammed, Minister, Irrigation and Lowland Areas

