



Ambassador Nebiyu Tedla

Ethiopia expresses concern in post-ATMIS forces deployment in Somalia

BY YESUF ENDRIS

ADDIS ABABA-The African Union and the United Nations must ensure careful deployment of the post-ATMIS forces in Somalia to prevent unnecessary and unexpected regional tensions, taking relevant Security Council resolutions into account, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) said.

MoFA has also expressed concern over the upcoming deployment of peacekeeping forces in Somalia. As a neighboring country and a key contributor to regional security and stability, Ethiopia is closely monitoring the situation.

During his biweekly briefing, MoFA

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Shedding light on Ethiopia's justifiable quest for sea outlet

BY YESUF ENDRIS

After months of diplomatic tension, Ethiopia and Somalia are close to resolving their dispute over the bilateral port deal

signed on January 1st between Ethiopia and Somaliland. Ethiopia remains committed to its longstanding quest for sea access, a goal supported by historians as justifiable and

achievable.

Following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with Somaliland, Prime

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Amb. Atif Sharif

Ethiopia's economic liberalization lures more FDI: Pakistani Ambassador

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA - Ethiopia's economic liberalization would allure more Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) akin to what Pakistan has achieved in recent years from similar move, Ambassador Atif Sharif said.

In an interview with the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), Pakistani Ambassador to Ethiopia Atif Sharif commended Abiy Ahmed's administration for addressing economic challenges through permitting the private sector to engage in the economy

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CEHA to triple Ethiopia's horticultural benefits

• Pavesway for African free trade area

BY GIRMACHEW GASHAW

ADDIS ABABA -Ethiopia's horticultural benefits would triple down in the next 5 to 10 years backed by the COMESA horticulture program, Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) indicated.

In an interview with *The Ethiopian Herald*, COMESA representative and Chief Executive Officer for ACTESA, John Mukuka (PhD), expressed that the COMESA East African Community Horticulture Accelerator Program (CEHA) aims to benefit the horticultural industry within the commercial member states, currently valued about 4 billion US dollars.

With the launch of CEHA in Ethiopia, it has the potential to triple the horticultural industry within the next 5 to 10 years, he added.

According to him, the benefits extend to the private sector and 90 million small farmers in commercial areas.



John Mukuka (PhD)

They will have access to planting materials, markets, and regional labor systems, which is a significant benefit for the private sector in Ethiopia, as well as for smallholder and commercial growers, he added.

By creating ACTESA, COMESA member

States have shown commitment to ensuring that food assistance and other types of food security interventions in the region are development-oriented and promote the sustainability of food security among target beneficiaries, the CEO said.

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College secures 1st ISO quality certification

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA – Addis Ababa Tegbareid Polytechnic College has received the first ISO 9001/2015 quality management certification for higher class achievement.

Receiving the certificate, College Dean, Girum Girma said that the college has been carrying out various activities since its inception in producing skilled human power, boosting production and productivity and providing 120,000 trainings for the past eight decades.

Currently, the college is providing training in 10 departments with 22 vocational sections, he noted.

According to Girum, the quality certification came after the reform that has helped the college register better outcome in reducing bureaucratic red tape, modernizing service provision, and improving the capability of the employees and teachers.

“The reward gained from the Ethiopian Conformity Assessment Enterprise would help the college push towards meeting international competitiveness and becoming trustworthy among the government and citizens in the future,” he added.

Ethiopian Conformity Assessment Enterprise (ECAE) Director General, Meaza Abera on her part said that the college has developed firm commitment to record quality production, build citizens’ capacity, increase the satisfaction of the people, and improve the service system as these are among the major thematic areas that helped it secure the certificate compared with other institutions.

ECAE certifies various institutions that show better performance meeting its criteria or standards. ECAE has nine department evaluation areas such as food and beverage, leather, garments, manufacturing, construction inputs, electrical equipment, and the likes. It means that ECAE and the college can work together in creating knowledgeable and skilled teachers and students as well as improving the quality of production, she added.

Addis Ababa Labor and Skills Bureau Deputy Head, Abera Biru (PhD) indicated that establishing effective system would play a decisive role in bridging the gaps among enterprises, improving service provision and ensuring competitiveness at the international level.

He added that Addis Ababa city administration strives for establishing better quality management system to help the colleges in the metropolitan become internationally competent through improving quality and maximizing productivity.

Among others, Abera emphasized that providing adequate skilled human power, expanding industry extension service, and realizing quality production are the major areas to meet world standard.

Addis Ababa Tegbareid Polytechnic College is the first institute in the field for boosting vocational trainings and reducing the skilled human power gap, it was learned.

Ethiopia eyeing investor’s involvement in energy to boost investment

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA –Ethiopia’s pulling out all the stops towards promoting foreign direct investment yet requires collaborative interventions amongst streamlined institutions, the Ethiopian Investment Commission (EIC) said.

EIC, Ministry of Water and Energy (MoWE) and United Nations Trade and Development Agency (UNCTAD) held a discussion yesterday on financing and investment for energy transition in Ethiopia in the presence of government officials, CSOs and experts.

Speaking at the workshop, EIC Commissioner Hana Arayaselassie said that the government has been revising policies and legal frameworks in a bid to promote the private sector’s engagement in the renewable energy sector, but it did not bear fruits because of lack of streamlined institutions and collaborative interventions among stakeholders, institutions and the private sector.

She has also asserted that the country has immense potential in renewable energy such as hydro, wind, geothermal, solar power in spite of the minimum investment in the sector. To address this gap, the commission is working on investment promotion through providing incentives to investors.

While Ethiopia is among the major countries in green economy with a



Hana Arayaselassie

virgin market, the electric access is still about 55%. Therefore, she stressed the necessity to tailor the generation and transmission opportunity to meet the remaining rate in parallel with the set industrialization target in manufacturing and other sectors.

According to her, potential investors have shown keen interest to participate in the renewable sector by facilitating a playground through strengthened investment and financial ecosystems.

Moreover, she stated that the commission along with UNCTAD launched a 3-year operational project with a view of promoting the country’s potential for a renewable energy hub and promoting it to international investors.

For his part, MoWE Senior Energy Advisor Gosaye Mengistie stated that Ethiopia is one of the few countries in the world generating almost all its

electricity from renewable sources, mostly hydropower green energy.

However, he emphasized that the generation capacity and related infrastructure development is very low, since the country’s electricity access rate is not more than 54% and the clean cooking access is about 10%.

Gosaye underscored that with six years ongoing effort the overall electricity access rate has increased from 44% to 54%, but still 46% of the population lack access to electricity.

“Although there has been an electrification rate progress in recent years, the expansion rate is still far from what is needed to achieve universal electricity access by 2030. The work is constrained by limited funding, weak implementation capacity and lack of imported materials,” he said.

UNCTAD Regional Office for Africa Chief Diane Sayinzoga emphasized that a ‘whole-of-government’ approach is needed for the promotion of green growth investment areas, the development of green bankable projects and to support new and existing companies and project sponsors to invest in the energy transition.

To support its climate change targets and ambitions, UN Trade and Development is leading technical assistance projects focusing on attracting investment in the energy transition in Ethiopia, as part of its broader work on investment and energy.

Local company set to export high-quality electrical products

• *Aims to reduce import costs*

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA - Uni-Mas Engineering PLC is gearing up to start exporting electrical products while continuing to meet domestic demand.

The company’s General Manager and Founder, Mohammed Muzein, revealed to journalists yesterday that Uni-Mas is on the verge of exporting international-standard electrical products, targeting both neighboring countries and other global markets.

Mohammed emphasized the company’s goal to reduce Ethiopia’s expenditure on imported electrical products by replacing them with locally produced alternatives. The main export destinations will be Africa and other parts of the world, according to the company.

Uni-Mas has been providing quality

electrical solutions with a diverse range of products, including LED lights, circuit breakers, extension sockets, voltage stabilizers, switches, and more. To achieve its export goals, the company is collaborating with Japan’s Panasonic SMT, South Korea’s Samsung production line, and Germany’s Tederic for injection machines and testing laboratories, bringing in the necessary machinery to produce and export standard electrical products.

“Our LED lighting solutions offer a wide voltage range, providing efficient and eco-friendly solutions for the nation’s current needs, catering to residential, commercial, and industrial clients,” Mohammed added.

The company has also established agreements with higher educational institutions for research and training purposes. Additionally, Uni-Mas has secured 11,647 square meters of land



Mohammed Muzein

in Bole Lemi Industrial Park after submitting a work proposal to the Ethiopian Investment Commission and is now working on developing the land by fulfilling the necessary formalities.

The company has so far created 97 permanent and 22 temporary jobs for citizens.

News

CEHA to triple Ethiopia's...

ACTESA has already launched CEHA in Ethiopia and plans to do so in Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, and Kenya and it will facilitate the regional harmonization of agricultural industry standards, including SPS standards, CD standards, and market access standards, he stated.

It will also work towards implementing CEHA and a regional leveling system to ensure that products like Irish potatoes,

avocados, and onions meet regional standards, Mukuka noted.

“We are implementing capacity-building programs to improve the quantity and quality of products. We will also train the private sector on quality standards to meet regional and global market demands. By ensuring that products meet CEHA standards, we aim to increase exports and meet the demands of markets like Europe,”

he said.

He believed that CEHA will pave the way for the African free trade area by setting minimum labeling requirements within commercial member states. This will eventually expand to cover 24 member states of the African Union, creating a building block for trade across Africa.

Ethiopia expresses...

Spokesperson Ambassador Nebiyu Tedla emphasized that the countries currently contributing to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) are important stakeholders and should be consulted on future missions.

Regarding Egypt's interest in deploying its army to Somalia, Ambassador Nebiyu stated that while Somalia, as a sovereign nation, has the right to enter into bilateral agreements with any country, Ethiopia will not compromise if its national security is threatened.

The spokesperson also reiterated Ethiopia's commitment to resolving all diplomatic disputes with the Somali government peacefully.

Concerning Ethiopia's access to the sea, Ambassador Nebiyu noted that while it was once taboo to discuss this issue, now almost all countries, including mediator Türkiye and Somalia, recognize the legitimacy of Ethiopia's quest for sea access. He described this as a significant achievement for Ethiopia, stating, “We will continue our pursuit through non-violent means to preserve the peace and stability of the region.”

The spokesperson also mentioned that negotiations with Somaliland or Somalia would focus on peaceful mechanisms to secure sea access.

Additionally, Ethiopian Foreign Minister Ambassador Taye Atske-Selassie expressed optimism for more fruitful outcomes in the upcoming third round of talks with Somalia.

Shedding light on...

Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) stated on X that the agreement could fulfill Ethiopia's historic quest for sea access, despite Somalia's opposition.

To address the diplomatic dispute, Türkiye has initiated mediation, with two rounds of talks already concluded. After the second round in Ankara, Ethiopian Foreign Minister Ambassador Taye Atske-Selassie expressed optimism for more progress in the upcoming third round of talks with Somalia. He emphasized Ethiopia's legitimate interest and peaceful approach in securing reliable sea access.

During a bi-weekly briefing, Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Ambassador Nebiyu Tedla reiterated Ethiopia's commitment to pursuing sea access while resolving diplomatic disputes with Somalia peacefully. “It was once taboo to discuss this issue, but now almost all countries, including

Türkiye and Somalia, recognize the legitimacy of Ethiopia's quest for sea access,” he stated. “This is a significant achievement for Ethiopia, and we will continue our pursuit through non-violent means to preserve regional peace and stability.”

Despite progress toward a peaceful resolution, the final outcome remains uncertain. Ethiopia's claim, however, is strongly supported by historical evidence, which scholars consider valid and reasonable.

Historically, Ethiopia had access to the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden until Eritrea became independent. Historian Ahmed Zekeria emphasized that Ethiopia's ancient civilization was closely linked to maritime activities and that the country's current landlocked status was artificially created to undermine its interests.

The historian further argued that future stability in the Horn of Africa, with its

6,000 km-long coastline, depends on Ethiopia's access to the sea, advocating for a mutually beneficial mechanism that allows all countries in the region access to the coast.

Diplomacy and Political Science scholar Yisihq Fikru echoed this view, noting that Ethiopia's lack of sea access has created significant challenges. He noted that Ethiopia had stable direct access to the sea for more than ten centuries, and the current situation, where the country is landlocked, is deeply concerning for this generation. The scholar also stressed that relying on trade agreements for port access is not sustainable, as it increases the cost of imports and poses risks to national security.

Yisihq concluded that Ethiopia's ambitious developmental projects in political, economic, and diplomatic affairs require dependable access to the sea

Ethiopia's economic...

to function in a balanced manner.

Sharif recalled that Ethiopia had been led by a more state-controlled economy contrary to many parts of the world that have become liberal in which the private sector take the role and the governments only regulate the system.

For that reason, he said that Ethiopia's imports are four times bigger than exports, which cause forex crunch.

“In my country and many other parts of the world, the foreign exchange rate is the result of demand and supply. If there is more demand for USD and there is less supply, your currency has to depreciate and the dollar has to appreciate. This way, it becomes an equilibrium balance.”

That is the way the export encouraged, the Ambassador said, adding that

Abiy's administration has made the right decision to adopt the homegrown economic reform.

He expressed that the reform has enabled Ethiopia joined IMF program thereby receiving billions of USD from IMF as well as WB.

The reform, according to Sharif, has also brought demand and supply to determine the market prices, which encourages investment in the country.

Today, Ethiopia has allowed foreign investors to engage in the banking industry, wholesale and retail sectors as well as commodity exports, he mentioned.

World countries that are considered as socialist, like China, are now liberalizing their economies through promoting private sector role and

market based exchange rates, according to the Ambassador.

Pakistan also adopted similar economic system two years ago applying market driven exchange rate which depreciated the currency about 100% but it is now stable, he indicated.

Such economic measure might have short term impact on Ethiopia like rising prices and inflation, but things will be adjusted gradually. To this end, strengthening the private sector and promoting public-private investment model to construct flagship projects is vital and this enabled Pakistan to accomplish big projects on time, he added.

The reform also helped Pakistan to possess competitive firms that lower prices and increase FDI. And it is

promising for Ethiopia too so that the country would see good result shortly, he expressed.

In the last two years, two large Pakistani investment delegations, incorporating 17 companies, have visited Ethiopia and observe country's resources.

The government has offered them incentives related to cheap electricity, industrial park shades and duty free imports, among others. “I think they are enough incentives, now the only thing that we need to focus on is that people need to understand the market,” he said.

After this foreign exchange reform, it will be easier for foreign investors including Pakistani companies would come to Ethiopia and do some investment, according to Sharif.

Opinion

Challenges, opportunities in implementing the Pretoria agreement for lasting peace

BY ADDISALEM MULAT

It is widely believed that in the wake of the AU-brokered peace deal, Ethiopia successfully ended up the war that lasted for two years in northern part of the country. This move in black and white demonstrates Ethiopia's ability and determination to resolve its internal conflicts and bolster peace and stability in the shortest possible time.

In the aftermath of the Pretoria peace agreement, the federal government has been expediting its implementation according to the agreement despite encounters. It is common knowledge that thus far, the effectuation has been going in the right direction with an interim administration formed and TPLF delisted from the list of terrorist groups at the earliest possible time.

It should be remembered that since the beginning of the war, non-fighters in Northern Ethiopia have passed through challenges to reach where they are in the present circumstances. The journey was not a walk in the park. For the sake of truth, the government has played a paramount role in achieving major breakthrough in taking the country to new frontiers through thick and thin.

The government has been working at all hours of the day and night with the purpose of putting the peace agreement into practice. In point of fact, the agreement turned out to be successful in ending the conflicts and all forms of hostilities which was rocking the northern part of the country.

In a similar vein, Ethiopia has continued going to the ends of the earth to demobilize and reintegrate former fighters as per the peace agreement devoid of missing the desired goal. However as a result of the current situation, the envisioned target has not been achieved yet.

Notwithstanding the fact that demobilization and reintegration programs smooth the path of backing former belligerents who have been preoccupied with the war, the sought-after target has not been accomplished yet on account of some groups' negligence that have been making an effort to back the country into a corner.

It is important to highlight that demobilization and reintegration beyond a shadow of a doubt plays an extremely important role in paving the way for peace-building in areas influenced by conflicts and transforming a peaceful and secure vibe.

Since the signing of the Pretoria peace agreement, the federal government has been moving heaven and earth to ensure peace and tranquility in the northern part of the country. As the priority of the government is restoring peace according to the deal, TPLF officials should do the whole kit and caboodle they can to materialize the intended target of the country.

The Government Communication Service (GCS) stated that the fundamental principle of the Pretoria Agreement is adherence to the constitution and its institution, according

to information obtained from ENA.

In a statement it issued on current affairs of the country, GCS recalled that National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) has recently issued registration of certificate to TPLF as a political party in accordance with the amended election proclamations number 1332/2016 article 2 (1). It said the government accepts and commends decisions made by constitutional institutions based on legal and institutional freedom as it is the fruits of the ongoing reform.

The TPLF lost its legal status following the decision made by NEBE based on the Proclamation of Political Parties' Registration and Code of conduct. The Board passed this decision due to TPLF's involvement in violent activities. The GCS emphasized that this decision was independent of the subsequent declaration of the TPLF as a terrorist organization by the House of People's Representatives.

Regarding the Pretoria Peace Agreement, the statement clarified that federal government's obligation was to facilitate the removal of the TPLF's terrorist designation, as indicated under article 7 (2) (C) and there is no particular responsibility or obligation that the government had taken concerning TPLF's legal status or registration.

The statement further asserted that TPLF's commitment to respect the constitution, laws, federal institutions and other constitutional institutions as outlined in the agreement's article 7(1) stressing the need for TPLF operate by complying with the country's political party registration laws and NEBE's mandate.

Hence, the issue of TPLF's legal status should be resolved only through the existing pertinent laws and the procedures of NEBE with respect to the Pretoria agreement. The statement noted that the federal government has been making efforts to facilitate ways for the party regains its status as political party by conducting series of discussions with the leaders of TPLF and NEBE.

According to NEBE's position in this matter, the only legal alternative available to TPLF is to register as a new party using the same procedures that other newly formed political parties must follow.

However, TPLF argued for recognition as an existing political organization insisting that it is an old political organization. It also claimed that the matter is not only legal but political that requires a particular political decision.

Accordingly, to bridge this gap and ensure a peaceful resolution, the government initiated legal reforms to accommodate the TPLF and other similar groups by recognizing the freedom and independence of institutions. Following these legal amendments, the federal government amended the law and approved by the House of Peoples' Representative.

After revising the Election, Political Parties Registration and Code of Conduct Proclamation, the Ministry of Justice communicated the necessary steps for the



TPLF to obtain legal status to the NEBE.

Albeit the federal government has been bringing at all hours of the day and night quite a lot of effective measures to fruition with the aim of restoring peace and tranquility, bringing about the desired goal is not turning out to be a low-hanging fruit.

It is true that the move of the federal government to let bygones be bygones and return the northern part of the country to normalcy has been receiving a pat on the back. As the country has been putting the Pretoria Peace Agreement into effect, the northern part of the country has embarked on bringing about the desired target in the face of challenges that have been throwing cold water on the positive developments.

Regardless of the positive moves burgeoning in every nook and cranny of the country, Ethiopia's arch enemies and discredited international media outlets have continued broadcasting fake news that do not reflect the existing reality on the ground. No matter how far Ethiopia's adversaries travel to blemish the actual achievements surfacing across the country, all their efforts jumpstarted licking the dust.

Since the beginning of the cessation of the hostilities agreement, civilians in the war-torn areas have set in motion breathing a sigh of relief. It is witnessed that there have been fast development and speedy progress in the northern part of the country. The positive achievements being taken by the federal government have been many a time and oft are bearing fruits in the face of challenges.

The African Union led brokered peace deal is a noteworthy breakthrough in bolstering peace and stability on the continent. What is more, it emphasizes the continent's competence to address its own internal conflicts, and function as a glimmer of hope for other regions experiencing violent conflicts. Through continued investments in conflict resolution and peace building endeavors, Africa can attain a more affluent and nonviolent future for its people.

It is gratifying to note the AU-led peace agreement in Northern Ethiopia is at present progressing as proposed and the planned timetable. On top of that, the success of the agreement serves as an example of what

can be achieved when African leaders come together to address matters that threaten the continent's stability.

It is recalled that in a statement the Government Communication Service announced that the federal government has attentively looked into the TPLF's statement that demands the Pretoria Agreement is respected, according to sources.

In the statement, the GCS stressed that the federal government firmly believes that the full implementation of the Pretoria Peace Agreement is the main solution to address the problem occurred in the Northern Ethiopia in a sustainable manner.

Beyond the Pretoria Peace Agreement, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has been taking practical measures to address the issue, the statement said. The Government has shown its commitment for peace, political solution and cooperation ahead of the Pretoria Peace Agreement, the Statement underscored.

Putting aside the role of the federal government as per the Pretoria Agreement, the government has allowed the formation of the Interim Administration of Tigray comprising the TPLF and armed forces in the state. It was aimed to save time till the leaders included in the interim administration introduce one another. And this shows how the federal government is committed to peace for the people of Tigray, the statement indicated.

To supply basic public services to the people in Tigray, the federal government sent leaders of the banking, telecom, road transport, health, education and relief operation sectors to Tigray for discussions with the regional officials on the restoration of services in the region just two weeks after the Pretoria Peace Agreement was signed.

A range of activities have been carried out to restore the teaching learning process in Tigray state. Human resource development, capacity building and restructuring of the leadership of universities in the region have also been undertaken.

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

Editorial

Special attention to special economic zones

Addis is going through a dynamic turnaround that serves as a harbinger that the future bodes well for the city and the country as well. The ongoing construction of the corridor projects public parks and other facilities has been in full swing bringing lofty dividends to the city and beyond. Besides giving a peculiar look and beauty to the city, the constructions and expansions of infrastructural projects foretell more about the country's ambition.

With the city requiring more projects that improve the well-being of its residents, the government is doing its level best to come up with more projects. In fact, the incumbent has been making the utmost effort to promote manufacturing and industry sectors.

In addition to other activities, the government has been investing in constructing special economic zones in different parts of the country. Previously the government launched Geda and Addis Tomorrow Special Economic Zones in Oromia state and the capital Addis Ababa respectively. Economic zones provide opportunities to cultivate business and expedite investments ultimately leading to the expansion of manufacturing and industry sectors.

Being territorially demarcated areas offers incentives for capital and trade as they encompass a range of typologies, including industrial parks, free ports and urban enterprise zones.

Special economic zones will serve as a major source of jobs for the country's growing population while enticing foreign direct investment and facilitating trade.

Once Geda is completed, it will be part of the Lume Free Trade Zone and become the second free trade area after Dire Dawa. On Wednesday, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed launched the construction of the Addis Tomorrow Special Economic Zone at the heart of the city.

The launching came as Addis Ababa City Administration and China Communications Construction Company (CCCC) entered an agreement for the construction of the special economic zone. It will be situated on 35 hectares of land is imperative to foster business and investment.

This is the start of our big dream of making Addis Ababa attractive as its name 'New Flower' refers to, and my gratitude goes to CCCC and the city administration for kicking start this project," Abiy said.

According to the prime minister, the Addis Tomorrow Special Economic Zone will be connected to other economic areas whose constructions are underway in other parts of the capital through the ongoing Addis Ababa corridor development.

Abiy said the economic zone is part of the government's commitment to transforming Addis Ababa into one of the most beautiful cities in the world by building smart communities with various facilities, including residential houses, shopping malls, hotels, and recreational centers.

Free and special economic areas ease business by providing a more relaxed regulatory environment and various incentives. Well-managed zones also help build the capabilities of the local workforce as outside investors share expertise and know-how. Now that the government is paying special attention to the expansion of industries, economic zones will prove vital along the way. The burgeoning youth population and the vast natural resources will also be vital ingredients needed by investors to take part in the zones.

Building special economic zones, however, is not an end; it requires recruiting vibrant manufacturers and businesses. In this regard, the government needs to encourage small and medium enterprises to grow in capital and production.

If timely and efficiently completed, the economic zones with the right policies and infrastructure can boost economic development and change the livelihood of the population.

Opinion



Mpox declared global health threat

After thorough investigation and discussion the World Health Organization (WHO) has finally officially declared that Mpox is a global health threat. Several reports including that of WHO's indicate that the disease has been detected in more than 13 African countries at this moment with a possibility of rapidly spreading out of the continent.

The region has been suffering from the outbreak of various contagious pandemics for decades. Among the rapidly spreading infectious diseases that the continent suffered includes the Ebola virus. Furthermore it was also victim of the globally known pandemic COVID 19. What makes it worse is the continent still has to recover from the impacts of the COVID 19 outbreak.

The global health entity, WHO, has already confirmed the issue as a global threat. WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom has determined that the upsurge of mpox in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and a growing number of countries in Africa constitutes a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) under the International Health Regulations (2005) (IHR).

WHO Regional Director for Africa Dr Matshidiso Moeti said, "Significant efforts are already underway in close collaboration with communities and governments, with our country teams working on the frontlines to help reinforce measures to curb mpox. With the growing spread of the virus, we're scaling up further through coordinated international action to support countries bring the outbreaks to an end."

According to WHO, Mpox is an infectious disease caused by the monkeypox virus. It can cause a painful rash, enlarged lymph nodes and fever. Most people fully recover, but some get very sick. The disease mpox (formerly monkeypox) is caused by the monkeypox virus (commonly abbreviated as MPXV), an enveloped double-stranded DNA virus of the Orthopoxvirus genus in the Poxviridae family, which includes variola, cowpox, vaccinia and other viruses.

The two genetic clades of the virus are clades I and II.

The monkeypox virus was discovered in Denmark (1958) in monkeys kept for research and the first reported human case of mpox was a nine-month-old boy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC, 1970). Mpox can spread from person to person or occasionally from animals to people. Following eradication of smallpox in 1980 and the end of smallpox vaccination worldwide, mpox steadily emerged in central, east and west Africa. A global outbreak occurred in 2022–2023. The natural reservoir of the virus is unknown – various small mammals such as squirrels and monkeys are susceptible.

Identifying mpox can be difficult as other infections and conditions can look similar. It is important to distinguish mpox from chickenpox, measles, bacterial skin infections, scabies, herpes, syphilis, other sexually transmissible infections, and medication-associated allergies. Someone with mpox may also have another sexually transmissible infection such as herpes. Alternatively, a child with suspected mpox may also have chickenpox. For these reasons, testing is key for people to get treatment as early as possible and prevent further spread.

Detection of viral DNA by polymerase chain reaction (PCR) is the preferred laboratory test for mpox. The best diagnostic specimens are taken directly from the rash – skin, fluid or crusts – collected by vigorous swabbing. In the absence of skin lesions, testing can be done on oropharyngeal, anal or rectal swabs. Testing blood is not recommended. Antibody detection methods may not be useful as they do not distinguish between different orthopoxviruses.

Now that the world has passed through grave levels of outbreaks in the recent past stakeholders need to give due attention to the issue and take quick action, as usual, before it goes the levels of the previous pandemics.

Source: WHO

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



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Business & Economy

Transformative potential of the African Continental Free Trade Area

BY LAKACHEW ATINAFU

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), launched in 2019, has the potential to be a true game-changer for the African continent. This ambitious initiative aims to create the world's largest free trade area, connecting 1.3 billion people across 55 African countries and representing a combined GDP of over USD 3 trillion.

At its core, the AfCFTA seeks to revolutionize intra-African trade by eliminating tariffs on 90% of goods, facilitating the free movement of people and capital, and promoting the development of regional value chains. By tearing down these long-standing barriers, the AfCFTA presents an unprecedented opportunity for African nations to unleash their economic potential and foster sustainable, inclusive growth, documents unveiled.

One of the primary benefits of the AfCFTA is its ability to boost intra-African trade, which currently stands at a mere 15% of the continent's total trade. By comparison, intra-regional trade accounts for 58% of total trade in Asia and 67% in Europe. Increasing trade between African countries can spur industrialization, create jobs, and diversify economies that have long been reliant on the export of raw materials.

Furthermore, the AfCFTA can help African nations overcome the challenges posed by pandemic and other global economic disruptions. By strengthening regional supply chains and reducing dependence on external markets, the agreement can build resilience and insulate countries from external shocks. This, in turn, can lead to greater food security, improved access to essential goods, and more stable economic growth.

Beyond the economic benefits, the AfCFTA also holds the promise of fostering deeper political and social integration across the continent. By facilitating the free movement of people and promoting cross-border collaboration, the agreement can serve as a catalyst for cultural exchange, knowledge sharing, and the development of a shared African identity.

However, the implementation of the AfCFTA is not without its challenges. Harmonizing trade policies, upgrading infrastructure, and addressing concerns over job losses and revenue shortfalls will require significant investment and political will. Navigating these complexities will be crucial to realizing the full transformative potential of this historic agreement.

As African nations work to overcome these obstacles, the success of the AfCFTA will have far-reaching implications for the continent's future. By fostering economic integration, promoting industrialization, and strengthening regional cooperation, the AfCFTA holds the promise of transforming Africa into a more prosperous, resilient, and interconnected continent – one that can harness its vast resources and human capital to create a brighter, more equitable future for all.



Strengthening AfCFTA is essential for the benefit of all Africans – photo google

According to ENA's recent report, African countries must work hand in hand to realize the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) as it is a very important agreement that enables African countries to deal without customs, administrative and bureaucratic constraints, Moroccan Ambassador Nuzha Alawi Mohammadi said.

In an exclusive interview with ENA, the Moroccan Ambassador to Ethiopia said her country is ready to work with other African countries for the implementation of the AfCFTA agreement.

According to her, economic cooperation between Morocco and other African countries has been going on for two decades. The country has been trading with several countries in Africa, including central and West African nations, as well as with countries outside the African continent.

"Morocco is the top investor in West Africa, and the second in the African continent in general," she stated. Elaborating on the economic policy of Morocco, Ambassador Mohammadi said the country works under South-South cooperation, meaning joint development.

"Morocco has experience and knowledge and is ready to share it with other African countries, and this was done after the visit of His Majesty King Mohammed VI to Sub Saharan Africa."

The Ambassador pointed out that the visit had a clear message, which is sustainable development, South-South cooperation and sharing of Moroccan experience with African countries in order to build a unified, prosperous and stable Africa.

Ambassador Mohammadi further explained that the AfCFTA is very important and a new system in the global economy that enables African countries to deal without customs, administrative and bureaucratic constraints.

African countries have trade exchange with each other as well as with other countries, but "we must build the African Continental Free Trade Area in order to strengthen the African economy," the ambassador pointed out.

Ambassador Mohammadi finally called on African countries to work hand in hand to implement the AfCFTA so that it becomes a reality and "the region becomes free and real."

African leaders have a crucial role to play in promoting free trade and regional integration to drive economic growth across the continent. Here are some key expectations and actions they should take: Political Commitment and Leadership is very crucial role for the integration of Africans so that African leaders must demonstrate unwavering political commitment to the AfCFTA and regional integration initiatives. This includes actively championing the agreement, advocating for its ratification, and ensuring its effective implementation at the national level. Strong political leadership is essential to overcome any resistance or skepticism and build a shared vision for a more economically integrated Africa.

Furthermore, many argue that harmonizing policies and regulations would be a spring board for Africans. In due course, African leaders must work collaboratively to harmonize trade policies, regulations, and customs procedures across the continent. This includes streamlining tariff schedules, simplifying rules of origin, and aligning non-tariff measures to create a more coherent and predictable business environment. Harmonization efforts should also extend to areas like investment, competition, and intellectual property rights to foster a seamless regional market.

Besides investing in Cross-Border infrastructure might be the question that matters at this concurrent paying tribute to improving cross-border infrastructure, such as roads, railways, and energy networks, as the frame work to facilitating the movement of goods, services, and people across Africa. African leaders should prioritize regional infrastructure projects and mobilize both public and private funding to address the continent's significant infrastructure gaps. Leveraging initiatives like the Programmed for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) can help coordinate and align

these infrastructure investments, so stated documents.

According to many scholars, enhancing institutional capacity is the critical factor for regional integrity that African leaders must strengthen the institutional capacity of regional economic communities and the AfCFTA Secretariat to ensure effective implementation and enforcement of the agreement. This includes providing adequate resources, building technical expertise, and empowering these institutions to monitor compliance, resolve disputes, and coordinate policy harmonization.

Moreover, giving due emphasis in supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) should be taken as the first steps of the ladder for development. For this reason, African leaders should implement targeted policies and programs to support the participation of SMEs in regional and continental trade. This can include providing access to finance, facilitating access to information, and investing in skills development to help SMEs navigate the complexities of the AfCFTA. Strengthening the capacity of SMEs is crucial for ensuring that the benefits of free trade are widely distributed across the continent.

Might also be so crucial and recommended for those steering the wheel of Africa to foster promoting free movement of people; facilitating the free movement of people, goods, and capital across borders is a key pillar of the AfCFTA. African leaders should work to remove barriers to the free movement of people, such as visa requirements, and promote the mutual recognition of professional qualifications. Enhancing labor mobility can help address skills gaps, foster cultural exchange, and strengthen regional integration.

By taking these actions and demonstrating unwavering commitment to the AfCFTA and regional integration, African leaders can unlock the transformative potential of free trade and drive sustainable economic growth across the continent.

Art & Culture

The Olympics as a powerful element of the global culture of peace

BY MULUGETA GUDETA

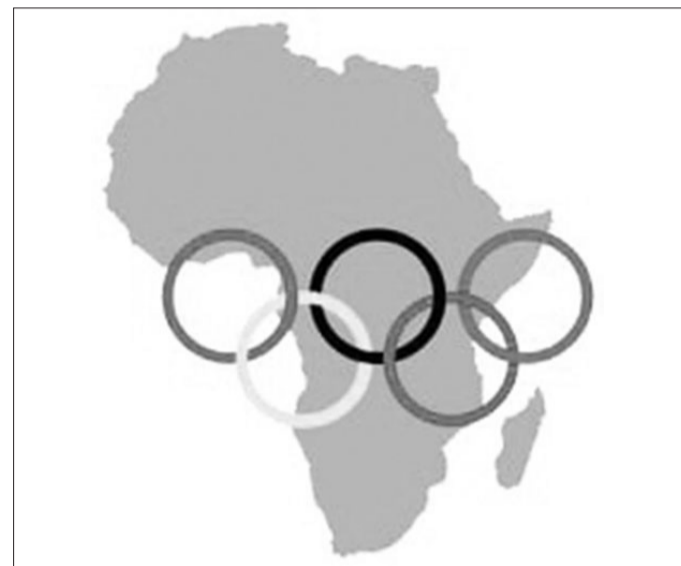
Back in 1960, upon his triumphant return from the Rome Olympics, Abebe Bikila was the subject of public adulation and many jokes that were popular at that time. The legendary Ethiopian marathoner born in a small village in the vicinity of the capital Addis Ababa, instantly became the second most popular man in Ethiopia after emperor Haile Selassie. He was the first man and African to win a gold medal in a marathon. It was a shock that reverberated across the world. How could an unknown athlete from a little-known country could win a race that was considered the most difficult in Olympics competitions?

“The favorites in 1960 included Sergei Popov of the Soviet Union, owner of the previous fastest marathon time of 2 hours 15 minutes and 17 seconds, and Abdesalem Rhadi of Morocco. So little known was Bikila before the race that the official Olympic program incorrectly listed him as “Bikila Abebe.” Before the 1960 Games, he had run only two marathons in his life—both in his native country.”

The 42 km marathon race in the Olympics is considered the most demanding and most grueling competition that has always put the resilience as well as the physical and psychological stamina of the athletes to the test. This was true back in the 1960s, when the like of Abebe Bikila achieved what was then thought to be an impossible feat. The marathon remains the ultimate test of endurance for athletes but also for their fans who have to undergo more than two hours of waiting until the first runner reaches the finish line.

This is as true now as it was more than 60 years ago although the record time has budged only a little and the competitors are generally younger than those veterans most of whom have now left the stadiums or transitioned to the other world. Those were glorious days for athletics in general and the marathon in particular when little-known and little-expected competitors emerged suddenly from nowhere and claimed the mantle of legend.

In Ethiopia, many Olympic legends have appeared and disappeared, but none are as revered as Abebe Bikila, who became a household name not only among the sporting community but also among the average Ethiopian who had nothing to do with running or sports in general. Abebe’s rise to Olympic supremacy was not only fast and unexpected but also unprecedented. He was catapulted to international fame so fast that his name and fame assumed mythical proportions. His downfall which was as sudden as his rise was largely ignored as it was shrouded in unfounded tales of mystery and intrigue.



According to an article in Encarta encyclopedia, “On a warm September evening in Rome, Italy, a slender, dark-shirted runner hastened toward the Arch of Constantine. Few of the spectators recognized him as he approached the finish line of the Olympic marathon, but most were surprised when they noticed that he was running barefoot. Two hundred yards ahead of his nearest competitor, Abebe Bikila crossed the finish line.”

Before that race, on the next-to-last night of the 1960 Olympic Games, Abebe Bikila was an obscure runner from Ethiopia, utterly anonymous to the world’s sporting press. A little over two hours later, Bikila had established himself as the fastest marathoner in history. He would go on to win, with surprising ease, the 1964 Olympic marathon in Tokyo, Japan. He would suffer a tragic auto accident that would paralyze him from the waist down, and he would die prematurely at age 41. But it was in that one race, at the Rome Olympics, that Bikila became one of the great champions in Olympic history.

The Olympic Games started in Olympia, Greece. “Although the ancient Games were staged in Olympia, Greece from 776 BC through 393 AD. it took 1503 years for the Olympics to return. The first modern Olympics were held in Athens, Greece in 1898. The man responsible for the rebirth was a Frenchman named Baron Pierre de Coubertin who presented the idea in 1894.”

Pierre de Coubertin succeeded in his effort to reestablish the Games primarily because his conception of the Games was international rather than nationalistic. Although earlier in his career he had been interested in sports as a way to improve the military preparedness of France, he eventually envisioned them as an instrument to overcome conflicts among nations.

“The history of the Games goes back around 3000 years, to the Peloponnese in ancient Greece. Sports contests organized by at Olympia took place every four years and acquired the Name Olympic Games. We do not know exactly when they started but the date of 776BC is often

cited in written sources.”

Pierre de Coubertin believed that sport contributed to the harmonious and well-balanced development of the body, personality, and mind. As such, interaction between sport education and culture is encouraged by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

“The goal of the Olympic Movement is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practiced without discrimination of any kind and the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding.”

As defined by the United Nations, “The Culture of Peace is a set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation by individuals.” This is however easier said than done as the ways of achieving or implementing a culture of peace have already proved extremely difficult unless the psychological, emotional, and sentimental conditions are conducive to the emergence of a genuine movement for a global culture of peace.

According to studies conducted in this area, “A Culture of Peace includes being in peace with oneself, others, and the natural world. The primary tool to promote a Culture of Peace is Peace Education, which must be taught in families, all levels of education, workplaces, and disseminated through the media, and encouraged at all levels of society.”

So far, there have been 30 Summer Olympic Games held in 21 cities and 24 Winter Olympic Games held in 21 cities. “The Olympic Games have become a significant global event, fostering international cooperation and cultural exchange. At the same time, hosting the Olympic Games can also bring significant economic benefits and challenges to the host city, affecting infrastructure, tourism, and local communities.”

There has hardly been any time when the Olympic games were taking place in an atmosphere of total peace. For one reason or another, the Olympics often

take place in contexts of wars, conflicts, and misunderstandings among nations. These conflicts are of course contrary to the spirit of the Olympic Games. “Olympic Games provide the framework for peaceful athletic competition and unite people all over the world. And the torch relay is a powerful symbol of peace, an expression of peaceful cooperation between human beings and between countries.”

Africa is not a continent that is struggling to develop and not a continent that pursues ambitious or hegemonic plans in other parts of the world. Africa as a developing continent is better committed to the prevalence of peace in the world because conflict in one part of the world would sooner or less impact its hopes and dreams. Africa has never been a source of global or regional conflict while most continents have been engaged in hegemonic conflicts that claimed millions of lives.

For this and other reasons, Africa has a better chance of generating ideas that benefit world peace both for its development and useful for regional and global peace. Global peace is unimaginable without Africa’s active participation and contribution while Africa’s peace cannot be guaranteed without international peace.

Africans should also use the opportunities Olympic Games created to promote the ideals of peace and development in the world. Africa’s quest for peace and development cannot be realized by outside forces but by Africans themselves. The once in four years Olympic Games should be used to promote this objective because it is also the objective of the developed countries many of whom are now engaged in unnecessary conflicts that undermine the ideals of the Games.

“The Olympics peace is symbolized by the dove of peace with the traditional Olympic flame in the background. In a world that is plagued by wars and animosity, the peace dove symbol represents one of the IOC’s ideals to build a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal.”

Science & Technology

Modernizing forest resource management system using technology

BY DARGIE KAHSAY

Ethiopia is striving to increase its forest coverage by strengthening its forest conservation efforts and through mass plantation. With this continuous effort, both planting billions of new seedlings and conserving the available forest, Ethiopia's forest coverage has increased to 23.6% in 2024 from 17.2% in 2019. This shows a significant move to attain the country's target of increasing the country's forest coverage to 30% by 2030.

In addition to investing in plantation and conservation, experts in the field recommend applying technological systems in the sector to improve the information gathering, data administration and control the situation of the forest resource. In this regard, especially since the launching of the Green Legacy initiative in 2019 by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD), in addition to planting billions of trees within a single season, Ethiopia has introduced managing the plantation and the follow-up of the planted trees using technological advancements. Still, the sector demands strengthening the implementation of technologies.

According to various documents, Ethiopia was covered by dense forest a century ago. Despite Ethiopia's being covered by forests, its forest coverage was slashed down during the past several decades. Research disclosed that over 100,000 hectares of natural forest were destroyed and burned by fire annually during the past several decades. As a result of fast and huge deforestation across the country, Ethiopia was exposed to drought, land degradation, desertification, food insecurity, and poverty as it lost its forest resources. The Green Legacy initiative is playing a crucial role in reversing desertification, land degradation, and drought as the initiative helped the country to plant over 30 billion trees within five years. This effort of recovering the deforested areas to build a green economy is bringing meaningful results. To achieve the goal, this extensive investment should be supported and strengthened through technology.

To properly reverse the deforestation and desertification challenges and to increase forest coverage, in addition to planting seedlings annually, there is a call for administering the forest resources using technological advancements in the sector. Modernizing the forest management system is a critical action to preserve the available forest, to follow the growth of the new seedlings, and to know the economic potential of the forest resource. The forest resources should be documented properly by applying technology-supported systems.

During the launching ceremony of the 2024 plantation season, it was reported that Ethiopia's forest coverage has increased to 23.6% at this time from 17.2% in 2019. The research about the forest coverage of Ethiopia was conducted jointly with internationally experienced institutions based on the United Nations Climate Change Convention. The survey also indicated that it used the most



Tea Seedling Plantation

advanced technology during the survey on forest coverage showing Ethiopia's efforts in applying technology in the sector.

Worku Zewdie (PhD) is a Forest Sector Researcher and Instructor. He is also a Forest and Satellite Information Advisor. For Worku, currently, technology is becoming necessary for every sector as it makes every task easy and helps to perform tasks scientifically. As to him, the forest sector also needs information supported by technology.

According to the researcher, there are three types of information systems in forest resources. Information gathered from the earth, information gathered using airplanes or web, and data gathered from satellites. The three types of information are gathered using three methods, i.e. optic (using the solar system), web system and the third one is using light reflection.

According to the researcher, the data gathering methods help to know the forest resource properly as it helps to know the specific location of the forest resource and the density and coverage of the available forest. Using this method also helps to know the height of the trees, the branches, and the composition of the forest. "This technology can help us to know the tree's height, branches, the composition, and the overall density of the forest coverage" the researcher stated adding applying the modern methods helps to understand the available forest.

Since 2019, Ethiopia has been planting billions of seedlings annually and the government announced that it applied technological methods to follow the plantation and the growth of the trees. In this regard, the researcher stated that by applying technological methods, it is possible to know the specific places where the seedlings are planted and to follow the growth and the current situation of the planted seedlings. As to him, if the technology is applied properly, it is possible to know

the current situation and growth rate of the seedlings planted since 2019.

Not only is that, as to Worku, using technologies, it is also possible to measure the carbon, nitrogen, and the number of substances in the leaves of the trees. By measuring these substances in the leaves of the seedlings, it helps to analyze the growth stage of the seedlings.

Worku stated that there are promising activities in introducing technology to administer the forest resources in Ethiopia. Especially higher education institutions and research centers in Ethiopia are playing a crucial role in this regard, mentioned the previous year's limitations in applying technological products in the forest sector. He commends the significant improvements being registered in the sector, despite the limitations which still need further interventions. Especially, there are limitations in regional states in using technology, as to him.

According to him, despite the developments in using technology to administer forest resources in recent years, still it is on its initial phase which needs further development to fully apply advanced technologies. Despite he appreciated the current technologies being implemented in the forest resources in Ethiopia, compared with the advancement of technologies being used by the rest of the world, he stated that a lot remains to do.

According to Worku, forest coverage is identified at the international level to about climate change and carbon emission. "To know Ethiopia's forest coverage and the areas where the forest is presented, the international organizations sent their experts to know and identify Ethiopia's forest to know the forest coverage using the technologies mentioned above. During this time, by studying the forest using the latest technologies and documenting the data properly, as a country we have to prove that the local efforts can meet the international

standard. Data should be documented using technological advancements."

Unless the data documentation system is strengthened using technologies to work together with international systems, we may remain behind. "By strengthening the initial efforts in applying technological advancements in the forest sector, we have to improve it," he stated. As we are in the era of technology, there is access to free data and by developing the capacity of professionals and data analyzing materials like computer, software and other products, it is important to create a suitable ecosystem for the sector.

For his part, Ethiopian Forest Development Deputy Director, Motuma Tolera (PhD) said that efforts are underway to administer the forest resource of the country using technology. He added that technology has been given due attention in the forest sector internationally adding that this year's theme for International Day of Forest "Forests and Innovation: New Solutions for Better World" indicates the attention given to using technological innovations in the forestry sector.

Motuma stated that at Ethiopian level, there are efforts to identify the technologies implemented so far, the changes that the applied technologies bring in the forest resources, and the current level of the country in using forest technologies.

According to the Deputy Director, different technological products are joining the sector that can help to control deforestation and restore degraded forest areas. New technological innovations are coming to the sector that can help to know and control the changes within hours. In addition, some technologies can analyze and alert wildfires or predict wildfires. Motuma further stated that Ethiopia is working to make the country's forest resource conservation and management system scientifically using technologies.

Society



Familiarizing the generation with digital competency

BY MENGISTEAB TESHOME

In the digital age the skills for operating digital devices is becoming not only necessary but also compulsory to equip citizens with the needed skills and knowledge. Thus, countries around the world are working to facilitating infrastructure development to lay a strong foundation for digital transformation.

Ethiopia is also working to build the capacity of its human capital, drive innovation, solve societal issues, and promote economic development by seizing the possible benefits that the digital economy holds.

To this end, it launched the 'Digital Ethiopia 2025' initiative and is also working persistently to accelerate its progress to digital transformation and push Ethiopia towards an innovative and sustainable economy by creating a favorable digital ecosystem.

As part of this effort, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed recently launched the 5 Million Ethiopian Coders Initiative to familiarize the generation with digital skills.

In this respect, *The Ethiopian Herald* talked with Stem Synergy Ethiopia Country Director Aseggedech Shawl over the phone to share her insights on the return of the initiatives mainly in advancing and familiarizing the generation with digital competency.

Aseggedech said that the initiative is a redeeming act because unless the generation has foundational digital literacy skills; and is ready to use the digital services appropriately through digital technologies, it will be excluded from the ongoing development.

Its return is great. For instance, in terms of economic affairs and job opportunities, it could let youth access jobs supported by online platforms. Ethiopia can also attract international tech firms. Moreover, the opportunity could increase the number of youth entrepreneurs that could compete in the global market.

Once Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed had remarked that the youth are Ethiopia's prospects for tomorrow. Thus, they should be trained to be entrepreneurs, innovators, and leaders who can compete globally.

"I do agree with his conviction. Educated citizens are the hope of the country. Thus, as the Premier underlined, Ethiopian youth should take advantage of this great opportunity and become the hope of tomorrow for Ethiopia. They should make the most of this opportunity and become entrepreneurs, innovators, and leaders who can drive Ethiopia's development"

While responding to how the education system and stakeholders should discharge their duties and responsibilities in harnessing the digital return in making the nation progressive, she said that each academic institution should invest in building facilities and infrastructure and encouraging the students to build digital skills.

According to her, the rapid growth of digital technologies over the past two-plus decades has transformed the way we access and receive essential services. That is from healthcare services to agriculture, education, and administrating business among others. The integration of digital platforms and tools has opened up new possibilities for delivering services more efficiently, conveniently, and equitably, which saves time, cost, and energy. To maintain the momentum, stakeholders should work in harmony because the bedrock for development is a skilled workforce.

"In my view, digital literacy should be nurtured appropriately because it helps to familiarize the posterity with skills and lets the nation build accessibility, reliable service, and building transparency of health, finance, and education services. At the same time, it ensures international competitiveness in the global market."

In this respect, coding is the epicenter of digital literacy, because it lets develop applications, software, and websites among others.

While talking about the role the government can play, she underlined the government should back the efforts by infrastructure development and supporting private and public institutions to apply digital services as well as ensuring the provision of persistent power. Likewise, development partners should provide technical and financial assistance to advance the initiative constructively.

Stem Synergy Ethiopia has been working along with higher education institutions for the past eight years to promote digital competency. "We gave support for the establishment of 22 STEM centers and provided short-term coding training along with universities," she remarked.

The organization is engaged in promoting STEM education, technology transfer, and social enterprises that benefit youth and women through hands-on technologies and innovation, she underlined.

She finally said that families and learning institutions should encourage students to register for the 5 Million Coder's initiative. If pertinent stakeholders act accordingly, Ethiopia will become a hub for digital innovation and entrepreneurship in Africa.

Ibex Technologies and Promotion Founder and CEO Ezedin Kamil for his part said that the initiative is a wonderful opportunity for the generation. It is an eye-opener in developing coding skills and creating an easy step to join the digital platform. It has significant importance in materializing the nation's digital transformation plan to the ground, he underlined.

Digital transformation demands a huge workforce and skill competency, and the contents selected for the courses confirm the government's high desire to empower the youth with digital skills.

"We have been promoting the initiative through our various platforms to allow the youth to be informed and get firsthand information."

According to the Ministry of Education,

consorted efforts are underway to harness the opportunity by letting citizens involved in the initiative. The Ministry has been working at the grassroots level to promote and strengthen higher education in e-learning. As a result, while 50 public universities are engaged in online education, over 35,000 students are utilizing the e-learning platform. More than 40,000 instructors are also trained in digital content development and delivery.

Of late, on his social media page, Prime Minister Abiy also emphasized the importance of equipping self with the skills and knowledge on demand in the market.

The Premier said that, in today's fast-paced world, continuous learning and skills development are more important than ever. Hence, he invited all students on break, young professionals, and those eager for personal growth and making a positive impact locally and beyond to participate in the "5 Million Ethiopian Coders" initiative.

"The 5 Million Coders initiative has been launched to help you stay ahead, regardless of your career stage or goals. Whether you're looking to enhance your current skills, learn something new, or prepare for future opportunities, this initiative is designed for you," the Premier elaborated.

He also strongly encouraged everyone involved in skill-building in Ethiopia—incubators, accelerators, universities, and others—to fully embrace this initiative.

"Our nation's strength lies in your growth," Abiy stressed.

It is to be recalled that the 5 Million Ethiopian Coders Initiative is implemented in collaboration with the United Arab Emirates and aims to provide digital technology training to 5 million citizens. The initiative is designed to transfer the time of Ethiopian youth and equip them with the skills needed to succeed in the digital age.

Promoting religious, ...

will compete with the roaring sounds and decorations of their Jiraf. Experts from the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewhido Church (EOTC) express that the sounds of Jiraf during the Buhe season represent the sound of Jesus Christ from the sky. The cultural aspect of the Jiraf sound on the other hand represents the coming of a New Year. Therefore, it heralds a new hope and motivates people to be ready for the New Year.

Regarding conserving the Buhe festival for future generations, the active participation of every stakeholder is important.

Moreover, preparations are underway to register the Buhe cultural celebration as the country's national intangible heritage, experts said.

In an interview with The Ethiopian Herald, Addis Ababa City Administration Culture Tourism Bureau Senior Heritage Expert Memhir Mekibib Gebremariam said that various studies have been conducted on the preconditions that enable Buhe's cultural celebration registration as a national heritage.

Accordingly, the Authority for Research and Conservation of the Cultural Heritage (ARCC) has done successive research works in various parts of the country where the holiday is marked colorfully.

The Buhe celebration is more known in Menz, Gondar, Wollo, South Gondar (Debre Tabor), and Addis Ababa, he said.

As to him, the registration of this cultural celebration as a national heritage will have a significant socio-economic benefit.

In addition, registration and conservation of the country's diversified intangible cultural heritages is important to promote the country's tourism sector through building the national image among the international community, he noted.

Moreover, the City Administration Culture and Tourism Bureau in collaboration with pertinent stakeholders facilitate the platform to celebrate the day through keeping the original cultural ceremonial process annually.

"Currently, the new generation is playing an important role in preserving and celebrating such cultural holidays through inheriting and keeping our forefather's/foremother's cultural wisdom and arts. It is the right time to utilize the immense potentials of cultural heritages through promoting via the social and mainstream media," he said.

Accordingly, the government has given due priority to developing the tourism sector and generating a tangible income.

In this respect, the Buhe festival could be a tangible source of income if developed and utilized properly for tourism. Buhe festival is among the leading festivals that have great potential to showcase ancient Ethiopia's cultural manifestations.

The festival has enormous spiritual, cultural, social, and economic values.



Buhe has both spiritual and cultural aspects. The festival creates a sense of ownership among the new generation and contributes their part in the efforts to conserve intangible heritages that are inherited from the ancestors through oral traditions.

The registration of this cultural celebration as a national heritage will have a significant socio-economic role. In addition, registration and conservation of the country's diversified intangible

cultural heritage is important to promote the country's tourism sector through building the national image among the international community.

In Ethiopia, Buhe is believed to be the turning point from the high rainfall season to bright sunshine and a lovely month, September which is the first month of the Ethiopian New Year. There is a widespread belief that there will be no more heavy rain, floods, and landslides after Buhe is celebrated

Public lecture on debt restructuring to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic growth

LUSAKA (ECA) - The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Sub-regional Office for Southern Africa (ECA SRO-SA) in collaboration with the University of Zambia's Department of Economics, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP) delivered a public lecture to economics students, lecturers and other stakeholders on the debt restructuring process still underway in Zambia.

The lecture, under the theme, "Debt restructuring underway, what else is needed to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic growth in Zambia", aimed to promote student engagement on the implications of the national debt management process, explore the impact of the on-going debt restructuring programme on the country's economic prospects and promote continuous dialogue amongst partner organizations in an effort to support Zambia's sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

In his opening remarks, Prof. Jacob Malungo, Dean School of Humanities and Social Sciences applauded the public lecture forum noting that it allows students to listen, engage and debate topical issues on the country's development and helps strengthen a broader understanding of the

implications of these issues. He thanked the United Nations System for the collaboration in facilitating student engagement on topical issues.

Ms. Beatrice Munthali, United Nations Resident Coordinator speaking on behalf of the UN family in Zambia, concurred with the Dean on the importance of having a platform that helps students to benefit from expert knowledge and called upon the partners to continue in this endeavour and especially ensure that key development issues are interrogated with active student participation. She noted that, "this is a time to reflect and examine future reforms necessary for economic growth and the lecture came at an opportune moment when the government of Zambia is leveraging the benefits of the restored debt for economic development. It is important to give students a voice on needed changes, transparency, accountability, effective governance and management of external financing".

The lecture benefitted from two presentations by the IMF on the regional outlook for the Sub-Saharan Africa region and by ECA on the prospects for Inclusive growth and sustainable economic growth in Zambia.

The IMF Resident Representative, Mr. Eric Lautier, gave an overview of economic, social, and political trends in Sub-

Saharan Africa, with a focus on how debt restructuring can affect these dynamics. Special emphasis was placed on Zambia's current economic situation, examining the impacts of debt restructuring on its growth and transformation prospects. The presentation also discussed additional policy reforms and strategies to support Zambia's journey towards achieving inclusive and sustainable economic growth. He elaborated on the IMF programme and the role of IMF in supporting the government to restructure the national debt while ensuring social spending, widening the tax base, revenue projection, debt management and fiscal consolidation. He emphasised that, "the restructuring programme is a Zambian programme supported by IMF and not an IMF programme".

Mr. Mzwanele Griffiths Mfunwa, Chief Sub-Regional Initiatives Section and Officer in Charge of SRO-SA discussed the socio-economic development trends in Zambia, focusing on poverty, inequality and unemployment and enumerated the drivers of inclusive and sustainable economic growth in Zambia to include: economic diversification, value addition, promotion of micro small and medium enterprises, effective implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area, creation of green jobs and the setting up of transboundary Special Economic Zones,

among others. He advised that to attain sustainable economic growth Zambia needed to, "effectively implement the Zambia National Green Growth Strategy and deliberately redirect benefits of debt restructuring to productive and social sectors to help mitigate poverty and inequality".

The two presentations were preceded by submissions from two students Subilo Banda and Lisa Mwiinde, who explained the origins of debt and the role of Zambians in ensuring that the debt restructuring programme is implemented and called on the active involvement of students in holding the government accountable for debts incurred and revenue collection which can help redress the economic challenges.

A question, and answer session allowed participants to field questions to the panel of experts from UNDP, IMF and ECA. Experts concurred on the need to support micro, small and medium enterprises to facilitate the creation of sustainable jobs, raise incomes and help address inequality. They called on the IMF to share more information on the support to government and underscored the importance of ensuring that the restructuring process has a human face and protects the most vulnerable Zambians.

Source: UNECA



This is Ethiopia

Promoting religious, cultural festivals towards boosting tourism

BY TEWODROS KASSA

Ethiopia has diversified cultural and religious festivals that gain special attention among international and local tourists. Being home to more than 80 nations, nationalities, and peoples, the country embraces immense potential to attract more tourists through effectively utilizing its cultural and natural endowments.

Currently, the government also gives due priority to the tourism sector, and; it is investing hugely in developing the sector.

Buhe, which marks the Transfiguration of Jesus on Mount Tabor and is celebrated warmly every year among followers of the Orthodox Church, is the one. The feast, which has both religious and cultural importance, is celebrated every year, during the high rainfall season. This festival is gaining momentum year after year following the due attention given by society to further promote the culture. Following this, children in the urban and rural parts of the country annually gather to mark the day with different ceremonial occasions.



The group song among boys becomes the colorful part of the cultural part of the festival where boys collect money to celebrate the day with their peers. Hoya Hoya's song is usually performed by a group of boys.

The boys wait for the annual Buhe festival eagerly. They prepare their own plan before the actual day of the celebration. They start fulfilling the basic preconditions to make their group's Buhe song better than others. Torches, Mulmul (bread), Jiraf (bigger whip), and decorated sticks, among others, are needed to celebrate Buhe colorfully.

Buhe is annually celebrated on August 19

in the urban and rural areas of Ethiopia. The festival is commonly known as children's holiday where children are allowed to go out and discover their surroundings. As the festival is celebrated annually during the school-off period, children utilize this opportunity to be well-prepared.

Before and on the actual Buhe day, children [always boys] will sing the common Buhe songs and their own poems, on the streets of Addis Ababa and move from doorsteps to doorsteps. In turn, they receive Mulmul (bread) or money.

The Buhe boys sing songs of admiration, best wishes of success, and peace for



any individual on their way. Presenting outstanding poems, performing attractively, and having the best sound of Jiraf, among others enable the children to be well admired by the community and gather more rewards.

Then, the children will utilize the gathered Mulmul bread and money together to celebrate the Buhe festival wonderfully. They will also share the remaining money equally.

Having Jiraf is one of the outstanding manifestations of Buhe festival. Children

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