



The Ethiopian Herald

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September Festivals: Rewving up for Ethiopia's tourism surge

BY YESUF ENDRIS

As Ethiopia's festive season approaches, preparations are in full swing to welcome tourists with tailored packages designed to enhance their experiences. September,

rich with cultural festivals and holidays, has become a focal point for the government's efforts to boost tourism.

The Ministry of Tourism is leading these initiatives, aiming to position tourism as a key driver of sustainable economic

growth, far beyond its traditional role. The government's strategic focus on tourism reflects its commitment to making the sector a cornerstone of Ethiopia's broader economic development.

Recognizing Ethiopia's leadership in the

sector, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has named Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed the "Tourism Champion" for the region for the next three years. This honor, alongside the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa's

See September Festivals: ... Page 3



Photo: Hadush Abreha

IGAD insists easier border entry rules amid tourism dev't

BY MISGANAWASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA -The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) emphasized the need for infrastructure development and the removal of restrictive visa policies among member states to unlock

See IGAD insists easier ... Page 3

Dialogue companion on path to durable peace: MoP

- Ethiopia observes 2024 Int'l Day of Peace

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA – Encouraging dialogues is pivotal in the efforts to cultivate a culture of peace and address women's and youth issues, the Ministry of Peace (MoP) said.

MoP Chief Peace Building Executive Officer Awoke Atniafu (PhD) made the above remark yesterday while commemorating the International Day of Peace held under the theme: "Cultivating a Culture of Peace".

Speaking at the occasion, Awoke highlighted that fostering inclusive dialogues and empowering women and youth are viable tools to ensure sustainable peace and national development.

He also underscored that the country has been going extra miles by crafting various peace mechanisms to bring about a well-articulated culture of peace.

Having said peace and development are intertwined, Awoke emphasized that the



National Dialogue has been addressing the communities' grass root pressing issues thereby supporting the people to lead their life.

Moreover, the government has given due emphasis to address the challenges of women and youth through various initiatives, he added.

Emphasizing the need to strengthen

collaborative efforts towards promoting the youth and women in the culture of peace, Awoke noted that they are key players in peace related initiatives which help accelerate a nation's socio economic development.

On behalf of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, UNDP Resident

See Dialogue ... Page 3

News



Photo: Hadush Abreha

Israeli charity expands heart surgery for Ethiopian children

BY HAILE DEMEKE

ADDIS ABABA - Save a Child's Heart (SACH), an Israeli-based international humanitarian organization, has launched a screening mission for 200 children at the Children's Heart Fund of Ethiopia (CHFE) and Black Lion Hospital to provide life-saving heart surgeries.

The mission, currently underway in Addis Ababa, aims to identify children suffering from heart disease. Dozens of children have already arrived for screenings at CHFE and Black Lion Hospital.

Israel's Deputy Ambassador to Ethiopia Tomer Bar-Lavi expressed his gratitude, saying, "It is a privilege to be at Black Lion Hospital and witness the collaboration between Israelis and Ethiopians, both working towards helping children with heart disease."

Addis Ababa University College of Health Sciences Chief Executive Director Prof. Andualem Deneke highlighted the ongoing cooperation, stating, "Since signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with SACH last year, we have successfully sent several children to Israel for life-saving heart surgeries. We are eager to expand this and begin sending our doctors to Israel for training, as well as welcoming Israeli medical teams

to our hospital."

A pediatric cardiologist at SACH Hanita Shai (MD) remarked on the longstanding partnership with Ethiopia, saying, "Ethiopia was the first country SACH helped in 1995. Having worked with Black Lion Hospital in 2019, it's encouraging to see the progress made, and we look forward to continuing our cooperation and treating more children in Israel."

CHFE Medical Director Miklol Mengistu (MD) noted, "We have collaborated with SACH for nearly three decades. This year alone, 39 children have been sent to Israel for treatment. We are excited to host an Israeli surgical team and continue this life-saving work."

One of the success stories, Aklile Bekele, who had heart surgery in Israel 23 years ago, is now a nurse at the CHFE cardiac center. She expressed her gratitude, saying, "I feel blessed to be part of this life-saving collaboration and urge the Israeli government to strengthen this partnership."

SACH is currently working with four prominent hospitals in Ethiopia: Black Lion Hospital, Children's Heart Fund of Ethiopia, Jimma University Hospital, and Saint Paul's Hospital Millennium Medical College.



COMESA commences cross-border electricity trade initiative

BY GIRMACHEW GASHAW

ADDIS ABABA - With a total capital of 1.5 million USD, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) launched a regional initiative to enhance the sustainability of the electricity sector in Eastern and Southern Africa through harmonized regulatory frameworks.

The initiative dubbed as "Regional Harmonization of Regulatory Frameworks and Tools for Improved Electricity Regulation in COMESA," aims at effective, transparent, uniform, and enforceable regulatory frameworks in the region. The ultimate objective is to stimulate cross-border electricity trade and improve energy access in the COMESA region, according to the press statement sent to *The Ethiopian Herald*.

Through her representative, Petroleum and Energy Regulatory Authority (PEA) Director General Shearla Abdulahi said that COMESA has been pivotal in fostering economic integration and development across member States.

"Energy, as the lifeblood of our economies and societies, is undeniably central to this progress. Harmonizing our regulatory frameworks is therefore not just an option, but an imperative."

"By aligning our approaches, we can unlock the full potential of regional energy trade, enhance energy security, and ultimately improve the lives of our citizens."

The director said that the stark reality is that 75% of the world's population without access to electricity resides in Africa, she said adding the Eastern and Southern Africa, is not immune to this challenge. The gap between energy supply and demand continues to widen, affecting industries, businesses, and households alike. Without significant intervention, the region's energy supply will not keep pace with rising demand driven by urbanization, economic growth, and population

expansion, she added.

In Ethiopia, national grid remains concentrated in major population centers, limiting access to electricity for the vast majority of our rural population. Expanding electricity access to rural areas, townships, and commercial centers is a long-term necessity and essential for balanced socio-economic growth at the national and regional levels, the director said.

Secretary General East African Power Pool James Wahogo said that realization of the ultimate objective of this project contributes a great deal to our collective effort to deepen regional power system integration in the continent.

He added that the EAPP region has achieved certain milestones over the years towards its objective of enhancing power system interconnectivity, cross border electricity trade and institutional capacity. "We all need to do the needful to build on the momentum, while addressing recurring barriers to the broader effort to deepen power system integration in our region."

Deepening regional power system integration in our region yet requires deployment of many more interconnection lines including concerted actions to allow for expansion of multilateral power trade and seamless operation of the regional grid formed through interconnection of the national power grids, the secretary general said.

RAERESA CEO Mohamedain E. Self Elnasr (PhD) said that COMESA has prioritized regional energy infrastructure development to ensure reliable and affordable energy access. This initiative acknowledges the crucial role of conducive regulatory environment and robust utilities in attracting private players and fostering competition, he added.

"COMESA is also collaborating with the World Bank to increase energy access (100 million people) and support the deployment of renewable energy."

CBE, VISA forge partnership to modernize digital payments

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA - The Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (CBE) and VISA Card have signed a strategic partnership agreement aimed at modernizing services and enhancing customer satisfaction over the next five years.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, CBE President Abie Sano emphasized the significance of the agreement in expanding Visa card sales to international customers, streamlining processes, and boosting capacity through financial support. He noted that the partnership would enhance international digital payment systems and address challenges faced by both local and international customers.

"Previously, it was difficult for someone to move their account abroad due to Ethiopia's strict financial regulations, which was not the case in other countries. This agreement will help solve such issues by allowing greater flexibility with Visa cards," Abie said.

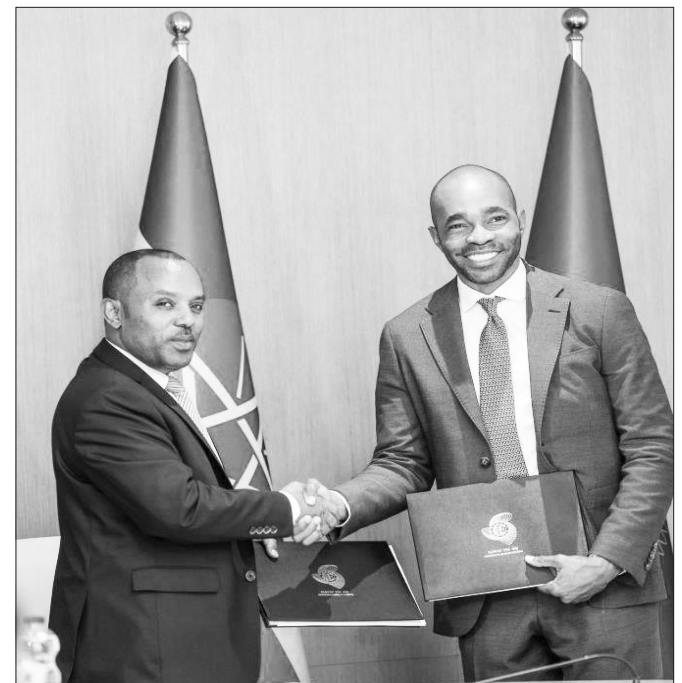
The president highlighted the pivotal role VISA will play in

connecting financial institutions, creating a more tourist-friendly environment, attracting the diaspora, investors, and travelers, and fostering a conducive business atmosphere. With this partnership, tourists, diaspora members, and businesses can use debit and credit cards to conduct transactions smoothly.

Abie also noted that VISA will provide annual financial support to CBE over the next five years based on the bank's performance. The ongoing macroeconomic reforms in Ethiopia present a great opportunity for both CBE and VISA to innovate beyond their previous achievements.

Visa East Africa Vice President and General Manager Chad Pollock expressed that VISA connects users globally, offering an innovative, reliable, and secure digital platform. The general manager further noted that the system allows seamless access to financial services, making it convenient for users across the world.

The two organizations have been partners for over 15 years, and this new agreement marks a significant elevation in their strategic relationship, with a focus on future growth and innovation.



News



Embassy, Tamra for social dev't organization ink 590,000 USD to combat HIV

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA – The U.S. Embassy and Tamra for Social Development Organization signed yesterday worth 590,000 USD (62 million Birr) award aiming at addressing ongoing challenges in HIV services for the coming one year.

The signing ceremony was held between the U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia, Ervin Massinga and Tamra for Social Development Organization's Executive Director, Biruk Yirgalem. The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) provided the support to help health programs and institutions to address ongoing challenges in HIV services, focusing on access and continued use, both in the community and at healthcare facilities.

During the signing ceremony, Amb. Ervin Massinga said that the U.S. government has invested 3 billion USD in the presence of emergency plan in Ethiopia that to support HIV response during the past 21 years. It is also supporting the effort of ensuring quality health service for the communities in the country.

As to him, community leadership engagement would play a pivotal role in ensuring the long term sustainability of HIV's response whilst the U.S. is continuously modifying and improving the program to bring better response in the HIV especially the way how enhancing individuals and the community reserved in that regard.

He also said that under the community

leadership engagement, the U.S. supports 300,000 USD (31 million Birr) in 2021. The main goal of the community lead manner is to help health program, institutions, with HIV that increase knowledge and understanding of the people. The U.S. government is committed to support the fight against HIV and support the improvement of health service in Ethiopia. Tamra for Social Development Organization's Executive Director, Biruk Yirgalem said: "It is a pivotal moment for our journey. This signing is not only signifies the two bodies collaboration but also our shared commitment in creating and expanding impact in the communities."

Biruk added that the partnership with PEPFAR began since 2021 through the first round Community Lead Monitoring (CLM) project implementation in Shashemene Town, Oromia State.

"In the past three years, we have expanded the effort realizing in Negele-Arsi of Oromia and Addis Ketema Sub City of the metropolitan that was driven by a community lead approach. As we take on the role of lead organization for the CLM project in 2025, we embrace the responsibility of coordinating 15 co-implementers across 12 states and the two cities administrations in the country," he noted.

Biruk added that Tamra for Social Development Organization was established in 1998 in Shashemene town's High school by ten visionary groups that started as a club and focused the HIV pandemic among others. Currently, it is engaging youth empowerment, gender equality, and environmental justice alongside with HIV.

September Festivals: Rewving up for...

(UNECA) support, underscores the potential of Ethiopia's tourism to not only drive economic growth but also promote regional cooperation and integration.

With an increase in both foreign and local visitors, tourism is becoming a central pillar of Ethiopia's economic strategy. The sector is expected to gain global attention, contributing to national revenue and job creation as infrastructure improves.

Speaking to the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), Tourism State Minister Sileshi Girma highlighted that major events such as Meskel, Irreecha, New Year celebrations, and World Tourism Day are expected to draw large numbers of tourists this month. Tailored packages will give tourists the flexibility to attend these celebrations while exploring other attractions, with states prepared to offer hospitality services.

"For instance, tourists traveling to Southern Ethiopia for New Year celebrations can also visit Nech-Sar National Park, near Chamo Lake," Sileshi noted. He added that UNE-SCO-registered heritage sites and newly inaugurated tourism infrastructure are included in the offerings.

The government expects substantial revenue growth from the tourism sector, especially during the peak season from September onward. The second-generation Diasporas also anticipated to contribute significantly to the tourism industry.

Training programs for hotel owners, staff, travel agents, and tour operators have been rolled out to enhance visitor experiences. These efforts are aimed at ensuring high-quality services and maximizing tourists' stays.

At the launch of IGAD's 10-year Sustainable Tourism Master Plan (STMP), UN representatives praised Ethiopia's achievements in tourism, recognizing the country's pivotal role in transforming sustainable tourism across the region. UNECA Executive Secretary Claver Gatete stressed that tourism must be seen as a gateway to economic prosperity, cultural exchange, and sustainable development.

Gatete emphasized that, given the challenges facing Africa, tourism offers a crucial opportunity for economic growth, job creation, and cultural engagement. Africa's travel and tourism market is projected to reach 23.37 billion USD by 2024, with the IGAD region uniquely positioned to benefit from this growth.

With its rich cultural heritage and natural beauty, Ethiopia is poised to become a global tourism leader, noted Gatete. He highlighted Ethiopia's world-renowned attractions, such as being the birthplace of coffee, the home of Lucy (one of the oldest hominid skeletons ever discovered), and the country's famed rock-hewn churches, as evidence of its immense tourism potential.

Dialogue companion on path...

Representative Samuel G. Doe (PhD) said that Ethiopia is on the right path which is not just a goal but it is the ongoing commitment toward lasting and comprehensive peace to cultivating a culture that embodies justice, equality, and hope.

During these challenging times, he said it is highly needed to emphasize that peace is not merely the absence of conflict; it is a dynamic process that requires effort, commitment, and resilience.

Moreover, the country is embarking on this path to guarantee its vision of unity and prosperity through the National Dialogue that would be a testament to its dedication to peace through mutual understanding.

"The National Dialogue also serves as a beacon for dialogue, promoting understanding amidst differences, resolving conflicts, and celebrating the rich tapestry of its diverse

society," he remarked.

He said: "It is essential to emphasize that dialogue is not a sign of weakness or a tool for pacification; rather, it is a powerful instrument for discovering our true selves and galvanizing a shared national vision."

Similarly, he emphasized that it is also undertaking transitional justice, which is critical for reconciliation and helps confront the past, heal wounds, and rebuild trust among the communities. Besides, it reinforces the rule of law, ensuring everyone's justified beneficiary.

Reaffirming the United Nation's commitment to standing with Ethiopia in its effort for comprehensive and durable peace and sustainable development, the representative said cultivating the culture of peace transcends challenges and leads to a justified and prosperous future.

IGAD insists easier border entry rules...

the region's untapped tourism potential.

Speaking to journalists, IGAD Secretary General Workneh Gebeyehu (PhD) highlighted tourism as a vital tool for fostering communication and resolving conflicts, contributing to peace in the region. He stressed that the region lacks adequate connectivity, with gaps in road, railway, and air transport.

"IGAD will collaborate with international donors to secure investment for much-needed infrastructure development," Workneh said. To make the region's newly launched 10-Year Tourism Master Plan effective, member

states must expand transportation networks and improve connectivity, even though this demands significant investment.

The region boasts enormous and unexploited tourism potential, but barriers such as inconsistent national policies, information gaps, restrictive visas, inadequate infrastructure, and climate change continue to hinder its sustainability. The secretary general added that countries in the IGAD region have valuable tourism experiences to share and domestic tourism must be promoted alongside international tourism.

Recently, IGAD ministers and tourism officials

endorsed the IGAD Sustainable Tourism Master Plan (2024-2034), aimed at unifying fragmented efforts across member countries. The plan will mitigate policy hurdles, enhance information sharing, and introduce a unified IGAD visa to promote free movement for business and tourism.

"This master plan is a major milestone and marks the beginning of a transformative decade for sustainable tourism, fostering collaboration, innovation, and resilience across the region," Workneh stressed.

One of the major outcomes of the newly launched

master plan is bringing IGAD member states in one roundtable to discuss either the region's tourism or other pressing issues.

The plan is expected to position the IGAD region as a globally competitive, integrated tourism destination, promoting socio-economic growth, poverty reduction, and integration. In 2023 alone, IGAD member states welcomed over 10 million international tourists, showcasing the growing global interest in the region's rich heritage, culture, nature, and history, the secretary general remarked.

Opinion

Somalia irredentism: A cry in the wilderness

BY GETACHEW MINAS

Somalia Irredentism is the quest for “Greater Somalia,” through armed struggle against the neighboring countries in the Horn of Africa. The Somalia had been determined to take up arms or perish. They had no excuses for delay in recovering the areas they assume as their “missing parts.” Consequently, they had been discontented and unhappy unless they take up arms against those countries that are alleged “occupied” their lands. They believe that any Somali who believes had been robbed of his property wasted no time recovering it. They would never enjoy any social entertainment until they recovered that supposed to be their country.

The irredentists had no time for gossip and discussion, but would take up arms to recover their missing property. All these had been a cry in the wilderness and finally Somalia became divided and dispersed. The major targets of Somalia irredentism have been its neighboring countries, with focus on Ethiopia. The Somalia’s government had claimed the Ogaden region and attacked Ethiopia during the Derg Regime, which had successfully repulsed it.

Historians have examined the interstate dimensions of ethnic conflict in an irredentist setting. This had been known as Somalia’s aspirations for a “Greater Somalia” that would include huge areas in the Horn. Experts have identified that this claim comprises Djibouti, the North Frontier District (NFD) of Kenya, and all of the Ogaden on Ethiopia’s border with Somalia.

The colonial division of Somalia into five different administrations created feelings of isolation and separation among Somalis. These divisions include the Italian Somaliland, British Somaliland, Kenyan Somaliland, French Somaliland (now Djibouti), and Ethiopian Somaliland (Ogaden). It is on record that in 1960, Italian and British Somaliland were united as a result of popular persistence and resolve and became part of the Somalia republic. Political scientists noted that the issue of Somaliland remained unresolved until today. After independence, Somalis have resorted to territorial claims based on “historical, ethnic, religious, and linguistic aspects.” These claims are driven by Western colonial powers with the objective of disrupting the Horn of Africa.

The colonial powers have shaped the foreign policy of Somalia expansively after its independence. An all embracing ideology emerged with a single Somalia state ruling the whole of the Somali nation. Somalia, therefore, remained a nation with a five star representing each part of the greater Somalia. According to experts, the country has been influenced by its former

colonial powers. It remained a nation in search of a state since its independence.

To comprehend this situation, experts suggest that several aspects of Somalia need to be identified. Initially, Somalia is exceptional in Africa since everyone residing in there is an ethnic Somali and shares a similar culture, language, and social structure. Next, the clan composition generated a belief in a common ancestry as a cause for national solidarity. Also, the role of religion is critical in strengthening the national solidarity of Somalia.

The political approach of Somalia elites to bring together the split clans for pursuing irredentist goal is considerable. Since external conflicts became the cause for holding power rather than constraint, its ethnic homogeneity availed an opportunity for irredentism. This opportunity has not been available to leaders of other multiethnic countries in Africa.

Since independence, Somalia has been engaged in several irredentist crises in the region. Among these the Ethiopia-Somalia conflict has been the most aggressive, violent and protracted one. This conflict reveals several complex issues in which the ethnic features of Ethiopia and Somalia have been a serious one. The important element of the Ethiopian-Somalia conflict is the fact that they are at demographically different angles. Ethiopia is an ethnically diverse country that has faced several internal social conflicts. During the 1974 revolution, armed insurrection took place in many regions of Ethiopia. The “socialist military” government nationalized rural land, urban land and extra houses and enterprises. It formed a communist party through which it ruled the country until replaced by ethnic parties.

By contrast, historians assert that Somalia is a homogenous state in terms of religion and language. Its clan-based struggle for identity exposed it to external pressures from its former colonizers. It adheres to Islamic jurisprudence, allegiance to Sufi brotherhood. In terms of language and history, the Somalis are not Arabs; only recently has a relationship formed between the Arab states and Somalia. Clan-based differences are significant manifesting in everyday life.

Until recently, Somalia elites have proved successful in mobilizing clans on the basis of a national identity in the face of an external adversary. Every Somali leader has been willing to pursue the goal of a ‘Greater Somalia’. In general, the idea of a Greater Somalia involves important political dimension which is internally useful. The Ethiopia-Somalia dispute is a regional one within which the conflict unfolded. The multiethnic characteristics of African countries, including Ethiopia, raise their feelings of vulnerability. This, according to experts, leads to a policy of restraint and

self-control regarding boundary disputes in the Horn.

African governments engage in a restrained policy toward ethnic conflicts in other neighboring countries. Experts observed that the multiethnic character of African states has become the basis of African foreign policy. The Charter of the OAU, now AU, upheld the “inviolability of borders” and reinforced the multiethnic orientation. However, the continuous conduct of Somalia in claiming Ethiopian territory “ran counter to” the inviolability of borders of sovereign state.

Another factor of the conflict is the role played by the superpowers in the affairs of sovereign states. Such external intrusion has tended to exacerbate conflicts in the region. In particular, the association of Somalia with the Western powers had forced Ethiopia to join hands with the Eastern powers. Western powers had provided Somalia with military assistance thereby encouraging territorial claims on countries of the Horn. Similarly, Ethiopia had been provided with military assistance from the Eastern powers.

The pursuit of a “Greater Somalia” has been encouraged by Western assistance that led to tensions in the Horn region. The superpower competition had given the Somali elites the opportunity to obtain economic and military assistance. This support enabled the leaders to suppress local critics and detain political opponents by playing on clan interests and rivalries. Even after the decline of superpower tensions, the region experienced more hostilities between Somalia and its neighboring countries, mainly Ethiopia. By the end of the Cold War between superpowers, “external support” with which Somali elites held power declined considerably. Locally, their political power also became weak due to clan rivalries. Experts observed that historical hostility and clan loyalties dominate political, social, and economic situations in Somalia. The weak, divided, segmented, and clan-based structure had become a major source of domestic clashes.

In the last three decades, Somalia has faced its own secessionist struggle in the north that proclaimed the “Republic of Somaliland,” as a breakaway state. In less than a year, Somalia existed in name only, succumbing to political disorder, human disaster, internecine struggle of warlords, and economic and social collapse.

In the Ethiopia-Somalia conflict, there has been a much broader interstate ethnic strife in Somalia. The conflict has constrained institutional and ethnic relations. Somalia has suffered from a strategy of intervention with dual purpose of irredentist conflicts and separatist objectives. There have been several political crises between Ethiopia and Somalia, which happened to span for decades. Ethiopia-Somalia confrontations involved

minor clashes along the border. All of these crises have resulted in frustration for Somalia to achieve its political objectives. Historians observed that only during the war of 1977–78 that Somalia came close to achieving its illegal claims to Ethiopian territory.

It is noted that Somalia has declared its renunciation of its claims on some territories in the Horn countries. It has recognized the independence and sovereignty of Djibouti. It has also declared that it has not been seeking any territorial ambitions or claims from Kenya. Concerning Ethiopia, historians have concluded that the Somali political elite would never renounce its dream of uniting the Ogaden with Somalia.

Yet, there have been situations when the Somali leaders have been willing to seek peaceful coexistence with Ethiopia. It is on record that these leaders have been backing away from the Ogaden issue. They have been striking a deal with Ethiopia by renouncing their irredentist claims on the Ogaden. There were several meetings between the Ethiopian and Somali leaders in which the latter demanded public abandonment of claims on the Ogaden. It is observed that not all Somali clans are interested in “Greater Somalia.” Observers believed that the Somali state believed over the past decades that continued fighting would eventually weaken Ethiopia.

Contrary to the belief of the Somali state, Ethiopia has not collapsed, but survived strongly. Consequently, some Somali intellectuals have been forced to question the very survival of their own “state and society.” This has been a serious issue over which the struggle for survival had been undertaken for decades.

The Somali intellectuals have, therefore, begun to question the assumptions on which the Somali state rested. Observers think that these intellectuals have to be appreciated. They have assumed the responsibility to design a policy of coexistence with their neighboring countries, including Ethiopia. It is hoped that they will question the basis on which “Greater Somalia” rests.

Historians recorded that it is lack of “wisdom and prudence” on the part of the Somali leadership that has caused lack of peace and stability in the country. As a result, they could not achieve productive cooperation with all the neighboring countries of the Horn. It is hoped that the Somali intellectuals will succeed where their political leaders and irredentists have failed in creating peace and security with their neighboring countries, including Ethiopia.

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

Editorial

Africa's quest for permanent seat at UNSC is not luxury

Africa is the only region without permanent seat despite representing 54 of the 193 member states of the UN and 18.3% of the world's population. Excluding this large continent with the population of more than 1.4 billion is failure to UN.

Africa's desire to be fully represented in all decision-making organs of the United Nations (UN), particularly in the UN Security Council, is informed by three factors. First, repairing the historical injustice of its underrepresentation in global governance; second, recognizing African contributions in shaping the contemporary world order; and third, the urgency of securing the legitimacy of the UN in the face of emerging threats to international peace and security, documents indicate.

Indeed, Africa deserves the right to equal membership in the global organization, the UNSC, which passes myriads of decisions that, include Africa denying the existence of truth in the case of its voice. Since long ago, African leaders have asked, time and again, to reform the Security Council. Besides, other leaders from friendly nations of Africa like India and Russia have voiced the issue in favor of it. They strongly believe that Africa deserves equal status with the rest of the permanent members. Major regions have representation but Africa is denied this privilege.

Though many countries of the continent were under colonization during the founding of the United Nations, Ethiopia, as non-colonized nation was the signatory of its founding charter. If becoming a founding member gives special status, Ethiopia should be the one and is the right state to represent Africa's voice. But victors of the WWII have taken the privilege. Ethiopia itself fought fascism in East Africa and secured victory together with its friends in need.

Peace and security issues of the continent shouldn't be some external powers' issue. Any discussion related to Africa must be taken care of by Africans as well. The old times in which Africa was the side observer of its own cases have already passed. African issues go beyond the continent and impact the rest of the world.

Thus, it is not begging for special favor to get seat, rather it is asking for its legitimate right. With its abundant natural resources; its emerging population with the majority of educated youth and its potential to develop among others make it attractive for various powers from all corners of the world. These powers that assume have national interest here; have to value not only its resources, but the people of the continent. They have to give listening ears to its questions and respond accordingly.

Some mighty states give green light for Africa to gain permanent membership in the SC but without veto power. African leaders, on the other hand, strictly oppose this discriminative move and ask for full membership with decision making power. Africa needs to be active participant in any discussion concerning its interests. Thus, the matter goes beyond veto power; it is the matter of equal participation.

If justice is fairly treated, this big continent shouldn't be ignored to date. It has to engage, take part and play role in all Security Council's operations.

In fact, Africa needs to work on internal issues. It has to strengthen interregional relations; consolidate economic integration; enhance cultural interaction; work on peace building; build trust among its nations and fortify the continental organization, the African Union, in the way it can serve its interest.

In so doing, Africa can speak with one strong voice; pose influence on issues that concern its interests; and get heard. Indeed, Africa's quest for permanent seat at the UNSC is not luxury, but a matter of claiming legitimate right it deserves which seeks quick response.

Opinion

Ethiopia's central role in promoting tourism development in Horn of Africa

Ethiopia is strategically located in the epicenter of the Horn of Africa region. This enables her to play important role in fostering the development of the region. One of the sectors through which it can contribute to the development of the region is tourism.

According to UNECA, before the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism was on an impressive trajectory in Ethiopia. By 2019, the sector contributed nearly USD 4.8 billion to GDP, and international tourist arrivals reached over 1.4 million, marking the peak of a decade of consistent growth. This success was driven by strategic investments in infrastructure, particularly in roads and airports, and an increased global marketing effort that positioned Ethiopia as a premier destination for culture, history, and adventure tourism.

However, the pandemic dealt a severe blow to this progress. International tourist arrivals in 2020 fell by over 84% from the previous year, bringing the number of visitors down to around 228,200. The economic impact was equally stark, with significant revenue losses that reverberated across the tourism value chain. Despite a slight recovery following the peace accord in 2022, tourism receipts in 2023 were still down by 6% compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Looking ahead, the future is promising, but it will require sustained effort and strategic planning. Projections for the next 5 to 10 years suggest that with continued investment, Ethiopia's tourism sector could surpass pre-pandemic levels by the late 2020s. Initiatives focusing on enhancing infrastructure, improving security, and developing new tourism products like ecotourism, will be key drivers of growth. It is anticipated that by 2030, tourism could once again be contributing over USD 5 billion annually to GDP, with international arrivals exceeding 2 million visitors.

The TSA is a powerful tool for decision-makers, both in government and the private sector. It enables evidence-based policy, providing the detailed information we need to optimize tourism's contribution to our national development goals, the creation of jobs, and the attraction of investments. Furthermore, the ability to measure both monetary and non-monetary aspects of tourism enhance our capacity to plan for sustainable tourism development that benefits both the economy and the environment.

I want to take this moment to recognize the dedicated individuals, teams, and international partners who have contributed to making the TSA a reality for Ethiopia. Your commitment has paved the way for a new era of tourism management in this country.

As we move forward, let us keep in mind that this is only the beginning. The launch of the TSA provides us with the data, but it is up to us to interpret and use it effectively to understand the true magnitude of the tourism industry. Let us ensure that this tool helps us to make informed decisions that promote inclusive and sustainable growth in the tourism sector.

"The launch of the TSA provides us with the data, but it is up to us to interpret and use it effectively to understand the true magnitude of the tourism industry," said Geoffrey Manyara, on behalf of Mama Keita, ECA Eastern Africa Office Director during the launch in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

"Let us ensure that this tool helps us to make informed decisions that promote inclusive and sustainable growth in the tourism sector."

The TSA is a unified framework for measuring tourism's contributions to GDP, employment, and investment. It aligns with international standards as set by the UN World Tourism Organization, offering us a consistent and robust methodology for integrating tourism data into the national accounts.

"With this tool, we can now quantify not just the direct benefits of tourism—such as visitor spending on accommodation and transport—but also the broader economic ripple effects across sectors like agriculture, construction, and retail," said Manyara.

Additionally, he said the TSA is a powerful tool for decision-makers, both in government and the private sector. It enables evidence-based policy, providing the detailed information we need to optimize tourism's contribution to our national development goals, the creation of jobs, and the attraction of investments.

Furthermore, he said the ability to measure both monetary and non-monetary aspects of tourism enhance our capacity to plan for sustainable tourism development that benefits both the economy and the environment.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism was on an impressive trajectory in Ethiopia. The sector contributed nearly USD 4.8 billion to GDP, and international tourist arrivals reached over 1.4 million, marking the peak of a decade of consistent growth. This success was driven by strategic investments in infrastructure, particularly in roads and airports, and an increased global marketing effort that positioned Ethiopia as a premier destination for culture, history, and adventure tourism.

However, the pandemic dealt a severe blow to this progress. International tourist arrivals in 2020 fell by over 84% from the previous year, bringing the number of visitors down to around 228,200.

"Looking ahead, the future is promising, but it will require sustained effort and strategic planning," he said.

Projections for the next 5 to 10 years suggest that with continued investment, Ethiopia's tourism sector could surpass pre-pandemic levels by the late 2020s. Initiatives focusing on enhancing infrastructure, improving security, and developing new tourism products like ecotourism, will be key drivers of growth.

It is anticipated that by 2030, tourism could once again contribute over USD 5 billion annually to GDP, with international arrivals exceeding 2 million visitors.

Source: UNECA



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Art & Culture

Post-Holiday Blues- Borrowed Time and Borrowed Money

BY MULUGETA GUDETA

Different countries observe their new years on different days and months of the year. Most countries, celebrate the new year in January. The Chinese for instance celebrate their new year between 19-21 of January. The Ethiopian new year, known as Enkutatash in Amharic, falls on September 11 or 12. Like anything in Ethiopia, the celebration of Enkutatash is also undergoing modernization. According to the Ethiopian Tourism Commission, "Enkutatash is not exclusively religious holiday. Modern Enkutatash is also the season for exchanging formal new year greetings and cards among the urban sophisticated -instead of the traditional bouquets of flowers."

The other point that makes the Ethiopian calendar different from the Gregorian one is that the year does not only consist of 12 months but has also an additional five or six days that add to the 12 months. That was why Ethiopia used to be portrayed on tourist posters as "the land of 13 months of sunshine". The five or six extra days of the year are considered like an extra month. And that was very attractive and symbolic of Ethiopia as a heaven for tourists where even the cold season is warm as the European summer.

The history of New Year celebration goes back to many centuries. "New Year's Day, first day of the year, January 1 in the Gregorian calendar. In the Middle Ages most European countries used the Julian calendar and observed New Year's Day on March 25, called Annunciation Day and celebrated as the occasion on which it was revealed to Mary that she would give birth to the Son of God. With the introduction of the Gregorian calendar in 1582, Roman Catholic countries began to celebrate New Year's Day on January 1."

Ethiopian new year has its own history. According to available information, "the Ethiopian counting of years begins in the year 8 of the common era. This is because the common era follows the calculations of Dionysius, a 6th century monk."

September or the first month of the Ethiopian year is a time of holidays. The new year, the Muslim holiday of Mawlid, the Oromo festival of Irreechaa, the Christian annual celebrations of Meskel or the finding of the true Cross... all take place during the first months of the Ethiopian new year. We can say that these annual festivals follow the rhythms of nature. The three months preceding the festival season that starts in September are times of rains, cold, farming going on of the fields and the filling of rivers with the gather after travelling the mountains and pouring down into the valley and the

Why borrow money to just spend it for one day's pleasures of eating and drinking sprees. You remember the idea behind your borrowing and spending spree: it was your ego that was playing tricks on you

lowlands. The three months of June July and August are busy months particularly in the rural areas where farmers labor in the fields during the farming season.

A new year is a time of new hope but also a time of big spending and big celebrations or a time of spending sprees. People spending money as if there is no tomorrow. The spending sprees are driven by the eagerness to enjoy rare moments of happiness, or get a respite or a break from the humdrums of daily life that can often be hectic or stressing. But this happiness seems to have costs, as all good things have prices.

The days and weeks preceding the Ethiopian new year are moments of excitement, expectation and hectic activities. It all starts with the holiday marketing spree. The queues are long not only in the banks but also at market stalls where food items, and clothing stalls are bustling with nervous and eager shoppers with worried looks hanging on their faces, scanning the price tags with their eyes. Prices tend to increase and goods might be in short supply.

The demographic profile of Mercato is shifting during the last days of dying old year and preceding the actual holiday. The crowds of shoppers that come from different directions converge at some of

the famous malls. Nowadays, most of the shops in Mercato are located on the new buildings where the young and the not so young shoppers labor up the second and third stories, breathing laboriously and sometimes taking breaks on their way to the next floors while others sitting at the crowded restaurants and cafes nearby.

In former times, Mercato consisted of horizontal shops and shopping was easier as you travel through the mazes of narrow alleys taking you to the open air stalls. Mercato might have lost its former glory, its exceptional or historical features that gave it the coveted name as "the largest open air market in Africa." Mercato is no more the largest open-air market in Africa. Nowadays, it is not even an open market and all the shops are located within the new buildings. Mercato has lost its old historical faces to modernization.

Although Mercato's former allure has now faded, one should only welcome the new buildings as a solution for stopping the horizontal expansion of the old marketplace. This makes sounds sense when we look at Mercato's new face from the point of view of vertical expansion that saves space and stops its unrestrained expansion. Is shopping in Mercato a pleasant experience? The answer is yes because the organized availability or location of shops within the new buildings makes shopping an easier and faster experience. This saves time, and prevents confusion for new shoppers in particular who do not know the entry and exit points of the vast market.

According to Wikipedia, Mercato is a huge market place indeed. "Mercato is the largest open-air market in Africa covering several square miles and employing an estimated 13000 people in 7000 business entities. The primary merchandize passign through Mercato is locally grown agricultural products-most notably coffee." By the way, Wikipedia needs to update its information about Mercato which is no more an open-air market that was recently renovated or rebuilt and most of it nowadays consists of modern buildings.

Why are children's clothing stalls are particularly crowded during the last weeks preceding the new year holiday? The answer is clear. First, children are, as a rule, the darlings of many families and enjoy top priority as buying new clothes new concerned. The second reason is that the new school year that starts soon after the new year holidays. It is obvious that children and the young need new clothes and shoes, in addition to the school materials and the uniforms.

New year holidays are usually periods of public excitement even under the present

conditions of galloping inflation or rising cost of living. The traditions of holiday celebration in Ethiopia put enormous pressures on many households that cannot afford the means of covering the costs of celebration, that often require the need to set aside special budget for the occasions. Those who cannot afford to cover the costs are often forced to borrow money from their neighbors or friends or ask for financial support from their relatives living in the Diaspora.

Although it is considered by many as a bad culture, celebrating holidays with borrowed money has become a deeply entrenched habit that put financial and psychological pressure on many low-income households. It makes no difference whether the money is secured through borrowing from friends and relatives or from creditors or lenders at high interests rates. The headache starts after the festivities are over and heads of families sit down to calculate the costs or draw a balance sheet of their expenses. This may feel like trying to remember about last evening's events after waking up the following morning with a heavy hangover. You don't want to think about it because it causes you discomfort.

You may not suffer from memory loss 'memory blowup' may be inevitable. And you feel not only headache but also heartache: Why borrow money to just spend it for one day's pleasures of eating and drinking sprees. You remember the idea behind your borrowing and spending spree: it was your ego that was playing tricks on you. it tells you to prove yourself equal or superior than your neighbor next door. If your neighbors kill a fowl for New Year dinner you have to kill a fattened sheep to prove to the world that you are the big guy from the neighborhood.

This is at least your pride or your ego that is whispering into your ears. So, you go to the money lender's office and borrow money that would be paid after the next month's payday. You may be trying appeasing your nagging ego but you will be the one who will settle the bills. In case that is not possible, you will keep on paying the interests until you pay back the entire money you borrowed.

Imagine the financial pressure that results from such a gamble. The costs in terms of lost sleeping hours and the stress and strain thereof can only be heartbreaking. It may take some time before you get rid of your ambitious borrowing gamble that cost you so much anguish. Why borrow money to prove that you are better off than your neighbor next door and then suffer the negative consequences? This is in brief part of the post-holiday blues, perhaps with useful lessons for the next Ethiopian new year.

Law & Politics

The “Africa we want” is unlikely in the existing order

BY WORKU BELACHEW

The rules-based international order that started its manoeuvre on the heels of the end of WWII has not brought the development that Africa needs, the highly hierarchical order rather hijacked international multilateral organizations and has been using them to systematically perpetuate hegemonic relations among the wealthiest Western nations and the poorest nations of Africa.

Africa needs a renewed world order where its people can live a dignified life. The people should properly utilize their resources to extricate themselves from the abject poverty. The continent’s dearly useful youthful populations have to get the proper niche to invest their labor, skills, and knowledge for the good of their society.

Countless of Africa’s youths desperately cross the world’s dangerous migratory routes, often exposing themselves to robbery, beatings, and other inhumane treatments at the hands of brutal human traffickers. Organ traffickers too perform horrific theater on the helpless migrants. This is not to mention the scorching temperature and the death that await migrants in the Mediterranean Sea. IOM called this year the deadliest year since 2016.

Wealthier countries at times close their borders and at other times call the countries “shit holes”. Economic and political migrants and asylum seekers are often considered as sub-humans in some destinations.

The existing exploitative world order is tailored to the size of the West and is made deliberately unfit for the global South and East. The current system serves to keep poor countries poorer and poorer. A few countries that moved up through the ladder of wealth with their rigorous efforts are tagged with bad terms such as “dictators,” “undemocratic,” “despots” and what have you.

The existing world order is nothing short of institutionalizing exploitation.

The thing is embodied in the guise of “protection of human rights,” “expansion of democracy” “development” and other rosy words. Countries and governments that adhere to the dictates of the wealthiest nations are ranked top in human rights handling, democracy and development, and are sometimes called “favorite dictators” Any country and grouping that stands out of their bracket, no matter what good record it has, is “undemocratic”, “brutal”, “dictator” and the list goes on. Farsighted leaders are demonized and puppets glorified using their media.

World famous scholars, John Mearsheimer and Jeffery Sachs in a recent debate on All-In agreed that the US went to create world countries in its own image, which

Countries and governments in Africa must clearly know their respective interests. They must work hard and smart to align their plans with their shared vision

Sachs called “delusional.” His take is that they don’t care if one is military or democratic or whatsoever, the thing is just to project power.

Keeping Africa poor

The onset of the ordeal started in 1619. Some historians may drag it even to an earlier period. By the account of colonist John Rolfe, around 350 enslaved Africans arrived in today’s Virginia from Angola with a slave ship, the White Lion. He called them 20 and Odd Negros.

Africa’s resources, such as gold and ivory, attracted Europeans and as the demand for labor grew in the New World, up to 12 million Africans were looted and shipped to the Americas.

No doubt, African brain and labor shipped to the other side of the Atlantic shaped that part of the world greatly. Black labor and intellect have midwived the modern world as well. William P. Jones, a professor in the Department of History in the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota wrote an article on the topic. He took a quote from Du Bois’s book Black Reconstruction in America. Du Bois wrote: that black labor was a “founding stone of a new economic system in the nineteenth century.”

But we rarely observe their contribution receiving due recognition. The New World simply treated black labor as free labor. The situation made Africa vulnerable to later exploitations. The torment went unabated, at least for four centuries. From the 19th C onwards to the second half of the 20th C Africans, other than Ethiopia, were subdued in their motherland.

The current situation in Africa is, by and large, the result of the cold wartime. The global superpowers vied for influence on world affairs and rallied countries behind them, creating Eastern and Western blocs. Most African countries seized the unfolding as a blessing in disguise to get their political freedom.

The optimism and euphoria, however, quickly disappeared.

The elected Togolese President Sylvanus Olympio was killed a few months before the charter that formed the OAU was signed. A wave of coups continued in Africa ever since, often backed by external powers. “Of the 492 attempted or successful coups carried out around the world since 1950, Africa has seen 220 with 109 of them successful,” according to, Powell and Thyne’s data (see <https://jonathanmpowell.com/data/>). During the stated period, 45 out of 54 countries in Africa saw at least one coup attempt.

Colonial powers deliberately sow the seeds of discord among peoples of different cultures in Africa. The evasive seeds grow here and there with their poisonous thorn. The prickle appears in the forms of irredentist and separatist

as well as other civil wars, creating a favorable niche for the neo-colonialists to easily exploit Africans and their resources.

Towards a New Era

The Pan-African vision is on the horizon—the “Pan African vision of “an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena.”

This does not occur because we wish it to. It behooves us to work hard and smart. It requires us to make the needed sacrifices. It requires a 21st-century mindset that puts Africa’s interests first. The old way of doing things cannot and will not usher Africa in the attainment of its vision. Opinion leaders in every country in Africa should put the interest of Africa first—the guns must be silenced.

It needs partners that support the quick transfer of skillsets and knowledge. It requires friends who lend support in the effort to expand critical development infrastructure. It is time to end the rosy words and pretentious friendship and begin a “genuine” partnership.

Our needs are explicitly expressed in Agenda 2063. African citizens share widely that Agenda 2063 is a relevant development discourse. This is stated in the introductory part of the second decade of the agenda’s implementation. The ambition is to elevate all countries of Africa including the islands well above the poverty line. Africa envisions becoming a continent of middle-income countries by 2033. It needs to transfer knowledge and skills. It needs to be a good competitor in the tech world. And this demands that it channel its resources into investments that would accelerate its growth and development. First and foremost, superpowers that want to play their proxy game should stay away. And good partners should continue investing in areas that are mutually beneficial.

There is no denying the fact that there aren’t babysitting countries that feed into the mouths of Africans. No foolishness here. Countries and governments in Africa must clearly know their respective interests. They must work hard and smart to align their plans with their shared vision. If Africa is divided internally, it is given that any entity will try to fish in the troubled waters. Who is to blame then?

Current generations of Africans in areas including academia, media, power circles and other influential positions should seriously work to defend the interests of Africa. In 1619 and even before our ancestors made a grave mistake. Powerful and influential ones traded the strong Africans for tobacco, cloth, sugar and rifles raiding villages and bringing colonialists deep into Africa. We need to take care in case our short-lived gains supersede the noble cause expressed in the Agenda 2063.



We prioritize coffee to reduce poverty and increase intra-African trade:

Josefa Sacko

BY GIRMACHEW GASHAW

Africa, a continent blessed with abundant agricultural resources, paradoxically remains a poor and backward continent that is not ensured food self-sufficiency. Despite there being a few agricultural products that bring in foreign currency, the pace of raw agricultural product production is far from adequate to meet the growing demands of exporters.

Though about half of the African countries produce coffee, due to various barriers, the income gained from coffee is low. In order to address the challenges faced by coffee-producing countries and enhance productivity, the African Union has established the Inter-Africa Coffee Organization (IACO) and recently endorsed the Kampala Declaration, making Coffee a strategic commodity.

Today's guest is Ambassador Josefa Leonel Correia Sacko, an Angolan agronomist, economist, and diplomat. She currently serves as the Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment of the African Union Commission.

Before being elected as AU Commissioner, Mrs. Sacko was the special adviser to the Minister of Agriculture, tasked with advising on issues related to international cooperation, both bilateral and multilateral. She was also elected as the Secretary-General of the Inter-African Coffee Organization, with a special mandate to represent the economic interests of the 25 African Coffee producers, manage the Secretariat, and present recommendations.

At one point, she acted as the Chairperson of the African Union Commission when the Chairperson in charge was not present. The Ethiopian Herald had a brief interview with Mrs. Sacko, allowing her to elaborate more on the efforts of the commission to make coffee-producing African countries more beneficial by searching for mechanisms to craft procedures that integrate them, share practices, and enhance productivity to earn more income from coffee. Enjoy the read!

Thank you very much for your time and willingness to provide this interview for our esteemed readers.

Could you tell us about the Kampala Declaration and what it entails?

In the Kampala Declaration, the most important connection with the African Union is the request for the African Union to consider coffee as a strategic commodity for the continent.

This is one of the commitments that our head of state asks the African Union to make, as 25 out of the 55 member states of the African Union are coffee producers who rely on this commodity for their livelihoods. Therefore, it is truly a strategic commodity for us. Additionally, coffee is the second most traded commodity globally after oil.

Taking advantage of our ability to produce coffee is crucial, especially since there are regions that want to produce coffee but struggle to find markets to sell it. This is our advantage, so we must reinforce this commodity. The International Coffee Organization (ICO) is an intergovernmental organization that was established even before the African Union. In 1960, 13 countries came together, already independent, to create the ICO. As more countries gained independence, they joined the ICO because coffee was a major export commodity.

In the past, coffee was so profitable that farmers could afford to send their children to school. However, today, falling prices and lack of investment in the coffee industry have discouraged farmers. Therefore, it is proposed that the existing organization be integrated as a specialized agency of the African Union.

When considering Agenda 2063, which emphasizes regional integration on the continent, it makes sense to bring all these organizations together to strengthen the coffee industry. The ICO would become a specialized agency of the African Union, operating autonomously with its own governance structure but linked to the African Union to work towards the economic transformation of the continent. This integration would have social advantages, capacity-building opportunities, and improved financing for the coffee sector.

Ultimately, by monitoring, evaluating, and investing in the production of coffee, we can strengthen this commodity in line with the goals of Agenda 2063.

You mentioned that coffee is a strategic commodity, especially for Africa. What makes it strategic?

Coffee is strategic because Africa has



abundant natural resources, including coffee. Since the 1960s, many countries in Africa, such as Ethiopia, Tanzania, Kenya, Cote d'Ivoire, and Ghana, relied on coffee for their economies. Countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone also heavily relied on coffee exports. Europe does not have the advantage of growing coffee like Africa does, making it a valuable commodity for African countries.

Coffee has the potential to reduce poverty in rural areas by providing income for farmers to support their families, access education, and healthcare. However, current low prices threaten the livelihoods of coffee producers. Collaboration is needed to prevent the disappearance of coffee farmers in some member countries that were once major coffee producers.

Countries like Angola, which was a significant Robusta producer, faced challenges like war that led to farmers abandoning coffee cultivation. Despite these challenges, there is a desire to revive coffee production in Africa due to its transformative impact on rural communities.

Coffee holds international value and is in high demand, particularly in Europe. Investing in research is crucial to address climate change, pest, and disease issues that affect coffee plantations. By working together and focusing on sustainable production methods, African countries can capitalize on the global market for coffee.

How can science and technology create new varieties that are resilient to the impact of climate change?

All of this discussion stems from the Kampala Declaration, which was concluded at the African Union Summit held in February of this year, during the 30th Ordinary Summit of the African Union. The Kampala Declaration was accepted and approved during the summit. Today, we are here to discuss the importance of coffee and I would like to commend Ethiopia for being the leading producer of coffee in Africa.

As a strategic commodity, what

Continued to page 9



We prioritize coffee...

Continued from page 8

emphasis has the African Union placed on coffee-producing countries like Ethiopia?

Within the African Union, I lead the Department of Agriculture. Coffee is an agricultural product. To reduce poverty and increase intra-African trade, we prioritize coffee. Just like in Ethiopia, we should prioritize coffee and allocate funds for research activities to benefit from this commodity. Ethiopia is a founding member of the African Union and plays a crucial role in revamping and enhancing the economy of the continent.

The Department of Economic Affairs in the African Union should also consider coffee when working on the African Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Integration is crucial as we speak with one voice and one position.

When we negotiate at the International Coffee Organization in London, the African Union is represented. In the past, the African Union was not represented, but now countries like Ethiopia can speak on behalf of the African Union as they are members. This integration is important as only 25 out of the 55 African Union member countries are coffee producers.

Non-producing African countries have agreed to consider coffee as a strategic crop to help reduce poverty. Countries in the northern part of Africa, like Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Tunisia, and Mauritania, consume a lot of coffee but do not have the ecosystem to produce it.

Coffee grows in sub-Saharan Africa, giving those countries a comparative advantage. Non-producing countries can join the International African Coffee Organization (IACU) and become consumers, allowing for trade within the free trade area established for the continent's integration.

When it comes to producing quality coffee products and exporting them to European or other countries, Africa is not focusing much on coffee quality. So, what is the African Union doing about this issue?

The African Union, in terms of its structure, used to be an independent body. Now, we have made the decision to revisit this issue. We have our own technical specialized offices that are dedicated to improving quality. During my time as Secretary General in IACU, I established four centers of excellence focused on improving quality.

The center for West Africa is in Cote d'Ivoire, for Central Africa it is in Cameroon, for Eastern Africa it is in Zambia, and for Southern Africa it is in Zimbabwe, specifically in Lusaka.

In addition, there is a center in Uganda for this purpose. These centers are dedicated to



To reduce poverty and increase intra-African trade, we prioritize coffee

training individuals to improve quality. The challenge now is to enhance the capacity of these regional centers for coffee. The infrastructure is already in place. As part of the African Union, we will collaborate with my department to address the issue of improving coffee quality on the continent.

How effective is the African Union in implementing the Africa Free Trade Agreement?

The secretariat for the Africa Free Trade Agreement operates independently, similar to a specialized agency for coffee. It is based in Accra and was established around two years ago. We need time to address standards and quality issues. I have assigned a staff member to work on phytosanitary standards at the AfCFTA in Accra to harmonize standards across regions and crops. This capacity building is essential for promoting intra-African trade.

Infrastructure availability is still a problem. Do we have the infrastructure necessary for inter-African trade?

We are actively addressing this issue by identifying programs that can facilitate trade. A pilot project has been implemented to promote trans-boundary trade between countries. This project focuses on the Cocoa commodity trade between Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire.

The goal is to establish a corridor for the exchange of products and value-added goods. This initiative aims to move away from exporting raw materials, which yield low profits. For example, a gram of coffee can sell for \$15 in a supermarket, while a ton of coffee beans sells for less than \$1. It is essential for us to transform our approach to business and rethink how we can improve our practices moving forward.

The issue of climate change falls under your mandate as you represent the African Union. How do you perceive the new EUDR regulation and its potential impact on African coffee-producing and trading countries?

If you are referring to the EU's new decision that requires geographic location to determine deforestation in coffee-growing areas, it may not apply to Ethiopia. Ethiopia cultivates its coffee in the canopy without destroying trees, as they are essential for Arabica growth.

I believe this new EU regulation is aimed at addressing deforestation concerns. However, implementing geographic location requirements without proper infrastructure poses challenges. Farmers need support to comply with these regulations, such as mapping each cooperative and coffee-growing area.

It is crucial to prepare people and provide necessary infrastructure before enforcing new rules. Without proper mechanisms in place, it is unfair to expect African countries to meet these regulations.

What do you think about the environmental contribution of the Green Legacy Initiative of Ethiopia?

I commend the ongoing Green legacy Initiative of Ethiopia as a model for other African countries. I appreciated the initiative as it is a decisive measure to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

The initiative, a self-reliant program that Ethiopia is implementing without any financial support from outside, demonstrates the government's commitment to fighting climate change. It is also instrumental in tackling drought and other natural disasters such as landslides and flooding, and is in line with AU's Great Green Wall Program.

Thank you for your insights.

It is my pleasure.

Society

Holiday volunteering: To make festivals enjoyable, peaceful

BY LEULSEGED WORKU

Ethiopia is a country where people with diverse backgrounds—ethnicity, languages, religions, cultures, customs, and traditions coexist peacefully; and a nation where various cultural and religious practices are entertained regardless of any differences.

Meskerem (September), the first month of the Ethiopian year, is a month of festivity in which several religious and cultural festivals are celebrated warmly and colorfully among Ethiopians.

Enkutatash, Ethiopian New Year, *Gifata*—a cultural festival celebrated every mid-September (second week of September) by the Wolayta people in the Southern State of Ethiopia—*Meskel* (The finding of the True Cross) and *Irrecha*—the Oromo people's Thanksgiving festival which is marked colorfully a week later *Meskel* and *Mewlid*—the birth of Prophet Muhammad—are among the festivals cherished colorfully among Ethiopians.

Currently, the people of Wolaita are rejoicing in the festival of *Gifata* which also serves as a platform to strengthen a sense of unity, love, and solidarity.

According to documents, the celebration of *Gifata* extends until the beginning of October (*Ofinta*), and during the festival days, religious and cultural rituals, and storytelling are the important parts of the celebration. Children engage in a variety of activities, including music, dance, games, and traditional sports such as “*Genna*” (hockey on horseback) and “*Amora*” (wrestling).

The consumption of “*Gifata honey*”—fermented honey mead, raw meat, *kitfo*, *bacira*, *filla*, and other high-protein foods is a part of the ceremony.

In addition to ‘*Gifata*’, Ethiopians are readying themselves to warmly celebrate the upcoming *Meskel* festival which falls on *Meskerem 17*; and the *Irrecha* festival, on *Meskerem 25 and 26, 2017 E.C* in Addis Ababa and Bishoftu Town respectively.

Meskel is celebrated primarily by Ethiopian Orthodox Christians, with vibrant processions featuring the *Meskel Demera*, a large bonfire, symbolizing the discovery of the True Cross by Empress Helena. This festival is characterized by songs, dances, and colorful attire, fostering a sense of unity and cultural pride.

On the other hand, *Irrecha* marks the end of the rainy months and the beginning of the sunny, bright season; and the people of Oromo mark it to express gratitude for the blessings received and pray for a prosperous year ahead.

The celebrations include rituals at sacred natural sites, traditional music, dances, and community gatherings highlighting the importance of nature and tradition. During the event, participants gather to honor the spirit of their ancestors.



Celebration of Meskel



Celebration of Irrecha

The vibrant nature of both Meskel and Irrecha requires the active participation of youth volunteers

As these festivities are approaching, the government, joining hands with pertinent bodies, the society at large, and volunteers are preparing themselves for the peaceful accomplishment of the festivals.

Addis Ababa City Youth Association and Federal Police are among these entities that have finalized their preparations for the

peaceful celebration of the festivals.

As indicated by Association Head, Yehunegn Mohamad, *Meskel* and *Irrecha* festivities are among Ethiopia's heritages that have special value for the people of Ethiopia and the whole world as well. That is why it is common to see local and foreign tourists attending the events. For this reason, the Association has finalized its preparation to assign more than 16,000 volunteers to the successful celebration of the festivals.

According to him, it is common to observe both local and foreign tourists take part in these festivals. For this reason, the volunteers will play their role in enabling the festivals to be marked peacefully. Several youths are keenly waiting for the day to discharge their responsibility in the capital Addis Ababa, where *Meskel* and *Irrecha* festivals are celebrated colorfully.

Yospeh Adel and Birtukan Bekele, are members of the Addis Ababa Youth Association. Speaking to ENA, they expressed their willingness to serve the society and discharge their responsibilities.

They said that public holidays like *Meskel* and *Irrecha* are events where multitudes gather in one place to observe the day, and volunteers would play a key role in coordinating the event, and facilitating the ground for participants.

As mentioned to *The Ethiopian Herald*, Adane Fesha, a former member of YMCA Ethiopia, (Young Men's Christian Association), volunteers have a significant social and economic role in their country.

Their role is not only confined to rainy seasons when several volunteers are actively involved in serving the community. They play a critical role in organizing and coordinating public holidays and other special events. From planning logistics to coordinating activities, their involvement ensures that the events run smoothly. They assist in setting up venues, managing crowds, and ensuring the safety of participants, allowing for a seamless celebration. In this regard, events like *Meskel* and *Irrecha* need the involvement of volunteers.

According to him, in a rapidly globalizing world, the youth serve as cultural ambassadors, bridging the gap between tradition and modernity. They take the initiative to educate their peers and younger generations about the historical and cultural significance of such festivals. By organizing workshops, discussions, and culture-centered presentations, they foster pride in their heritage and encourage broader participation.

Youth volunteers are often at the forefront of community engagement efforts. They mobilize their peers, families, and neighbors to participate actively in the festivities, emphasizing the importance of communal celebration. This engagement not only brings people together but also strengthens community bonds and fosters a collective identity and shared purpose.

To mention their role in the upcoming festivals, the vibrant nature of both *Meskel* and *Irrecha* requires the active participation of youth volunteers. “Young volunteers often participate in traditional music and dance groups, contributing to the cultural tapestry of the events. They are also, the ones who organize performances, art displays, and cultural showcases, providing entertainment and enriching the overall experience for attendees.”

With an increasing emphasis on environmental sustainability, youth volunteers can also play a vital role in ensuring that *Meskel* and *Irrecha* celebrations are eco-friendly. Initiatives such as clean-up drives after the festivities, educating participants on waste management, and promoting the conservation of natural spaces used for celebrations demonstrate their commitment to protecting the environment. What is more, he said that volunteer youths play a key role in sustaining peace by working with security forces.

The role of volunteer youths in every aspect cannot be overstated. Their contributions not only enhance the peace and cultural significance of such events but also ensure their smooth execution and sustainability. By embracing their roles as organizers, educators, community builders, artists, and environmental stewards, have the power to make the festivals more peaceful and unforgettable for all. What is more, their passion and dedication are instrumental in fostering peace, unity, and pride, and cementing a sense of belongingness between and among the people.

Rising Temperatures Threaten Our Oceans

Human practices, such as unsustainable fishing, pollution, coastal development, and fossil fuel use have pushed the Earth's oceans to their limits. This has resulted in warmer, more acidic waters. As global temperatures rise yearly due to climate change, oceans continue to see significant losses in biodiversity, rising sea levels, and environmental damage.

"While atmospheric temperatures tend to fluctuate, the ocean is steadily and constantly heating up. The State of the Ocean Report indicates that the ocean is now warming at twice the rate it was twenty years ago", states the United Nations Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) in a 2024 report.

The ocean absorbs the vast majority of the greenhouse gasses emitted globally, causing ocean temperatures to rise at alarming rates. This causes a depletion of oxygen in marine environments, ravaging marine ecosystems.

Biodiversity and ecosystem stability are crucial in ensuring planetary health. Without high levels of biodiversity,

access to clean air, food, and water are severely compromised. Warmer waters, as a result of climate change, have made it difficult for a host of species to survive.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) states that deoxygenation of waters can lead to hypoxia, or "dead zones", which are environments that cannot sustain marine life. EPA adds that small marine organisms, such as plankton, are particularly sensitive to changes in temperature and oxygen levels. This severely disrupts the food chain as animals further up the food chain face the risk of starvation with their main prey being compromised.

Additionally, deoxygenation and overfishing have led to alarming rates of coral bleaching. Coral reefs are superorganisms that provide the fundamental building blocks for about one quarter of all marine life. They are crucial for ocean health, housing entire ecosystems on their own.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) stated,

"Because of the diversity of life found in the habitats created by corals, reefs are often called the "rainforests of the sea." About 25% of the ocean's fish depend on healthy coral reefs. Fishes and other organisms shelter, find food, reproduce, and rear their young in the many nooks and crannies formed by corals".

Coral bleaching is particularly concerning as reefs rarely recover after they've been degraded. As a multitude of ecosystems are dependent on coral reefs for survival, ensuring proper coral health is imperative for biodiversity.

Rising temperatures caused by the greenhouse effect have led to ocean waters becoming significantly more acidic over the years. According to EPA, ocean waters have increased in acidity by over 25 percent since the Industrial Revolution.

Acidity has a significant, adverse impact on a multitude of marine animals. According to the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), rising levels of pH, which contribute to acidity, impede the availability of carbonate, which allows mollusks to create shells

and other important structures. This worsens the chances that mollusks have at survival and puts their predators at risk of starvation.

Losses in ocean biodiversity pose serious concerns in humans as well. According to the World Bank, approximately 58 percent of the world's income comes from jobs in fish production. Additionally, over 3 billion people rely on fish as a crucial part of their diets. Decreasing levels of biodiversity in the Earth's oceans threatens to cause widespread food insecurity.

Coastal communities, so far, have been the most directly impacted by worsening ocean health. Rising sea temperatures have exacerbated the rise of sea levels and flooding. According to the EPA, exposure to sea water gives way to increased risks of contracting waterborne diseases. Additionally, coastal flooding causes great damage to critical infrastructures, such as housing, roads, and salination systems.

(Source: Inter press service)

Verbatim and Caption

PM Abiy selected as new IGAD Tourism Champion: IGAD

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) of Ethiopia is selected as the new IGAD Tourism Champion for a period of three years.

His visionary leadership will play a pivotal role in advancing sustainable tourism across the region, driving economic growth, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship for the benefit of all IGAD Member States.

IGAD has launched a 10 year Sustainable Tourism Master Plan (STMP) 2024-2034 this week in Addis Ababa in a bid to shape a more sustainable and inclusive future for tourism in the IGAD region.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) statement



Ethiopia's diplomacy prioritizes peace, security, regional integration: Amb. Nebiyat

Ethiopia's diplomacy prioritizes peace, security, mutual development, and regional integration based on principle and reciprocity. At the same time, Ethiopia's foreign policy prioritizes neighboring countries and that is why Ethiopia is playing pivotal role in protecting peace, stability and development of the Horn of Africa region.

Hence, Ethiopia will not passively observe any attempts to destabilize the Horn region as well as to thwart its development efforts. Ethiopia is monitoring the recent acts in its neighbors. Ethiopia will avoid engaging in hostile rhetoric aimed to distort its focus. However, it will not only continue monitoring actions in neighboring countries affecting Ethiopia's national interest but respond. Ethiopia is reaffirmed Ethiopia's commitment to peaceful resolution of disputes and regional cooperation.



Ambassador Nebiyat Getachew, Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia



Global media coverage of Africa dominated by negative narratives: PMO Press Secretary

Global media coverage of Africa has long been dominated by narratives of disease, poverty, conflict, and political instability. This approach has negatively impacted and continues to shape the perception and policy decisions about Africa at the international level. Balanced and objective reporting based on journalistic ethics is expected from international media journalists.

Ethiopia is ready to provide accurate and timely information to international media journalists. As Ethiopia continues to experience rapid reforms and development, fostering balanced and objective media coverage is crucial. Therefore, Office of the Prime Minister organized a round table discussion with largest international news media agencies based in Ethiopia.

Billene Seyoum, Press Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister of Ethiopia



Ethiopia's first-ever TSA crucial to capture national tourism data: Minister

The official launch of Ethiopia's first-ever tourism satellite account (TSA) is a scientific tool designed to capture data on national tourism. TSA, developed by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), is a standard statistical framework for measuring tourism's economic impact.

Adopting new data system plays pivotal role in driving sustainable tourism development in Ethiopia. The launch of our first-ever TSA is a crucial step in capturing comprehensive data about tourism, enabling us to effectively measure and manage its economic impact. This is a very historic day for Ethiopia.

Nasisie Chali, Tourism Minister speaking at the TSA official launching program

Ethio-Telecom plans to reach 83 million subscribers this fiscal year: CEO

Ethio Telecom aims to reach 83 million subscribers and generate 163.7 billion Birr in revenue during the current Ethiopian fiscal year.

The company also plans to build 1,298 new mobile sites to enhance telecom coverage and capacity, expanding 4G services to extra 500 cities, introducing 5G services in additional 15 cities.

Ethio Telecom also plans to build 331 rural connectivity solutions and 165 mobile network sites, to extend network coverage to 1,000 rural kebeles aiming at narrowing the digital divide between urban and rural areas.

Firehiwot Tamiru, Ethio Telecom CEO

