



# The Ethiopian Herald

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## Premier touts Ethiopia's untapped investment potentials for BRICS members

BY STAFF REPORTER

**ADDIS ABABA** - Government highly encourages investors from the BRICS nations to seize the enormous investment opportunities available in Ethiopia, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) said.

Speaking at the BRICS Business Forum, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) yesterday said that the BRICS is well positioned to make a substantial global economic growth and sustainable development.

"To fully realize this potential, we must actively work to ensure that global governance structures that are more representative, inclusive and responsive to the needs of the developing and emerging economies."

Today's international financial architecture does not fully align with the aspiration of emerging economies. "We advocate for the comprehensive reform of the global



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## Activist eyeing relevant actors' timely access to information

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

**ADDIS ABABA**- Government and concerned institutions need to create timely access to information

See Activist eyeing ... Page 3



## Axum to attract 5,000 foreign tourists in this FY

BY MESERET BEHAILU

**ADDIS ABABA** - The Axum Town Culture and Tourism Department has unveiled plans to draw over 5,000 foreign tourists in the current Fiscal Year (FY), leveraging the improved peace and stability in Tigray State as key drivers. Speaking to the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), the Department's Head, Gebremedhin Fitsumbirhan, highlighted

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## Ethiopia's coffee future vis-à-vis EU deforestation law

BY YESUF ENDRIS

The European Union (EU), which imports 30% of Ethiopia's coffee, has postponed the implementation of its deforestation regulation by 12 months after extensive negotiations with the Ethiopian government. Despite Ethiopia's sustainable coffee production practices, the Ministry of Agriculture emphasized the need to protect the country's reputation in the EU market. Coffee plays a critical role in Ethiopia's economy, serving as a primary source of foreign exchange. However, production challenges and regulatory hurdles prompted Ethiopia to seek more time to comply with the EU's new deforestation rules.

During a recent workshop on environmental issues in coffee farming, the Ethiopian Coffee and Tea Authority (ECTA) Director General Adugna Debela (PhD) stressed the importance of addressing environmental concerns to benefit farmers, exporters, and stakeholders. He reaffirmed the government's commitment to increasing coffee production while aligning with international standards, including the



deforestation regulation. Efforts to improve coffee farming are reversing a five-year trend in which farmers

abandoned coffee for maize due to low prices. Recent studies presented

See Ethiopia's coffee future ... Page 3

# News

## Addis Ababa's corridor projects drive livability, dignity: Mayor

### • Engaging in dialogue with residents

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

**ADDIS ABABA** – Propelling community concerns in corridor development projects is crucial for timely and impactful execution, the Addis Ababa Mayor said.

Mayor Adanech Abebie made the above remark yesterday during a wide-ranging discussion with city administrators, residents, religious institutions, and other stakeholders.

The dialogue aimed to assess the progress of ongoing development projects and chart a path forward. The mayor underscored that the redevelopment efforts have made the capital more livable and dignified for all residents, not just the wealthy. “Our priority is to ensure the city lives up to its name by addressing the needs of every citizen,” she stated.

The mayor pledged to incorporate participants’ feedback, describing stakeholder engagement as an essential platform for inclusive insights and valuable contributions. She applauded residents for their role in the project’s progress, which aligns with plans to nurture responsible generations and combat poverty.

Adanech further indicated that the administration aims to improve socioeconomic development while creating a city that guarantees a dignified life for all. In the first phase of redevelopment, 8.7 billion Birr was disbursed to compensate private homeowners. The Cabinet Affairs Head Tilahun Worku stressed that Addis Ababa’s role as a hub for international diplomacy requires leveraging



the “latecomer advantage” by implementing inclusive development. He reported that 50,000 jobs were created, SMEs were stimulated, and working cultures within communities improved during the project’s first phase.

However, challenges such as construction input shortages, skill gaps, unseasonal rainfall, and resident awareness issues affected progress. Addressing these setbacks, Tilahun stressed the importance of continued public engagement to ensure residents are actively involved in the next phases.

The project also sets the stage for new developments, including the construction

of an international convention center and enhanced conference tourism.

Participants raised concerns about infrastructure, social welfare, sustainable settlements, and the need for fair compensation. They urged leadership to streamline pro-poor initiatives, conduct research-based development, and address bureaucratic delays affecting the project’s progress.

The city administration reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring inclusive, research-driven development to make Addis Ababa a model of sustainable growth and livability for all its citizens.

## ESX, NSE, iCapital Africa ink MoU to enhance capital market

BY HAILE DEMEKE

**ADDIS ABABA**- Ethiopian Securities Exchange (ESX) signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Nairobi Securities Exchange (NSE) and iCapital Africa Institute to enhance the growth and development of capital markets.

Speaking at the occasion ESX Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Tilahun Esmael (PhD) said that this strategic collaboration seeks to enhance the growth and development of capital markets between Kenya and Ethiopia through various strategic initiatives. The collaboration will support the integration of capital markets in the two countries, leverage the expertise and experience of the NSE and Capital. The partnership will place special focus on key areas such as knowledge exchange, capacity building, and the promotion of cross-border investments.

He stated that the MoU landmarked a significant step towards enhancing financial markets in Ethiopia and the broader East African region. Outlining several initiatives, including joint training programs for market participants apart from establishing a strong regulatory framework and exploring innovative financial products.

The MoU is also crucial to meet the growing needs of investors in both countries, he noted.

He emphasized the importance of this collaboration, stating, this partnership with NSE and iCapital Africa Institute is a pivotal moment for the Ethiopian capital market. It will not only accelerate the two countries’ market’s growth but also position Ethiopia as a key player in the regional financial landscape.

Commending the partnership CEO of NSX Frank Mwit expressed enthusiasm for the collaboration, highlighting the potential for increased regional integration. The NSE is delighted to partner with ESX and iCapital Africa Institute to further the growth of capital markets in Kenya and Ethiopia. This partnership will unlock significant opportunities for issuers and investors in both countries, enhancing the appeal of the region to both domestic and international investors.

Capital Africa Institute CEO Gemechu Waktola (PhD) for his part stated that the institute support this partnership by delivering cutting-edge intellectual capital solutions. We are eager to contribute to the growth of capital markets in Ethiopia and the region through innovation and technology transfer. The MoU signifies a shared commitment to the development of strong, transparent, and accessible capital markets, ultimately contributing to economic growth and financial inclusion in both Ethiopia and Kenya.

The ESX, NSE, and iCapital Africa Institute will work closely together in the coming months to implement the initiatives outlined in the MoU, to achieve tangible outcomes that will benefit both markets, it was learnt.

## ECX shares expertise to boost African commodities exchange

### •Inks MoU with Tsedey Bank

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

**ADDIS ABABA**–The Ethiopian Commodity Exchange (ECX) has made significant progress in sharing its expertise in commodities exchange and operations to strengthen trade among African nations.

ECX CEO Wondimagegnehu Negera announced that delegations from nine African countries have visited the ECX, building relationships aimed at fostering the exchange of knowledge and best practices in the commodities market.

“These collaborations are opening up new opportunities for market development and growth across the continent. For instance, Ethiopia is currently trading soybeans with Kenya,” he said, adding that similar trade partnerships are being developed with other African nations.

Wondimagegnehu emphasized that the ECX will continue creating exchange platforms to streamline cross-border trade within Africa. Additionally, ECX is modernizing its marketing system by launching an online shopping platform.

In the first quarter of this fiscal year, ECX facilitated the online exchange of around 25 Ethiopian agricultural products, with transactions totaling over 5.6 billion Birr.

The new online platform is designed to enhance the current electronic shopping



system, allowing traders to conduct transactions digitally without the need to visit physical trading centers. This innovation is expected to make the market more accessible, increase participation, and offer more technology-driven services.

According to Wondimagegnehu, the online system is continuously evolving, allowing new products to be introduced to the market. The platform also supports financial inclusion and ensures a reliable payment system, enhancing the efficiency of market exchanges nationwide.

“Additional agricultural products, including soybeans, teff, beer malt, and salt, are being

integrated into the market system,” he added.

In a related development, the Ethiopian Commodity Exchange (ECX) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Tsedey Bank to collaborate on enhancing commodity exchange initiatives. Tsedey Bank CEO Mekonnen Yelewumwossen emphasized that the partnership would empower farmers to bring their products to market more efficiently, thereby boosting productivity.

Tsedey Bank, which supports small, medium, and large enterprises, currently holds a total capital of 12 billion Birr and assets amounting to 60 billion Birr, with a network of over 630 branches.

# News

## TTI boosts hospitality workforce with nationwide college partnerships

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

**ADDIS ABABA** - The Tourism Training Institute (TTI) has announced a new initiative to further capacitate 34 polytechnic colleges nationwide by providing targeted training aimed at developing skilled hotel professionals. TTI's Deputy Director General Yitaseb Seyoum told *The Ethiopian Herald* that the selected colleges are receiving comprehensive support to upgrade their training systems and workshops, elevating their hotel and tourism training programs. The institute is also introducing new training schedules and collaborating closely with these colleges under a unified framework.

For over 56 years, the institute has been bridging skill gaps in the hotel and tourism sectors through various degree, certificate, and short-term training programs. Trainees are sent to hotels to convert their theoretical knowledge into practical experience, ensuring a well-rounded professional development.

Yitaseb highlighted the institute's significant contributions to the industry, including partnerships with hotels, tour operators,

and other tourism destinations to enhance collaboration. "We are working with the University of Gondar, Hawassa University, and others to shape training programs, offer consultancy services, and engage in research activities," he added.

The institute is also preparing hotels to feature 20 traditional Ethiopian foods on their menus, promoting the nation's culinary heritage to guests. Yitaseb noted that skilled hotel professionals have increased from 33% to 47%, though further efforts are required to fill the remaining gaps in the workforce.

He emphasized that tourism is a human-centered industry that supports other sectors like agriculture and technology, underscoring the critical role of human resources. Recent hotel openings in Addis Ababa have already recruited many graduates from the institute.

Founded in 1968, TTI has played a key role in shaping Ethiopia's tourism and hospitality industry by offering comprehensive training to aspiring professionals. The institute aims to meet the growing demand for qualified personnel and strengthen the sector's overall competitiveness.

## Activist eyeing relevant actors'...

regarding Abbay dam to stay competitive with other media outlets, so stressed the Ethiopian Institute for Public Diplomacy (EIPD) founder and president.

In an interview with *The Ethiopian Herald*, EIPD Founder and President Yasin Ahmed Bagay highlighted that as an Ethiopian media activists around the world, in the West, and in Arab countries, there is a need to have quick and useful information.

"Sometimes, I receive statements from the Egyptian Foreign Minister or Arab media regarding events in Ethiopia. We often have to wait 24, 48, or even 72 hours to hear from our own government or ministers."

As to him, the delay is problematic, especially when we (activists) are invited to speak on Arabic media since they are informed quickly about statements or comments made by Egypt or Sudan, and they ask for Ethiopia's opinions. Meanwhile, Ethiopian activists struggle to find any official statements in Amharic, English, or Arabic. "This puts us at a disadvantage when providing analysis or commentary," he emphasized.

"While we are not official representatives of the Ethiopian government, our insights are valuable and can help shape public opinion and reduce conflicts until official statements are released. This challenge is significant, and we need quicker access to information to stay competitive with Arabic media," he underscored.

He went on saying: "When I visit news outlets like Al Jazeera, I often find that there is no official response from our government, but I still provide my perspective. This lack of information hinders our ability to keep up with the speed of Arabic media.

With regard to misconceptions and fake news about Ethiopia and the project, he mentioned that Abbay dam has created an opportunity to correct misconceptions and fake news about Ethiopia and the project.

Moreover, it allowed Ethiopia to be introduced to every Arab household, thereby increasing awareness and understanding of our country. This publicity can be used to strengthen Ethiopia's relationship with the Arabic world, culturally, socially, economically, and in terms of security, he added.

While it is now widely acknowledged that Ethiopia is the source of the Nile, the challenge lies in changing the Egyptian narrative that the Abbay dam will reduce water flow to Sudan and Egypt.

The reality is that the dam will primarily generate electricity, not affect irrigation practices. Egypt has already adjusted its policies regarding water usage due to the Abbay dam, showing a willingness to adapt to the new geopolitical landscape, said the President.

"As a media professional, it is important to recognize the difference between propaganda in the media and the actions taken by the Egyptian government. While the media may use the Abbay dam to distract from domestic challenges, the government is actively preparing for the changes that will come with the completion of the project."

Cooperation between Egypt and Ethiopia is essential, as Ethiopia has every right to proceed with the Abbay dam under international law and agreements. Public diplomacy would play vital role in this regard. It complements official diplomacy and can significantly contribute to Ethiopia's development, Yasin added.

Expressing his delight by recent developments, such as the establishment of public diplomacy initiatives within the Ethiopian Foreign Ministry, he stressed that the move underscores the importance of government support for public diplomacy efforts.

"By showcasing the new Ethiopia and moving away from outdated narratives, we aim to promote Ethio-prosperity and regional cooperation," he said.

## Premier touts Ethiopia's...

financial system to establish a more equitable framework. BRICS itself should set an example by expanding mutually beneficiary economic cooperation within member countries.

According to him, BRICS can serve as a standard for reformed global financial system that not only address the needs of its members, but also supports the development objectives of other emerging or developing economies.

Ethiopia's rapidly expanding economy presents significant opportunities for investment, economic cooperation and trade particularly, for the BRICS nations. Ethiopia is endowed with abundant natural and agricultural resources offering access to large and diverse markets across Africa and beyond.

This advantage is further strengthened by the Ethiopian Airlines, the largest in Africa and a leader in an international cargo and passenger transport. Furthermore, country's affordable and increasingly renewable energy infrastructure coupled with a young skilled and trainable workforce positions Ethiopia as

an attractive destination for investment.

In recent years, the country has implemented bold economic reforms aimed at making its economy even more business friendly. The measures include the liberalization of key sectors such as telecommunication and finance. The country also adopted market-based foreign exchange regime creating more conducive environment for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

These changes are designed to enhance the country's competitiveness in the global market and to offer significant returns for investors. "We strongly encourage investors from the BRICS countries to seize the opportunities available in Ethiopia, particularly, in sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture, energy, mining, ICT and tourism. These sectors hold enormous potential for growth and innovation. BRICS countries can benefit by investing in these areas brings form Ethiopia's strategy positions as gateway to the African continent while contributing to the block's shared development objectives.

## Ethiopia's coffee future vis-à-vis...

at the workshop emphasized the need for additional support for smallholder farmers and greater international cooperation, especially with the EU.

Agriculture Minister Girma Amentie (PhD) highlighted Ethiopia's alignment with the EU's environmental goals, noting that the nation's forest cover has increased from 17.2% to 23.6% under the Green Legacy Initiative. This initiative reflects Ethiopia's commitment to sustainable agriculture and climate action.

To ensure compliance with the EU regulation, ECTA and the German International Development Cooperation (GIZ) introduced a national geospatial database system to track the origins of coffee and verify deforestation-free production. A recent EU delegation visit confirmed that Ethiopia's coffee farming practices do not contribute to deforestation, as coffee plants coexist with forest ecosystems. The EU's postponement of the regulation until December 30, 2024, provides operators, traders, and Third World countries, including

Ethiopia, time to prepare for the new requirements. While the law technically took effect on June 29, 2023, enforcement has been delayed pending approval from the European Parliament.

Ethiopia's coffee exports have achieved significant success recently, generating 521.98 million USD from 115,851.77 tons of coffee, tea, and spices in the first quarter of the 2024/25 fiscal year. This performance exceeded the original target of 427.10 million USD from 83,294.25 tons, marking a 46% increase in revenue and a 69% growth in export volume.

With the extra time granted by the EU, Ethiopia is poised to strengthen its coffee sector, meet international standards, and build on its recent export achievements.

The EU deforestation law, aimed at combating global deforestation and promoting sustainable trade, requires that products imported into the European Union, including coffee, be free from any connection to deforestation.

## Axum to attract 5,000 foreign tourists...

ongoing initiatives designed to revitalize Axum's tourism sector, which was severely affected by the two-year conflict. "Axum was once a major destination for foreign visitors, but the war led to a sharp decline in tourism. Now, we are working diligently to revive the industry and welcome tourists back," he stated.

In the past three months, Axum has already seen resurgence in tourism, with 340 foreign tourists and over 1,000 local visitors arriving in the town. Gebremedhin expressed optimism that these numbers will continue to grow as peace efforts progress. "Our goal is to attract over 5,000 foreign tourists by the end of this fiscal year, assuming peace in Tigray is fully maintained," he added.

The town is working closely with local authorities to ensure lasting peace, which is seen as essential to reigniting tourism in

the state. Domestic tourists and members of the Ethiopian Diaspora have already begun returning, especially during recent holidays such as Meskel (Finding of the True Cross) and Ashenda (a festival for girls and young women). A further influx is expected for the upcoming Axum Tsion (Zion) celebration in November.

Addressing concerns about misinformation, Gebremedhin urged potential tourists to seek reliable information from official sources, rather than falling prey to false reports on social media. He emphasized that the department remains committed to ensuring peace, which is crucial for the recovery of the tourism sector.

With peace efforts advancing, Axum is poised to reclaim its status as a top destination for both international and domestic visitors.

# Opinion

## GERD: A symbol of national pride, fulfilling economic aspirations amid external conspiracies

BY ADDISALEM MULAT

Following the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), Ethiopia has passed through a diverse range of twists and turns owing to conspiracies emanated from the country's archenemies working around the clock to badmouth the flagship project.

Albeit Ethiopia every once in a while goes to the ends of the earth to acquaint the unvarnished truth with the wider international community, the country's adversaries left no stone unturned to defame the move going behind closed curtains time and time again.

As the country's opponents feel an extreme animosity towards Ethiopia's growth, they every now and then turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to the concrete reality on the ground bringing their usual make-believe and spurious stories into service.

Although Ethiopia's foes know the fact that the country has no intention of harming any nations worldwide and its overreaching goal like the back of their hand, they have continued bamboozling the international community in cold blood.

There is broad agreement that on the heels of the construction of the colossal dam, Ethiopia at different points of time has been at loggerheads with some nations.

However, no matter what the challenges may be as a result of Ethiopia's diplomatic efforts, the country's endeavors have set in motion bearing fruits and making progress in the right direction at regular intervals.

As a consequence of the successful expedition of the construction of the dam, high government officials many a time and opt have been articulating their way of thinking in a number of effective ways.

The newly appointed President Taye Atskeselassie remarked that the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is a mega project that represents Ethiopia's outstanding achievement in its modern history, according to local media.

The president was sworn in as the President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia during the joint session of the House of Peoples Representatives and House of Federation.

Addressing the two Houses, President Taye emphasized the dam's completion and its fifth round of water filling, marking a major milestone in nation's development journey. He also disclosed the completion of its civil engineering work.

Acknowledging the remarkable contributions of Ethiopians, The President revealed that their collective efforts will be remembered in history. The dam not only serves as a vital source of electricity but also it fulfills the country's overdue national aspiration, he stated.



For him, the successful construction of the GERD demonstrates Ethiopia's capability to achieve its developmental goals in its own capacity.

Furthermore, the President highlighted that the dam will benefit neighboring countries, fostering regional development and reducing risks associated with river basin management. This year marks a significant victory for Ethiopia, he emphasized, reaffirming the government's determination to reinforce progress of the country.

It is abundantly clear that chasing closely the positive achievements of the dam, Ethiopians residing at home and abroad have been feeling on top of the world and in seventh heaven. As the completion of the flagship project mean everything to them and play a mammoth role in taking the country to new frontiers, all and sundry could not believe their eyes and ears.

As the government has accorded the highest priority to the dam which would be an engine to the industrialization of the country, the construction of the dam has been comprehended prudently, responsibly and shorn of a break.

In the present climate, everyone has continued its support to make the colossal project see the light of day on the grounds that it takes the country to further stage and whole new level. As things stand now, if Ethiopians from all walks of life sustained standing in unison, the country's economy will at the earliest possible juncture catapult to higher standard.

It has commonly been assumed that meeting the deadline of the construction of the oversized dam of the country would be a do-or-die situation for Ethiopians. In actual fact, diverse backgrounds have vowed to enthusiastically form an alliance for the construction of the high profile project which is expected to get rid of poverty from the face of the earth for good and all through the passage of time.

In the same way, people from all sections of the populations have been discharging large number of activities with the purpose of procuring resources, providing appropriate information for empowering the people, fostering Diasporas participation and more of the same.

It is recalled that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) has recently congratulated Ethiopians on the near-completion of the Abbay Dam describing its current status as a "historical arc" that cannot be reversed.

In a video message, Abiy highlighted Ethiopia's progress on transformative projects like the GERD and the Green Legacy Initiative. "The GERD is a monumental project that everyone should witness. It stands as a powerful lesson for the entire continent of Africa," he stated, urging riparian countries like Sudan and Egypt to support the project.

The Prime Minister emphasized the vast water capacity of the dam, noting it is possible to fill the entire reservoir in just 71 days. He also suggested that constructing additional dams could enhance year-round water flow, benefiting downstream countries.

Currently, the dam releases 2,800 cubic meters of water per second, providing more water than usual to downstream nations. "Ethiopia is sharing its resources with other nations for mutual development. If the lower riparian countries manage these resources wisely, it could significantly enhance their development," Abiy remarked. He assured that as further construction progresses, the dam would provide an even better water supply.

Looking ahead, the Prime Minister revealed that by December, the dam is expected to operate at higher capacity as water levels rise and more turbines come online. He mentioned that the dam's bridge is nearing completion, and additional electromechanical components for new turbines will be commissioned soon.

Abiy explained that launching all turbines simultaneously would not be beneficial; instead, a phased approach following technical guidelines is planned. "The dam is now almost completed. Those who invested in efforts to halt its construction have failed. While they may have caused some damage, we have successfully completed the dam. Their resources would have been better spent supporting the project," he asserted.

The PM acknowledged the high cost of the project but expressed pride in achieving its ambitious goals, reiterating Ethiopia's commitment to advancing the GERD for national development and regional cooperation.

The comprehensive construction of the dam has been witnessing accelerated development by the commitment and determination of the federal government that has been working around the clock to make the dam fully operational in the near future.

It is true that the dam has been executed carefully, responsibly and without interruption. Above and beyond, the government has given top priority to the project, which would be the pillar of the economic development of the country.

It is common knowledge that Egypt has been spreading misleading information about the progress of the dam though its nefarious acts over and over again failed to attain the intended outcomes.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed reiterated Ethiopia's readiness to negotiate on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), according to information obtained from Ethiopian News Agency.

The premier has responded queries from the House of People's Representatives at its 14th regular session held in the recent past.

In his response regarding the trilateral negotiation on GERD, Abiy said Ethiopia is ready to listen to the demands of the brotherly people of Egypt and address them to the best of Ethiopia's ability. The premier has also stressed the need for readiness by the Egypt side too to address Ethiopia's demands.

The information claiming that Ethiopia's filling of the GERD will cause the Aswan Dam's water volume to decrease has also been practically disproved, Abiy stated. The GERD has demonstrated the fact that there will be no damage to the lower riparian countries, it was indicated.

The Premier stated, "The filling of GERD will not be a question anymore. Ethiopia's intention is to develop together with discussion and cooperation. However, the idea of promoting merely own interests won't take us any further."

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

# Editorial

## Historic share sale for economic growth

The largest state-owned company, Ethio Telecom, recently launched the sale of 10% of its shares, marking a significant milestone in the nation's economic progress. During the launch ceremony, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) stated that this measure is an essential step in the ongoing journey from political revolution to evolution over the past six years. He emphasized the key reforms, including the development of Digital Ethiopia, have laid the groundwork for this moment, enabling progress across various sectors.

As part of the government's "Digital Ethiopia 2025" strategy, which aims to stimulate the economy and privatize state-owned enterprises, Ethio Telecom will be the first company to sell shares on the Ethiopian Stock Exchange, setting a precedent for others to follow.

The first phase of the sale began last Thursday via TeleBirr, with shares priced at 300 Birr each. A minimum purchase of 33 shares is required, amounting to an investment of 9,900 Birr. Ethio Telecom's CEO Frehiwot Tamiru announced that the company's total share value stands at 100 billion Birr, with 10% allocated for public sale until January 3, 2025. Individual investments range from 9,900 Birr for the minimum package (33 shares) to a maximum of 999,900 Birr for 3,333 shares.

Ethio Telecom is one of the largest and oldest companies not only in Ethiopia but also on the African continent. It has dominated the telecommunications sector for the past 130 years, making this step even more impactful, as millions of Ethiopians are expected to participate in the share purchase via the company's digital platform.

It is part of the "Big-5" group of state-owned corporations in Ethiopia, alongside Ethiopian Airlines, the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, Ethiopian Insurance Corporation, and Ethiopian Shipping Lines. The telecom company has also proven itself to be the largest profit-making institution in terms of revenue and a leading taxpayer for the government.

This public sale is open to individual Ethiopians residing both domestically and abroad. It serves as an open call for all Ethiopians to become owners of this national asset. Investing in Ethio Telecom shares is a significant opportunity for every Ethiopian, fostering a sense of ownership in this substantial investment. Purchasing shares is akin to investing in one's own wealth with the expectation of future profits. For this reason, Prime Minister Abiy extended his congratulations to all and encouraged all Ethiopians to participate in the nation's economic progress.

This initiative not only fosters ownership among Ethiopians wherever they reside but also enhances the company's competitiveness in the global stock market. Furthermore, this significant step and the involvement of Ethiopians in the process will enable the company to sustain its profit-making journey.

Additionally, the share-selling initiative empowers Ethio Telecom to expand its operations beyond Ethiopia, including markets like South Sudan and Djibouti. This expansion presents further opportunities for growth and enhances its global competitiveness.

The role of digital transformation initiatives has paved the way for this share sale, which hints at future opportunities in other sectors, including hospitality. Therefore, it is essential for Ethiopians to take action by purchasing shares and becoming owners of their country's assets to realize comprehensive national development.

# Opinion

## Ethiopia's plan to uphold diplomatic success for local regional prosperity

BY SOLOMON DIBABA

During his inaugural speech for the Ethiopian Fiscal Year 2017, President Taye noted that it is planned to increase domestic revenue to 1.5 trillion birr. He added that state expenditure will be allocated for rural road development, water development and other infrastructural facilities. The President also noted that market infrastructure will be promoted and new manufactured goods worth 5 billion USD will be produced. In terms of increasing FDI into the country, the President added that it is planned to attract FDI worth 5 billion USD.

Ethiopia is now well placed in BRICS, the President remarked adding the diplomatic successes that the country has achieved over the years in building the image of the country and in her role on promoting regional peace, economic cooperation and ensuring the stability of the Horn of Africa. He mentioned that Ethiopia will work on further strengthening her relation with the countries of the Persian Gulf.

The President mentioned that efforts are underway to complete Ethiopia's efforts to have access to ports which will have a significant role in boosting the economic development of the country. Moreover he reiterated that a large number of Ethiopians have been provided with foreign employment opportunity abroad.

Ethiopia will further continue in its peace keeping mission in Somalia under ATMIS and the mission to be formed under AUSSOM.

It must be noted that all these achievements were registered amidst multiple sets of conspiracies that were plotted by foreign and domestic forces who wish to deny Ethiopia of her peaceful and stable economic development.

The nation faces a number of challenges related to regional instability, sporadic ethnic based destabilization, proliferation of contraband on the major commanding heights of the national economy, developing more logistics and infrastructural facilities, possible cyber-attacks and corruption.

The author believes that the current fiscal year is so critical for

Ethiopia in the sense that ensuring nationwide stability and peace is a major prerequisite for sustained development of the country. However, this cannot be accomplished only through the efforts of the government and its leadership. All who claim to solve their country should contribute their part in settling internal disputes in a peaceful manner unless we all risk putting the country in the most unprecedented chaos.

The politicians and intellectuals in the country and overseas should shoulder moral and historical responsibility to ensure the peace and development of their country. It is understood that they may have differences in world outlook but the safety and security of their country is far more important than their differences. It is regrettable that some of them still think that the political and economic transformation of this country will come through the barrel of gun. Ethno-nationalistic sentiments among the youth and the academia is not only helping to erode the unity of the country but is also paving the way for foreign intervention into the affairs of Ethiopia. This needs to be reversed.

Blaming each other and foreign governments on causes of local issues would only help to perpetuate the agony that the motherland is now facing. Ethiopians of all walks of life need to support the ENDF in the efforts that they are making in defending the unity, territorial integrity of this country. No Ethiopian worthy of the name here or overseas can be indifferent spectator when foreign forces are trying to mobilize local extremists against the very foundation of the statehood of country. Ethiopia should not be left to suffer from agonies perpetrated by power mongering politicians who love to hear themselves about democracy and state building.

All should work together to make the current fiscal year a year of peace and stability as this is the core of the national interest of the country. People of all walks of life including armed groups need to come to round table in the process of conducting national dialogue which is the main key to resolve the differences in this country. The people of Ethiopia deserve to be honored.

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



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The Ethiopian Herald

# Art & Culture

## Addis Ababa as one of the potential tourism destinations

BY MULUGETA GUDETA

This is the tourism season in Ethiopia. Although some parts of the country may not be accessible to tourism and travel at this particular time, most of the country is open both for domestic and foreign tourism activities. Ethiopia has not yet used even a quarter of its tourism potentials that are as vast and as diverse as the country itself. Another problem consists of the fact that the same old tourism destinations are still the travel destinations for most tourists.

We sometimes feel that all the tourist sites in Ethiopia are located in distant and inaccessible places that tourists have to go there to discover them. Our ideas of tourism are largely formed by old stereotypes of us. Tourism means for most of us are castles in the north of the country, wildlife in the south, ancient or historic towns in the eastern parts of the country or natural wonders, nature and animals in the western parts of the country. The idea of tourism evokes in our minds difficult trips.

Ethiopia has not yet diversified its tourism destinations although a few attempts are making in the right direction. The identification of new and potentially lucrative tourism destinations in the country still remains one of the challenges of diversification. We often dream about distant tourism destinations while there are many unexploited potentials right under our eyes. Addis Ababa is of course a growing city with diverse tourism potentials awaiting development.

Obviously, the tourism industry is one of the strongest sectors in the economy of most developed countries. Tourism is often called the “smokeless industry”, an industry that requires relatively little investment while the returns are potentially immense. In the past, conventional wisdom was telling us that tourism was the business of the government or the public sector. According to this view, only government has the financial and organizational capacity to promote tourism in the country. Private individuals or potential investors in the sector were thus alienated from involving in the sector. This was mainly due to our fixation on traditional tourism destinations and our reluctance to develop new destinations. This view is however losing credence recently as a new approach to tourism development is increasingly gaining credence. Another problem is that tourism management and the absence of a guiding or long-term vision for the development of the sector. Because of this and other constraints, the sector has been languishing in stagnation instead of serving as a dynamic input for the growth of the economy in general.

According to available information, in developing countries like Ethiopia, the sector has not had visible impact on its economy. The revenues generated from tourism, are not reinvested within the sector. The growth of tourism depends

**We often dream about distant tourism destinations while there are many unexploited potentials right under our eyes. Addis Ababa is of course a growing city with diverse tourism potentials awaiting development**

on a long-term vision and the capacity to evaluate opportunities that require appropriate policy, planning, investment, strategic alliances and strategic management. Ethiopian tourism needs an overhaul of attitudes, thinking, strategizing and implementation. It is such a holistic approach that can save the sector from stagnation and catapult it into a process of dynamism and modernization.

Addis Ababa steps in to fulfil the above vision as it is the natural candidate for playing the role of the most important city in the country with great tourism potentials and a catalyst for development. A foreign tourist once said the following regarding the importance of the Ethiopian capital. He said, “Africa’s 4th largest city, the sprawling capital of Ethiopia – Addis Ababa – can certainly be an intimidating entry to the country. For this reason, on my first visit to Ethiopia, I was barely there for a night or 2, preferring to spend my

time (like most visitors) in the churches of Lalibela and the natural awe of the Danakil Depression.

“But now, on my second visit to the country, I decided it was time to get to grips with this city – plus it had the only 3G connection in Ethiopia at the time, so I was kind of forced by blogging necessity to stay there! But stay there I did, for over a week in fact and slowly but surely Addis grew on me, until it became clear I’m rather a fan of this crazy African capital. For one thing, it’s incredibly safe – when compared to most others in the continent – and for the seconds, I really think there’s actually some pretty cool things to do in Addis Ababa.”

Addis Ababa has the potential and advantage to become one of the modern tourism centres in Africa for many additional reasons. Addis is the diplomatic centre of Africa and one of the biggest conference centres in the world. It is visibly becoming a modern city as its skylines are fast changing and its economic and political importance becoming more prominent than any time in its history. As a blogger wrote about Ethiopia and its capital city, “Ethiopia is of course a country that is endowed with various natural, cultural and historical heritages that enable the country to be a destination of conference tourism, attractions, and cultural events and is also gifted with friendly climatic conditions. The capital Addis Ababa with an average altitude more than 2,400 meters is conducive for tourists in its natural tourism segment due to it being considered as a “naturally air conditioned” city.

There are of course many tourism attractions across the country. There are also big towns like Gondar or Axum or Harar that are also centres of ancient history and tourism destinations. Yet, there is no city as big or as important as Addis in terms of its tourism potentials. “Whilst the inherent strength of the tourism product portfolio lies across the country, the industry remains concentrated in Addis Ababa, where visitor arrivals account for more than 86% of the total market shares.”

Ethiopia in general and Addis Ababa in particular are potentially competitive in the tourism industry in the region. However, we should be realistic in our assessment and realize that the country has still to go a long way to catch up with other competitors in the region. Kenya, for instance is the leading tourist destination in East Africa with its variety and marketing savvy.

This does not however mean that Ethiopia or Addis Ababa has lost its advantages as a potentially big and lucrative potentials and markets in the industry. Ethiopia’s demographic and territorial size gives it an edge over other countries in the region. The sad reality is that this vast potential largely remains idle or not fully exploited. “Currently Ethiopia should focus on other tourism asset such as urban destination,

business conference, spa etc specifically for Addis Ababa.:

In order to improve inbound tourism and its competitiveness, the previous government had issued a tourism policy in 2009 at national level and subsequently Addis Ababa City Government also issued a regulation called the Addis Ababa City Government Cultural and Tourism Service Providers Licensing and Registration Regulation in 2009 to regulate the tourist service providers. It is not however clear to this writer whether or not this law is still in force or it has been revised or changed.

Addis Ababa can be said to be the macrocosm of Ethiopia because it is a small-scale representation of the entire country as far as tourism resources or historical relics are concerned. In a way it can be visualized as the museum of the entire country. “Moreover, Addis Ababa is a home of tremendous tourist attractions that have various cultural, historical, architectural, aesthetic, economic, spiritual, political and symbolic values. They have a considerable importance to inform us about the true remarkable past of Ethiopia in general and Addis Ababa in particular. They have also greater potentials for tourism industry if they are well promoted and appropriately utilised.”

Failure to promote the tourism potentials of Addis Ababa maybe considered one of the weaknesses of tourism management in the capital. While domestic tourism within the city has great potentials, there is no visible effort being made to popularize it. We could for instance form tourism promotion committees in every school in the capital in order to promote youth tourism and introduce the new generation to the beauty and potentials of Addis.

New parks, recreational centres and historical and religious sites could be promoted as tourism destinations in Addis. There is therefore much work to be done in this area. this obviously requires some kind of initial investment; yet this could be addressed by including private sector operators in this kind of projects. Tour and travel agencies could also be involved in the process.

According to available information, in Addis Ababa 150 cultural heritages have been registered and incorporated in the new master plan of the city. These include 35 historical churches, 2 mosques, 26 former public buildings, 72 residences of former notable, 17 monuments (statue), caves and bridges and 6 historical sites. Among the various inherited and cultural attractions of the city only the few and the major ones are annexed.

The above figures of historical sites were given a long time ago and as the situation has changed in the capital, there may be more or less sites at present. This requires to update previously available data. The tourism authorities in the capital should therefore turn their focus on promoting tourism in Addis Ababa that has long been neglected or overlooked.

# Law & Politics

## CFA rectifies past wrongs, injustices

BY FITSUM GETACHEW

Since time immemorial the Nile River has been in the eyes of many countries even distant from the region where it originates. In both areas where the so-called White Nile and the Blue Nile originate, many countries particularly those interested in colonising Africa made every attempt to use the river exclusively. Historians tell us that the interest of Egypt in the part of the Nile that originates in Ethiopia or the Abay as it is locally called was intense and relentless. It has always been its dream to control the source of the river and make exclusive and undisturbed use of the water. This desire of Egypt has not restrained itself from attempting to use force against Ethiopia and take full control of the source of the river. But its attempts have always been stifled by Ethiopian patriots and more recently its attempts to block the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, GERD, has been defeated by the strong diplomatic struggle that Ethiopia has conducted convincingly without depriving Egypt of its fair and equitable share of the water of the River.

Looking at the history of the Nile and the countries that want to control the sources of the Nile, we find out from history that there have been various treaties and agreements on the usage of the water of the Nile signed between the British as colonial masters and Egypt and Sudan. However, all of these pacts have deliberately ignored Ethiopia despite the well-known fact that it is the origin of the river and in fact not only did it carry water to these countries but also precious and fertile soil that is taken from the highlands of Ethiopia. Egypt and Sudan have used this treasure to enhance their agricultural ventures but they never expressed any appreciation to Ethiopia.

Egyptian civilization has been founded and thrived on the shores of the Nile and there is no doubt that without the Nile River, there would be no Egypt in the way we know it today. For centuries it has been used to monopoly the water of the Nile and has always been considered the legitimate and only owner of the river. When they were contested this claim they continued to refer to 'historical facts', 'natural rights' and ultimately the treaties it concluded with its colonial master excluding the legitimate owner of the river, Ethiopia.

Ethiopia has always objected to the pacts that Britain, Egypt and Sudan have concluded both in 1929 and 1959 dividing the waters of the Nile according to their wishes. The point is that it never occurred to them that Ethiopia has a right to the river and is entitled to use at least a part of the river before it leaves Ethiopian land and travels to Sudan and then Egypt.

What is surprising is that Egypt has always insisted on its claim of full and exclusive rights on the river and anyone who wants to use the river must secure permission from

**With the implementation of the CFA, all colonial agreements on the use of the water of the Nile will be annulled and the provisional agreements will be replaced by permanent ones**

Egypt at its terms and conditions. Egypt's hegemonic attitude in this regard has been put into discussion and to avoid any sort of conflict due to these differences there have been attempts to settle the issue peacefully and reasonably by many countries including those that are far away from the Nile Basin. This initiative was also supported by the international community and the Nile Basin Initiative was founded. This initiative has brought hope to the region so that any sort of use of force can be avoided.

There are eleven countries which are part of the Nile Basin and there was a need to bring them all together to cooperate regarding the usage of the river and settle all their differences or disagreements based on a cooperative agreement which later was to be known as the Nile River Basin Cooperative Framework Agreement or CFA. This

framework agreement outlines the rights and obligations for the development of the Nile Basin water resources and promotes the equitable and reasonable utilization of the River. But at least six countries should ratify the framework to establish the Nile Basin Commission and bring it into full force. Its implementation will lead to the establishment of a Commission that will ensure fair and equitable usage of the water resources of the Nile. Now with the Republic of South Sudan being the sixth nation to ratify the agreement, the CFA is put in vigour and all the terms of the framework agreement would be effective.

Egypt and Sudan have in principle agreed to a certain framework for the usage of the river realizing that avoiding the agreement would not be beneficial to them. But they came short of ratifying it stating that there are terms that should be modified in a manner that would suit them. In principle, they claim that the pre-existing situations should not be modified and they continued to refer to the 1929 and 1959 colonial pacts. But naturally, this claim has not been accepted by the signatories of the agreement. Given that now the agreement is signed by six out of eleven countries with South Sudan being the last country to have ratified it, the CFA has effective validity throughout the Basin.

The agreement has been opened for ratification by member states since 2010 and between 2013 and 2023 Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Burundi have signed the initiative with South Sudan adding its voice to the majority and unleashing the full effects of the CFA. Sadiq Adem, a scholar on the establishment of the Nile Basin Commission and a member of the House of Peoples Representatives and Standing Committee of Foreign Relations said disregarding the unfair and defunct agreements on the use of the waters of the Nile, the signatory countries have now resolved to work on a framework that will ensure equitable distribution and mutual development of the Nile thrusting the Nile Basin Initiative to a new and decisive stage.

With the implementation of the CFA, all colonial agreements on the use of the water of the Nile will be annulled and the provisional agreements will be replaced by permanent ones. Implementing the CFA will secure international recognition for the Agreement and this will in turn provide an opportunity to acquire technical, financial, and diplomatic support from international financial institutions and governments, Sadiq stated.

On the occasion of the entry into force of the CFA Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) has said that the entry into force of the agreement on the Nile River Basin Framework strengthens our bond as a Nile family and ensures that the management and utilization of our shared water resources benefit all, for the good of all. On his social media outlet, the premier wrote "Today the 13th of October, 2024 marks

the culmination of a long journey toward the equitable and reasonable utilization of the waters of the Nile, with the entry into force of the Agreement on the Nile River Basin Framework". He added this day will be remembered as a historic milestone in our collective efforts to foster genuine cooperation in the Nile Basin. The premier extended his heartfelt congratulations to all state parties to the CFA for their unwavering commitment to advancing cooperation in the region. He also called upon non-signatory states 'to join the Nile family so that together we may achieve our shared goals of development and regional integration'.

Similarly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia said that the principles enshrined in the CFA fix historic wrongs, ascertain equitable use and foster mutual understanding and shared responsibility. After congratulating the peoples of Nile Basin States on the coming into effect of the CFA, the Ministry stated that the dedication, perseverance, and collaborative spirit displayed by state parties throughout the process would no doubt enhance cooperation and provide impetus to realize the equitable and reasonable management and utilization of the shared water resource.

The Ministry also underlined that Ethiopia is confident that the entry into force of the CFA will yield significant benefits for the Basin states and contribute to a more prosperous and sustainable future. It is to be reminded that the CFA stipulates that each Nile Basin State has the right to use within its territory the waters of the Nile River System in a manner that is consistent with the other basic principles of international law and practice.

On a similar note, the Minister of Water and Energy Engineer Habtamu Itefa said that the Nile River Cooperative Framework Agreement is a backbone and is going to "make the big shift toward utilization of water resources." He said, "I want to congratulate all Ethiopians and citizens of the Nile Basin member states. This is a wonderful and fruitful achievement for all of us who were demanding justice and equal rights in utilizing our water resources." He said that all previous laws were not inclusive of the upstream countries ignoring them and instead formulating them for a few citizens in the downstream countries. He added that the CFA has no harm on anyone and requested all member states especially Egypt and Sudan that 'if they thought that the CFA is not all-inclusive we can get in touch and talk about it and utilize it.'

With the CFA Ethiopians and other upstream riparian countries can now come together to plan for the betterment of their shared interests. The agreement will serve as a foundation for the establishment of the Nile River Basin Commission and this will operate independently supporting development throughout the Basin and facilitating implementation of projects from upstream as well as downstream.



# Public diplomacy can significantly contribute to development

- Yasin Ahmed Bagay

BY GIRMACHEW GASHAW

Today's guest, Yasin Ahmed Bagay, is a founder and president of the Ethiopian Institute for Public Diplomacy. Living in Sweden, he established the institute four years ago to defend GERD issues. As an Ethiopian-Arabic speaker, Ahmed has been active in defending Ethiopia in Arabic media and on social media.

He previously appeared on Al Jazeera, Russia Today, and other Arabic media outlets. His dream of starting the Ethiopian Institute for Public Diplomacy began 15 years ago, inspired by the Swedish Institute's work in public diplomacy.

After Dr. Abiy Ahmed's reforms in Ethiopia, he seized the opportunity to establish the organization in 2020 with friends from Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia. Born in Ethiopia, Ahmed left at a young age and returned after 33 years, motivated to defend Ethiopian interests, starting with GERD.

The Ethiopian Herald recently had a brief visit with Yasin Ahmed Bagay to discuss a variety of issues regarding the role of the Ethiopian diaspora community in defending Ethiopia and related matters. Have a nice read!

**Many Ethiopians are engaged in activism and highly interested in defending Ethiopian interests, especially GERD, but they do not seem interested in establishing an institute. What motivated you to pursue this institute?**

Thank you for the insightful question. I believe one reason for establishing this institute is the weaknesses observed in Ethiopian public diplomacy. In Ethiopia, we have experience working with official diplomacy through government channels and Ethiopian embassies worldwide. However, in European countries like Sweden, Germany, and the UK, there are numerous public organizations, mostly NGOs, that receive government funding to support public diplomacy efforts. Western governments believe that civil society organizations play a vital role in strengthening official diplomacy.

I couldn't find any Ethiopian organization dedicated to public diplomacy, which sparked my interest in filling this gap. By establishing an institute, we can bring together diverse talents, capacities, and opportunities. As Ethiopians living in the diaspora, we share common backgrounds and interests. Leveraging Western public diplomacy experiences can help us export our knowledge to Ethiopia.

In my experience, public diplomacy is not only about defending Ethiopian interests, such as those related to the GERD or the Red Sea, but also about building trust between different communities. For instance, during the Sudanese war, we showed support for the Sudanese people to demonstrate solidarity. Celebrating national events in countries like Saudi Arabia, Kenya, and Sweden through social media posts also helped foster positive relationships.

Public diplomacy complements official

diplomacy and can significantly contribute to Ethiopia's development. Ethnophobia, the negative perceptions surrounding Ethiopia in neighboring African and Middle Eastern countries, presents another reason for establishing this institute. By showcasing the new Ethiopia and moving away from outdated narratives, we aim to promote Ethio-prosperity and regional cooperation.

Engaging with countries like Somalia and addressing current challenges while highlighting Ethiopia's role in regional geopolitics is crucial. Ethiopia's abundant natural resources, like water, can benefit the entire African continent. By emphasizing Ethiopia's historical right to access the Red Sea, we can pave the way for regional collaboration.

I am encouraged by recent developments, such as the establishment of public diplomacy initiatives within the Ethiopian Foreign Ministry. This underscores the importance of government support for public diplomacy efforts. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's administration has opened up opportunities for Ethiopian individuals and organizations to actively participate in defending the country's interests, both domestically and abroad.

**As your organization is an institute, one of the tasks undertaken will be conducting research. In this regard, how effective is the organization?**

Yes, that's a good question. We have published articles and research on various issues such as the GERD, Ethiopia becoming a member of the BRICS, the African and American summit, and Russia. We publish research in Arabic and sometimes in English. We focus on research in Arabic because our target audience is Arabic-speaking, but we also publish in English.



For example, currently, we are working on summarizing the new book, "Ye Hulet Wuhawoch Abay Strategy," translating it into Arabic, and publishing it. This is the first document published by the Ethiopian government and the Ethiopian foreign minister. Last week, I attended a conference about Africa between Al Jazeera Center Studies and the Institute of Foreign Affairs in Ethiopia. It was a two-day event.

As a representative of the Ethiopian Institute for Public Diplomacy, I established a good network with researchers and presenters at the conference. Most presentations were in Arabic, with some in English by Ethiopian authors. Research is crucial, but honestly, we lack enough documents on Ethiopian policy.

Previously, our main source of information on the Nile came from Arabic sources in Egypt, Sudan, and the Gulf states. Now, with more documents becoming available, we are starting to have access to information. However, there are delays in translating documents from Amharic to Arabic and English, which are international languages.

When the Ethiopian government publishes policy documents, we need them to be available in multiple languages. There is a translation available, but it may not be accurate. Egyptian researchers have reached out to me to verify the quality of translations. We aim to provide analyses of these documents in Arabic magazines with an Ethiopian context to serve as a source for other Arab research centers.

In the institute, we have various researchers who can write on different issues. We aim to provide our analysis when the Ethiopian government publishes policy documents. We are also seeking a local partner in Ethiopia to apply for projects and funding from Europe to further our research and publications. Our goal is to defend Ethiopia and provide more research and publications in the future, Inshallah.

**Many media outlets in Egypt, and even some government officials, have been**

**providing conflicting information to the public, suggesting that the source of the Abbay River is not Ethiopia, but Egypt. What was your role in terms of raising awareness of the people?**

This narrative is entirely wrong. However, when it comes to telling the truth about GERD and even the river Abbay, sometimes this false narrative asserts that the source of the Nile River is not Ethiopia, but Egypt. So, in terms of being truthful with the public, especially Egyptians, what mechanism do you use? There is a historical reason for this. Our Institute in collaboration with the government of Ethiopia have failed to highlight this issue because we did not publicize or inform the world that the source of the Nile is Ethiopia until the GERD project began. There has also been a lack of knowledge from Arab countries, as they are unaware of each other, resulting in mutual ignorance between the Arab countries and Ethiopia.

Over the past four to five decades, Egypt has succeeded in spreading this narrative that the Nile belongs to Egypt. Even my colleagues in Sweden, when asked about the source of the Nile, were under the impression that it was Egypt. This narrative has become widely accepted in the Arab world and beyond, being perceived as the truth. This is why I believe that the GERD project has the potential to change this narrative, and we must thank our government for initiating this project.

This GERD is not only beneficial for Ethiopia in terms of generating electricity but also in terms of promoting Ethiopia in the Arab world. The Ethiopian government would never have been able to afford the billions of dollars required for such publicity in the Arabic media, but thanks to the GERD, we have received free publicity from the Arab media, as it aligns with their interests.

Through the GERD, we have the opportunity to correct misconceptions and fake news about Ethiopia and the project.

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## Public diplomacy can significantly...

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This has allowed Ethiopia to be introduced to every Arab household, thereby increasing awareness and understanding of our country. This publicity can be used to strengthen our relationship with the Arabic world, culturally, socially, economically, and in terms of security.

While it is now widely acknowledged that Ethiopia is the source of the Nile, the challenge lies in changing the Egyptian narrative that the GERD will reduce water flow to Sudan and Ethiopia. The reality is that the dam will primarily generate electricity, not affect irrigation practices. Egypt has already adjusted its policies regarding water usage due to the GERD, showing a willingness to adapt to the new geopolitical landscape.

As a media professional, it is important to recognize the difference between propaganda in the media and the actions taken by the Egyptian government. While the media may use the GERD to distract from domestic challenges, the government is actively preparing for the changes that will come with the completion of the project. Cooperation between Egypt and Ethiopia is essential, as Ethiopia has every right to proceed with the GERD under international law and agreements.

**The other question I have related to this is: six Nile riparian countries have signed and ratified the CFA, what does this mean for you, especially in defending the GERD?**

It means a lot to me. It means Ethiopia is not alone. Ethiopia has the support of five countries. The majority of the Nile basin is supporting this initiative, which makes it easier for me to defend. This is accepted by the African Union. The six countries, the initiative agreement, and the support of the African Union all help me defend Ethiopia's rights and speak the truth. Egypt's narrative has been about historical rights.

Egypt always claims to have historical rights to the Nile. However, after this CFA agreement, there is no place for historical rights because there is no basis for historical rights in international law. The CFA denies or rejects this historical right, which is wonderful.

The Arab world and Egypt have a strong attachment due to the new project called Toshka, which involves collaboration with the Arab world. However, the Toshka project in the desert has faced challenges and has not worked as planned. In terms of collaboration with the Arab world on providing water and electricity, Ethiopia has an opportunity to strengthen its relationships.

Egypt has become isolated as the Gulf States have shifted their strategies to maintain good relations with both Egypt and Ethiopia. Ethiopia is now seen as a source of food security by the Gulf States due to their investments in the country. Additionally, Ethiopia's access to the Red



Sea will allow it to play a significant role in securing the region alongside Arab and African countries. Ethiopia's membership in BRICS, a financial and economic forum, also opens up opportunities for regional cooperation with Arab countries.

Egypt's attempts to influence the Arab countries against Ethiopia through military actions or alliances are outside the new geopolitics. The BRICS will prevent any conflicts between Egypt and Ethiopia, as Ethiopia's interests are aligned with Arab countries and other regional powers. Ethiopia's strong relations with the West also prevent Egypt from influencing the Arab countries against Ethiopia. The Arab League, with 11 countries in the African continent, shares mutual interests with both Africa and the Arab world.

**Ethiopia is now cooperating with Somaliland to gain, as you mentioned earlier, a sea gate, while Somalia is now opposing the former. So, what message do you have for the people in Somalia and Somaliland?**

By the way, we have a large Somali community in Sweden. I have very good friends and a good relationship with the Somali community in Sweden, including both Somalia and Somaliland.

After this agreement between Ethiopia and Somaliland, there has been a lot of debate and discussion. We have learned a lot from our neighbors in Somaliland because we didn't have much information about them before. It has been a huge opportunity for me to get to know them better. I have learned that Somaliland was an independent country before the Republic of Somalia-Mogadishu.

They were recognized as a state by the UN in 1960 after gaining independence from the Italian colony. Somaliland proposed a union with the Republic of Somalia as a sovereign and independent country. However, this union did not work out. In the 1990s, the people and government of Somaliland declared their independence from this union.

Many in Arab countries, like Egypt, do not know this. They consider Somaliland to be a regional part of Somalia, but the people of Somaliland do not see themselves as part of Somalia. They were part of the union but left because they felt it was unfair.

It is important for us to respect their choice.

Ethiopia is not the only country to form relations with Somaliland. There are eight other countries, including the United States, the UK, and the United Arab Emirates, that have good relations with Somaliland and have consulates or embassies there.

The cooperation between Somaliland and Ethiopia is not new. Ethiopia has used the Berbera port before. This agreement is strategic and tactical. It changes the issue of Ethiopia seeking access to the Red Sea from a mutual concern with Eritrea and Djibouti to a more regional and international issue.

Ethiopia, led by Dr. Abiy Ahmed, aims to gain access to the Red Sea for commercial benefits and to establish its own military base. This has led to initiatives from other countries in the region to provide Ethiopia with access to the sea, but with the condition of a military base.

Ethiopia has a historical right to access the Red Sea, and the benefits of this agreement are regional and international. It has changed the geopolitics of the region, and other African countries are now offering their support. However, Ethiopia will only accept offers that are better than what Somaliland has presented.

This agreement with Somaliland may change the geopolitics of the region and is both strategic and tactical. It depends on how Somaliland behaves and what they offer Ethiopia. If a better offer comes along, the government may consider it. For now, the offer from Somaliland is the best.

This agreement could also change Ethiopia's approach, as historically they sought access through Eritrea. This new development with Somaliland could shift the dynamics, depending on how both parties behave and respond to each other's offers.

Many Ethiopians are going to the Middle East in search of better jobs. In this regard, what is your institute doing to raise awareness in the Arab community and contribute to solving this problem?

This issue is very significant, but through the media, we aim to shed light on the problem. For example, when many Ethiopian workers returned from Saudi Arabia to Ethiopia, it became a major issue. The Ethiopian government managed to resolve it, but illegal migration remains a significant challenge.

As Ethiopian Diaspora, we focus on spreading accurate information about the dangers of illegal immigration. It is not only harmful to individuals and their families but also to the country as a whole. We emphasize the consequences of illegal immigration and promote legal immigration as the best option.

In Sweden, where I work with refugees and legal immigration, we witness many individuals from African countries like Ethiopia and Eritrea coming in illegally. We see the negative impact it has on their health and families. Therefore, it is crucial to provide correct information to encourage legal immigration and discourage illegal immigration.

While the government has made progress in addressing issues between Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia, there is still a need to educate the public and increase awareness to prevent further problems. Ultimately, we aim to create new opportunities for our youth so they do not feel the need to immigrate illegally.

Many Ethiopian activists who are advocating for the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and promoting a positive image of Ethiopia are facing challenges, such as marginalization in the Arab world. Do you have any experience with this issue?

Personally, I do not have direct experience with this as I live in the West and hold Swedish citizenship. However, I understand the difficulties faced by Ethiopian media activists living in Arab countries. They may struggle to defend their beliefs in the media due to restrictions in those countries.

It is essential for the Ethiopian government to support its citizens living abroad and provide guidelines on how to navigate these challenges diplomatically. While it is important to advocate for Ethiopian interests, it must be done in a way that respects the laws of the host country and maintains positive relations between Ethiopia and the Arab countries.

**These are the questions I have prepared for you. If you have any additional points to add, please feel free to do so.**

Yes, thank you for this opportunity. What I am requesting from our government is greater access to information.

As Ethiopian media activists around the world, in the West, and in Arab countries, we need quick and useful information. Sometimes, even my brother Samer Aino and I receive statements from the Egyptian Foreign Minister or Arab media regarding events in Ethiopia. We often have to wait 24, 48, or even 72 hours to hear from our own government or ministers.

This delay is problematic, especially when we are invited to speak on Arabic media. They are informed quickly about statements or comments made by Egypt or Sudan, and they ask for our opinions. Meanwhile, we struggle to find any official statements in Amharic, English, or Arabic. This puts us at a disadvantage when providing analysis or commentary.

While we are not official representatives of the Ethiopian government, our insights are valuable and can help shape public opinion and reduce conflicts until official statements are released. This challenge is significant, and we need quicker access to information to stay competitive with Arabic media.

When I visit news outlets like Al Jazeera, I often find that there is no official response from our government, but I still provide my perspective. This lack of information hinders our ability to keep up with the speed of Arabic media.

**Thank you.**

It is my pleasure.

# Society

## Transforming urban farming towards ensuring food security, creating job opportunities

BY TEWODROS KASSA

Urban farming in Ethiopia has emerged as a transformative force in addressing the challenges of unemployment among youth while simultaneously playing a crucial role in market stabilization. As cities expand and the demand for fresh produce rises, urban agriculture provides young people with practical solutions to engage in meaningful work.

Initiatives that promote vertical farming, rooftop gardens, and community plots not only empower youth to cultivate their own food but also equip them with entrepreneurial skills, fostering innovation and creativity. By harnessing limited urban spaces, these young farmers contribute directly to local food production, enhancing food security and reducing reliance on imported goods.

Additionally, urban farming creates job opportunities in various sectors such as marketing, distribution, and agri-tech, stimulating the local economy. The increased availability of fresh produce at reasonable prices also helps stabilize market fluctuations, ensuring that consumers have consistent access to nutritious food. As urban farming continues to gain momentum, it fosters community engagement and resilience, bridging the gap between agricultural practices and urban life. This synergistic relationship between employment and food production is paving the way for a more sustainable and equitable future for Ethiopia's youth and its urban populations.

Recently, the Office of the Prime Minister indicated that practicing urban farming is gaining momentum in Ethiopia. Transforming backyards and unused spaces into green areas that boost food security, sustainability and economic growth in cities like Addis Ababa.

Accordingly, the PMO also encouraged other urban areas throughout the country to engage in such activities by teaming up with neighbors. "Want to get started? Try using containers or raised beds, and team up with neighbors to share tools, knowledge, and seeds. Together, you can grow fresh food and build a stronger community," Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) pointed out on his social media post.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed underscored that Ethiopia has been intensifying urban farming as part of its sustainable urban livelihood strategy.

The Prime Minister stated that: "When we intensified urban farming in Ethiopia as part of a sustainable urban livelihood strategy, we did so with a clear understanding of its transformative potential."

Premier Abiy added that urban farming not only boosts the agricultural sector but also drives the urban economy and creates jobs.

"It enhances national food security, supports



urban development, and connects consumers directly to local farms," he stressed. Ethiopia is maximizing productivity while minimizing environmental impact by using space more efficiently through practices like vertical farming and utilizing recycled materials, Abiy elaborated.

"Across the country, these initiatives are already showing impressive results, proving the power of urban farming to reshape our cities and strengthen our economy," the Premier lauded. He called on those already engaged to further intensify their efforts and encourage others to take part in this growing movement for a more sustainable urban future.

It is witnessed that urban farming is bearing fruits in Addis Ababa following the due attention given by the government to ensure food security and create numerous job opportunities to youths and women. In addition, urban farming is contributing significantly towards transforming the lives of communities through sustainable efforts.

Currently, agricultural experts are recommending replicating the experiences of Addis into other urban areas as the urban farming initiatives in the city is making a positive impact on communities and transforming the way people access fresh produce. Thus, exploring how urban farming is changing the landscape of food production in Ethiopia and the potential benefits it brings to local communities is important in the efforts to ensure food and nutritional security.

Farm Africa Urban Agriculture Project Coordinator Teshome Nega highlighted the importance of urban farming in excelling community-based farming practices and harnessing its significant contributions towards ensuring food security in the country.

Urban farming in Ethiopia is becoming an alternative way towards ensuring food security and economic empowerment in urban areas. Efforts to transform Ethiopia's urban farming industry have been driven by a combination of government policies, grassroots initiatives, and community engagement.



According to him, urban low-income communities face challenges in accessing nutritious food. One of Africa's biggest cities and Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, shares this struggle. High inflation and the rise in the cost of living rates make accessing healthy food a daily challenge in most urban areas in the country.

To this end, urban farming sought to ease these challenges if practiced effectively and given due attention by the government, pertinent stakeholders, and the community. Moreover, it has been rewarding to see the community come together, forge new relationships and transform unused land into green, valuable spaces in Addis Ababa.

So far, sustainable government support is vital in the efforts to transform Ethiopia's urban farming. Realizing this is possible where the government has recognized the importance of urban farming in addressing food security challenges and reducing poverty. Encouraging urban residents to engage in small-scale farming activities within the city will immensely contribute to access fresh produces with a proportionate price. This will lead to an increase in the number of community gardens, rooftop farms, and backyard vegetable plots in urban areas across Ethiopia.

One of the key objectives of transforming Ethiopia's urban farming sector is to promote sustainable agricultural practices that protect the environment and enhance food security. By implementing agro-ecological principles, such as crop diversification, water conservation, and integrated pest management, urban farmers will be able to produce a variety of crops in a small space

while minimizing the use of synthetic inputs. This approach not only benefits the environment but also ensures a steady supply of fresh, nutritious food for local communities.

Other sector experts also applaud urban farming as it has the potential to improve the economic well-being of urban residents by providing access to affordable and nutritious food.

By growing their own produce, individuals can reduce their food expenses and supplement their income by selling excess harvests at local markets. In addition, urban farming creates employment opportunities for women, youth, and marginalized groups, contributing to poverty reduction and social inclusion.

As urban farming continues to evolve in Ethiopia, there are both opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. Scaling up urban farming initiatives, improving access to markets, and enhancing infrastructural support are key factors that will determine the success of urban agriculture in the country. Efforts to transform Ethiopia's urban farming industry are making significant strides towards building resilient and food-secure communities.

By leveraging government support, community engagement, and sustainable agricultural practices, urban farming has the potential to revolutionize the way food is produced and consumed in urban areas. As more people embrace urban farming as a viable solution to food insecurity, the future looks promising for Ethiopia's urban agriculture sector.

# International

## Women-Led SMEs can also benefit from the AfCFTA – Director

**Rabat, (ECA)** – The ECA Office for North Africa initiated today in Rabat (Morocco) a four-day capacity building workshop for the benefit of women-led SMEs. This workshop will provide participants with an opportunity to improve their capacity to access export markets within the framework of the AfCFTA, strengthen their digital capacities and adopt sustainable and climate-resilient practices.

“The African market is currently very fragmented, which means that African enterprises are missing many opportunities. We believe that there can be significant opportunities for women-led enterprises to gain market shares and contribute to employment both in Morocco and across the continent,” said Adam Elhiraika, Director of the ECA Office for North Africa.

“This workshop aims to strengthen women entrepreneurs’ capacity to work in a digital environment and provide them with technical tools so they can access and compete in international markets. This is also an opportunity for us to advocate for women-led enterprises to be granted greater financial inclusion and appropriate technical support so they can make their way into the industrial sector, digitalization, innovation and the markets of tomorrow such as sustainable development and agriculture or green energy” said Ouafae Alaoui, Chair of the Association of Women Business Leaders of Morocco (AFEM) for the Rabat-Salé-Kenitra region, who expressed hope for the creation of a business incubator for women-led SMEs to help them make the most of the opportunities provided by the AfCFTA.

Women led enterprises in North Africa have a greater difficulty securing funding than their men-led equivalents. Their digital competencies also tend to be lower. These deficiencies tend to have a negative impact on their competitiveness and growth potential. In addition, climate change is also having a growing negative impact on SMEs across the subregion.

This workshop is part of a series of training courses implemented by the ECA office for North Africa within the framework of its SME support program for a sustainable development in North Africa. This project aims to help improve the resilience of SMEs led by Libyan, Mauritanian and Moroccan women entrepreneurs in accordance with SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) and SDG9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure).

*Source: UNECA*

## World’s least developed countries spend twice as much servicing debts as they receive in climate finance

The world’s poorest and most climate-vulnerable countries are spending more than twice as much to service their debts as they receive to fight the climate crisis, according to new analysis by IIED.

It also shows the situation is getting worse, with debt payments growing at a faster rate than climate support.

The research comes ahead of a series of high-level international summits – including the World Bank/International Monetary Fund annual meetings, G20 leaders meeting, and the nature and climate COPs – where finance will be key.

IIED is calling on world leaders at these summits to overhaul the international financial system to make it fairer for countries that have done the least to cause climate change but are bearing the brunt of its effects.

The analysis uses the latest available data for 58 countries which are either part of the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Group or the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) group. These countries are home to around 1.2 billion people.

Key findings from IIED’s analysis show that The 58 countries spent US\$59 billion repaying debts in 2022 compared with \$28 billion they received in climate finance; While the amount of climate finance is up on 2021 data, it’s not keeping pace with the growth in debt payments. In 2021, the 58 countries paid \$33 billion on debt servicing and received \$20 billion in climate finance, Of the \$28 billion

provided in climate finance in 2022, just over half (\$14.8 billion) was provided as loans rather than grants, For 26 countries, debt repayments in 2022 cost more than they received in total bilateral foreign aid (of which climate finance is a subset), and Almost half (25) countries in the analysis are at high risk of defaulting or are already in debt distress, severely hampering their ability to invest in climate resilience.

Climate change is an existential problem for many heavily indebted LDCs and SIDS because they are so highly exposed to climate impacts yet have very little fiscal room to adapt. When a drought, flood or major storm hits, they are forced into a vicious cycle of borrowing more money to support their people and rebuild their infrastructure, further compounding their debts.

Even though \$11 billion of the \$14.8 billion provided as loans was given on ‘concessional’ terms – meaning somewhat below market rates – this flawed system piles up interest and pushes governments further into the red and forces them to cut vital spending.

IIED senior researcher Sejal Patel said: “Leaders from the world’s richest countries have spent lots of time talking about financial reform and the sovereign debt crisis but have little to show for it. These are the same countries that have done so much to cause the climate crisis.

“Many of the world’s poorest countries are being battered by the effects of climate

change, often going deeper and deeper into debt. The finance from richer countries is simply not keeping pace.

“Every dollar that these countries are spending on loan repayments is a dollar not being spent on hospitals or schools, or funding climate-resilient infrastructure.

“The international financial system is a relic of the 20th century. It needs to be overhauled to benefit all nations and underwrite our collective climate goals, in line with the new UN Pact for the Future.

“Rethinking debt and providing climate finance are two sides of the same coin. Both are needed to help the most vulnerable countries respond to climate change.”

IIED believes lower-income countries should be given easier access to money through grants and concessional finance along the lines of the Bridgetown Initiative proposed by the government of Barbados.

It is crucial to reform bureaucratic hurdles preventing funds from reaching those on the frontline of the climate and nature crisis.

There also needs to be more comprehensive debt relief to support developing nations free up budget space for climate change adaptation. Investors and government lenders should make greater use of debt-for-climate-and-nature swaps, parametric insurance, pause clauses or even cancellation, where appropriate.

*Source: iied.org*

## Moroccan internet users rated ‘Partly Free’ in latest Freedom House report

**Rabat** — Morocco has been classified as “partly free” with a score of 54 (+3) out of 100 in the latest “Freedom on the Net” report, published by the international NGO Freedom House. The annual report assesses the state of internet freedom across 72 countries, representing nearly 87% of the global online population.

The report divides countries into three categories: “free,” “partly free,” and “not free,” based on key metrics such as violations of user rights, content restrictions, and obstacles to access.

This year’s findings highlighted Kyrgyzstan as the country with the most significant decline in internet freedom, while China and Myanmar were identified as having the “worst global environments” for online freedom.

At the other end of the spectrum,

Iceland maintained its ranking as the country with the most “free” online environment, and Zambia recorded the greatest improvement in its score. Despite these advances, the report marks 2024 as the 14th consecutive year of global decline in online freedom, with human rights protections in cyberspace weakening in 27 countries, while 18 saw improvements.

Freedom House also emphasized in its report that online freedom of expression faces increasing threats due to harsh prison sentences and rising violence.

In three-quarters of the countries studied, internet users have been arrested for peacefully expressing their opinions. Additionally, a record 43 countries reported incidents where individuals were targeted or even killed for their online activities.

The report further highlights that internet shutdowns and penalties for online speech have heightened risks, especially in countries affected by armed conflict. Pro-government commentators in at least 21 out of 41 countries studied were found to manipulate online information, raising concerns over future electoral fairness and eroding long-term trust in democratic institutions.

Government interference, along with a lack of transparency from major social media platforms, has also hindered the efforts of independent researchers and the media to expose election-related influence operations, further complicating efforts to protect the integrity of online spaces.

*Source: Morocco World News*

# Verbatim and Caption



## President Taye Receives EU Commissioner for International Partnerships

The President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Taye Atske-Selassie, met and held discussion at his office with European Union Commissioner for International Partnerships, Ms. Jutta Urpilainen .

During the meeting, President Taye briefed the Commissioner on current national, regional, and global issues of shared interest.

The President stated that the government is working with special attention to ensure food security and that encouraging results are being registered in the ongoing economic reforms.

He also stated that the support provided by the EU is essential, adding that the direct budgetary support that can be provided by the European Union should continue.

Commissioner Urpilainen, for her part, disclosed that the EU recognizes and supports the economic reforms undertaken by the Ethiopian government.

## PM Abiy appoints new Ministers

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has appointed new ministers for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Tourism. Accordingly Gedion Timothewos has been appointed as the Foreign Minister of Ethiopia. Similarly, the former Chief Commissioner of the Ethiopian Investment Commission (EIC), Hanna Araya-Selassie has been appointed as the Minister of Justice, replacing Gedion Timothewos.

The former State Minister of Government Communication Service, Selamawit Kassa has been also appointed as the Minister of Tourism.



## African military delegates hailed military professionalism and capabilities of Ethiopia

The delegates made the remark while visiting the Ethiopian Air Force (ETAF) headquarters and Bishoftu Automotive Manufacturing Industry.

Commending the visit, South African Defense Deputy Minister Bantu Holomiga highlighted that apart from training facilities, and promoting partnerships to ensure peace and security, Ethiopia is undertaking exemplary military professionalism, and infrastructural maintenance.

## African Nations urged to engage with Ethiopia to share peacekeeping experiences

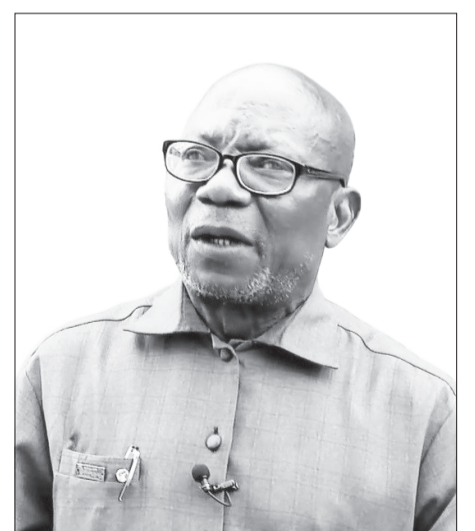
A senior official of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) urged African nations to engage with Ethiopia to share experiences, as the country exemplifies leadership in peace and security matters.

ECOWAS Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security Abdel-Fatau Musah said expressing his gratitude to the government of Ethiopia for hosting African Defense Ministers' Conference in Addis Ababa.

He praised the country's commitment to peace and stability, emphasizing the importance of such gatherings in strengthening regional cooperation.

Stating Ethiopia is a major troop-contributing country to both the United Nations and Africa, he said "We have known the role of Ethiopia in Somalia and in many other conflict zones, not only in Africa, but around the world.

"It is very important that the other countries of Africa can come here to share experiences with Ethiopia, because



Ethiopia is a leader," in this regard, he urged.

Mentioning Ethiopia is also the host of the African Union, which serves as the continental umbrella he said, adding "From all angles, it's very important that people come here to learn from what Ethiopia has achieved in terms of peace and security."