



The Ethiopian Herald

Vol. LXXXI No 022 5 October 2024 - Meskerem 25, 2017

Saturday

Price Birr 10.00

“Let’s focus on lofty goals for prosperity”: Premier

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA – Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) urged fellow citizens to focus on lofty goals to realize Ethiopia’s prosperity in the near future. The premier made the call yesterday in connection with this year’s *Irreechaa* celebration.

In his message, he underlined the need to stop caring about trivial things in the efforts of making strides towards Ethiopia’s prosperity.

“Let’s work exhaustively against poverty, Never waste our today’s opportunity to grow and prosper attracting negative energies.”

The Premier also reminded citizens to toil for prosperity without messing up the fortunes of posterity.

“We need to perpetuate our forefathers/ mothers’ wisdoms with a view to passing down prosperous Ethiopia to next generations.”

Taking the opportunity to convey the core values of *Irreechaa*, he urged the nationals to promote forgiveness, unity, and mutual respect during the celebration.

It was learnt that *Irreechaa* is a time of renewal, thanksgiving, and reconciliation,

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Kenyan delegation hails *Irreechaa* as beacon of peace, unity

BY HAILE DEMEKE

ADDIS ABABA- The *Irreechaa* festival, a symbol of peace, unity, and love for the Oromo community and beyond, received high praise from a Kenyan delegation visiting Addis Ababa to join the celebration.

A delegation of around 60 Kenyans arrived in Addis Ababa late Wednesday to partake in the Oromo thanksgiving festival, *Irreechaa*, which is being celebrated today in Addis Ababa and will continue tomorrow in Bishoftu.

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Adugna Debela (PhD)

Ethiopia mulls coffee market expansion to Asia

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Railway regional connectivity: Path to economic integration

BY YESUF ENDRIS

In a bid to enhance regional railway connectivity, the Ministry of Transport and Logistics is embarking on ambitious reforms aimed at transforming Ethiopia’s logistics sector. This initiative aligns with the country’s strategic goals for foreign trade, addressing the infrastructural challenges currently hindering supply chain and trade connectivity.

Recent research indicates that, despite these challenges, Ethiopia has significant economic potential that can be unlocked through expanded railway infrastructure across the region.



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News

Nat'l Dialogue pathway to transcend nation's holistic posterity: *Participants*

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA – Participants comprised from Afar town administrations and woredas pinpointed that the dialogue would be viable towards addressing differences and sustaining lasting peace and development.

Speaking to the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), Clan Leader from Dulecha Woreda Ibrahim Ali the National Dialogue would be a powerful platform to suggest solutions on the rolling out communities' disparities and grabbing national development agendas in unison.

Ibrahim has also noted that it is also highly important to table common national and trans-boundary pressing issues inclusively.

He said, "Communities living in Afar have exemplary home-grown conflict resolution customs. The National Dialogue would be an opportunity to share and contribute our own experiences in this regard."

Similarly, representative from zone 4



Wolina woreda pastoralist Aden Agdissa Aden underscored that the dialogue has a paramount significance to sustainably address long-aged disagreements thereby ensuring national sustainable development.

Aden, on behalf of pastoralists, traders, government employees, students, women, youth among many other segments of the societies, said that dialogue which is being held in the Afar capital Semera helps foster

sustained peace to the generations.

He said, "I firmly believe that the ongoing dialogue has generational value."

For her part, Semera City Representative Medina Ibrahim echoed that the agenda collection phase helped the residents not only for the state but also for the country at large to raise collective issues.

Urging the people in all walks of life not to miss the historic milestone and golden opportunity that flickers hope to the future, she emphasized the need to leverage properly to tackle natural and manmade calamities once and for all.

By the same token, Wuhaji Mohammed from Awash City Administration said that they are raising and identifying core agendas which are being tabled in the ongoing dialogue to settle lasting peace across the country.

The agenda gathering process is expected to finalize within three days, EPA learnt.

Nat'l BRICS ministerial steering committee finalizes engagement strategy

ADDIS ABABA (ENA)- The National BRICS Ministerial Steering Committee has finalized Ethiopia's BRICS Engagement Strategy, which has been reviewed over the past few months.

The National Steering Committee convened its session on Thursday, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA).

The Strategy will provide overall guidance for Ethiopia's engagement as part of the BRICS family.

The National Steering Committee further reviewed Ethiopia's participation in BRICS activities over the past ten months based on an assessment report submitted by the Senior Officials Technical Committee and the BRICS Secretariat.

The Committee was briefed on the outcomes of the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meetings, which took place from 10-11 June and 26 September 2024, preceded by the Sherpa and Sous-Sherpa meetings.

The Committee discussed preparations for the XVI BRICS Summit scheduled to take place in Kazan, the Russian Federation, from 22-24 October 2024, it was indicated.

The meeting identified contributions from stakeholders to finalize preparations for Ethiopia's participation in the Summit.

Ethiopia's BRICS Sherpa, and the National Bank Governor Mamo Mihretu, stated that the BRICS framework is an additional high-level platform to protect Ethiopia's national interests. He explained that since becoming a member of BRICS, Ethiopia has actively participated in various activities to advance its national interests.

Ethiopia's Deputy Sous Sherpa, and MoFA State Minister Ambassador Mesganu Arga also said Ethiopia's membership in BRICS has elevated the country's diplomacy.



calling for improved gender data to boost SDGs

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

ADDIS ABABA- Consistent gender data collection is vital for accelerating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and supporting evidence-based decision-making, the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) said.

At a recent landscape assessment workshop on the gender data and decision-making ecosystem in Ethiopia, AFIDEP Research and Policy Analyst Violet Murunga (PhD) highlighted the organization's efforts to help the Ethiopian government bridge gender data gaps between research, policy, and practice. AFIDEP has been assisting in identifying, analyzing, and utilizing existing research and data to support the decision-making process with solid evidence.

Murunga underscored the importance of strengthening the policy environment around gender data in Ethiopia, particularly in terms of

government departments, structures, and infrastructure. These would be crucial for collecting, storing, and analyzing gender data effectively, she said. Implementing a robust gender data ecosystem, she noted, would significantly contribute to achieving the SDGs and improving the decision-making process.

While Ethiopia values the gender data agenda, research findings reveal that the country is not investing adequate resources to generate the evidence required to inform decisions and devise effective solutions. Key challenges include limited technical capacity, a lack of awareness, insufficient budget allocations, and the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs' (MoWSA) inability to mandate institutions to contribute gender data due to a lack of authority.

AFIDEP Study Research Assistant BinyamGintamo (PhD) also stressed the critical role of gender data collection in tracking and evaluating SDG progress. Although Ethiopia has

mainstreamed gender data collection efforts since adopting the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, data gaps persist.

"Efficient gender data collection is essential for identifying development challenges and gender equality gaps, designing impactful strategies, tracking SDG progress, monitoring, evaluation, advocacy, and influencing policy toward gender equality," Binyam explained. However, he pointed out that the collection efforts depend on institutional priorities and programmatic focus.

Despite some institutions actively collecting gender data, others have yet to contribute to this crucial agenda. The absence of a coordinated, accountable institution responsible for collecting gender data, coupled with challenges like a lack of coordination, awareness, infrastructure, and institutional power, has hindered Ethiopia's progress in this area, the researcher concluded.

News

Ethiopia mulls coffee market expansion to Asia

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA- The Ethiopian Coffee and Tea Authority (ECTA) has revealed its strategic plan to expand the country's coffee market into new territories, particularly China and South Korea, while continuing to build on its already established markets in the U.S., Germany, Belgium, Japan, and Saudi Arabia.

This move comes as Ethiopia aims to secure 1.8 billion USD by exporting 326,000 tons of coffee during this fiscal year.

ECTA Director General Adugna Debela (PhD) stated in an interview with the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the country had already generated 1.43 billion USD from the export of 300,000 tons of coffee in the last fiscal year. During the first two months of this fiscal year alone, Ethiopia exported 83,000 tons of coffee, earning 380 million USD, which is an increase of 30,000 tons and 110 million

USD compared to the same period last year.

Ethiopia's expanding focus on China and South Korea reflects the country's ambition to diversify its coffee markets beyond its traditional partners. Adugna noted that efforts are underway to boost coffee production and ensure quality and traceability through regulatory and development measures. The Authority is also promoting value-added approaches to increase revenue.

The expansion into specialty coffee production is another key focus area for Ethiopia. Specialty coffee, which can sell for 5,500 USD per ton, provides significantly higher returns compared to commercial coffee, which fetches around 2,800 USD per ton. This shift towards higher-value products is expected to generate more foreign currency for the country.

Moreover, Ethiopia's coffee production

practices are aligned with the United Nations' deforestation-free criteria, giving it a competitive edge in international markets. The UN market alone accounts for 30% to 35% of Ethiopia's coffee exports, offering a significant opportunity as other coffee-producing nations face scrutiny over deforestation.

The authority's ongoing efforts, including the pruning of coffee trees across 500,000 hectares, have significantly boosted productivity, enhancing Ethiopia's position as a leading coffee producer.

As Ethiopia continues to expand its coffee market, it remains committed to maintaining quality and sustainable production practices, positioning itself for growth in both traditional and emerging markets, the director general remarked.

Ethiopia is known as the birthplace of coffee, and the coffee sector is not only a vital part of the country's economy but also a cornerstone of its cultural heritage.

Railway regional ...

Ethiopia's only operational international railway link, the Ethio-Djibouti Railway, currently operates below capacity. While it plays a critical role in connecting the country to the Djibouti port, inefficiencies in this line limit its effectiveness. To tackle these issues, the government is prioritizing the establishment of new legal and structural frameworks, as discussed in a recent workshop.

The reforms aim not only to enhance the functionality of railways within Ethiopia but also to extend their benefits to neighboring countries. With increased efficiency, the railway network could significantly facilitate regional economic growth by improving logistics and reducing transport costs, according to officials from the Ministry of Transport and Logistics and the Ministry of Finance.

Recognizing the need for international support to fund these ambitious infrastructural developments, the World Bank, a key financier for Eastern Africa's railways, has expressed its commitment to assist. The World Bank's Country Director for Ethiopia Mariam Salim highlighted that inefficient trade logistics pose a serious constraint on Ethiopia's international competitiveness. "Several World Bank reports underscore the railway sector as a critical bottleneck for Ethiopia's future economic growth," she noted, welcoming the Ethiopian government's reform efforts as essential for regional economic integration.

A study by logistics and transport experts also revealed the risks associated with Ethiopia's weak connectivity. It emphasizes the need for a closer examination of the logistics sector, particularly regarding cargo flows and regional last-mile connectivity. Inadequate consolidation hubs and weak links to dry ports hinder the movement of Ethiopia's value-added commodities, making improvements to the railway network essential for efficient goods movement across borders.

Beyond logistical enhancements, the reform initiatives aim to implement structural changes in Ethiopia's railway sector. The government plans to establish a clear separation between policy-making, regulatory bodies, and railway operations, which is expected to attract private investment and foster competition within the freight services market.

Finance State Minister Semereta Sewasew emphasized that these reforms, which include opening the sector to private investors and increasing competition, could significantly improve service quality in the railway industry. The initiatives also foresee private-sector involvement in expanding and operating the railway network, potentially stimulating growth and promoting regional integration.

These ongoing efforts mark a pivotal step toward establishing a comprehensive and efficient railway system. If successfully implemented, the reforms are expected to bolster Ethiopia's surface transport capacity in the short, medium, and long term. Achieving the railway sector's full design capacity would not only enhance Ethiopia's trade competitiveness but also promote greater economic integration across the region, as indicated by researchers.

"Let's focus on lofty goals ...

marking the end of the rainy season and the onset of spring.

He underscored the importance of unity, asserting, "There is no one who will be left behind from *Irreechaa*," and urged attendees to reflect on their shared kindness and relationships with one another.

Prime Minister noted that, "Lush grass symbolizes honor, love, and good wishes. Spring signifies a transition, as we let go of the past and embrace new hope with a clear conscience. This reflects the core values of the Oromo people."

Furthermore, the Premier addressed the historical significance of the Gada system,

among the Oromo people, explaining how it promotes wisdom, peace and equality.

Prime Minister Abiy concluded his message by expressing hope for a brighter future, urging citizens to learn from the lessons of the past and to work collaboratively toward a united and prosperous Ethiopia.

Kenyan delegation hails *Irreechaa* ...

Speaking to the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), delegation leader Dima Hasan emphasized that the festival represents unity, love, and brotherhood among the Oromo people. "This will be my third consecutive year celebrating *Irreechaa*. The team has traveled from Mombasa, Kenya, to join in the celebrations at both HoraFinfinnee and HoraArsedi, which is a testament to the unity and brotherhood that the festival fosters across communities," Dima said.

The delegation leader added that the festival plays a vital role in strengthening unity within the community and beyond. He also called for the creation of an international forum to further solidify these ties. Since 2016, the festival has been observed in Kenya under the title "Oromo Cultural Festival," with preparations finalized for this year's celebration in early November 2024.

Another delegate, Ibrahim Guyo, shared his enthusiasm: "The celebration is truly mesmerizing. The hospitality has been incredible since our arrival, and I am eager to experience this fascinating



Dima Hasan



Ibrahim Guyo

event." *Irreechaa*, the Oromo thanksgiving festival, is widely observed in Ethiopia, particularly among the Oromo community. It marks the end of the rainy season and the beginning of the harvest

season, a time for the Oromo people to express gratitude for the blessings they have received. The festival is also an occasion to seek reconciliation and future blessings from Waaqaa (God) for the coming season.

Opinion

Irreechaa: A carnival beyond thanksgiving

BY MENGESHA AMARE

By its very nature, a human creature or being would like to thank whom they appreciate and give priority to help them be people of their wish, and are given expected or unexpected in life. Yes, a lot of things can be mentioned along this line as things can be fulfilled as per peoples' aspirations and needs. The majority of the people of the world also love the idea of being thankful, but they think giving thanks should happen only once a year.

One of the Bible's prominent leaders, Paul, started thanking his readers for their faith saying, "We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you." He knew that giving thanks is crucial for four main reasons namely God wants it, everything is from God, lack of thanksgiving keeps us from moving forward, and giving thanks changes people's perspectives. The art of thanksgiving is consistent, steadfast, genuine, year-round thankfulness in all things, for it is determinedly good.

Having said all this, this writer would like to plug esteemed readers to the grand thanksgiving festival annually held in Ethiopia, peculiarly in Oromia state of Ethiopia by the people of Oromo, not limited to, in fact. The festival is really tantamount to what has been cited from the outset. While certain cultural traditions and customs are emblematic of the Ethiopian national and cultural identity, individual practices differ between regions, religions, ethnic sects and tribal segments. Ethiopia houses over 80 different ethnic groups whose ancestries vary, with some tracing back to centuries back ancestors.

Historically, each ethnic group has been divided into tribes and sub-tribes on the basis of people's descent from common ancestors.

Each ethnic group has distinct cultural practices and speaks a language specific to their ethnicity.

There is a general expectation that an Ethiopian living overseas will eventually want to return or stay connected to their country regardless of improved living circumstances elsewhere as their culture is incomparable. Ethiopians also share a deep pride in the country's legacy and what it symbolizes as a historically independent African nation.

It is important to appreciate the legacy and depth of Ethiopian culture in order to understand how Ethiopians see themselves in the contemporary setting. There is a very strong community focus embedded in Ethiopian culture. People are often mutually reliant on their relatives and neighbors.

Ethiopians have had a number of religious and cultural holidays which have an immense contribution to tourism promotion apart from their local religious and cultural essence. True, since time immemorial, Ethiopians have been commemorating such appealing festivals and the trend has been transcended from generation to generation, and still persists well.

Cognizant of the fact that Ethiopians' festivals have helped draw important lessons about culture, norms and traditions of the local



Irreechaa, a Season of Peace and Thanksgiving among Ethiopians

community and serve as a means for the refreshment of body and mind, visitors from all over the world have time and again come to visit this mesmerizing nation and take what they would live to have for their knowledge and mind. True, a range of holidays be they are directly related to religion, culture of the societal values of the community like *Meskel*, *Fiche-Chmbelala*, *Shadey/Solel/Ashenda* and *Irreechaa*, have been known for, especially these days, their being tourism magnet other locally entertained scenarios being the same.

One of the huge rituals among the majority of remembered annually, especially the latter, *Irreechaa*, has had an enduring history tied with Ethiopians especially with the Oromo people. This mammoth festival is of paramount importance in attracting tourists or visitors from all over the world beyond its cultural and societal essence locally. It is also of significantly useful in helping people establish firm tie as it is a means by which people can be known/ introduced one another and helps people establish firm attachment among/between each other/one another.

It is also well recognized that *Irreechaa* is a thanksgiving holiday celebrated at the end of the winter predominantly in Oromia state of Ethiopia and the Oromo people celebrate it to thank God (Waaqa) for the blessings and mercies they have received throughout the previous year. The carnival is celebrated every year at the beginning of spring, new season after the dark and rainy winter season. It is attended by hundreds of thousands people and celebrated at sacred lakes across the Oromia state of Ethiopia like the Hora Finfinne, Addis Ababa and Hora Harsadi, Bishoftu, and across Oromia state as a whole, too. Once at the lake, festival-goers immerse freshly cut green grass and the flowers they are carrying and sprinkle themselves and place in water.

Many people interpreted the *Irreechaa* festival of the Oromo people as a festival of difficulty period between the month of June and September. However, it is the festival of welcoming the expected seeds and fruits of prosperity and peace in the times to come.

The Oromo people also consider the winter rainy season of June to September as a time of difficulty for communications, with families, friends due to heavy rain which could cause swelling rivers and floods that may drown people, cattle, crop, and flood homes.

Furthermore, it is highly believed among the Oromo community that family relationships will suffer during winter rain as they cannot visit each other because of swelling rivers and the difficulty of passages following the rainy, foggy and muddy circumstances. In addition, it is presumed that the winter (Kiremt) time could be a time of hunger for some because the previous harvest collected in January is running short and the new harvest is not ripe yet.

Because of this and other related justifications, the Oromo people see winter as a difficult season. It does not mean the Oromo people hate rain or the winter season at all. Even when there is a shortage of rain, they pray to God for rain.

Not only is the *Irreechaa* festival celebrated to thank God but it is also marked to welcome the new season of plentiful harvests after the dark and rainy winter season associated with nature and creatures. At *Irreechaa* festivals, friends, family, and relatives gather together and celebrate with joy and happiness. It brings people closer to each other and makes social bonds well firm thereby confidently consolidating social cohesion.

Moreover, this auspicious day that commemorates the passing of the dark time of starvation and hunger and the welcoming of the bright time for growth and prosperity, has been well remembered all the time as a Thanksgiving instant.

Cultural or other related sacred beliefs have been a vital aspect of human existence as human being has always been in search for purpose and meaning, and thus, has birthed many different beliefs with their unique way of festival celebrations.

This distinct thanksgiving celebration in the Oromo tradition is, by itself, means 'green and fresh grass' that symbolize fertility and flourishing life due to the bless and guidance of the Creator, God. On this day (*normally falls at the end of September or beginning of October*), many people of Oromo come to the river or mountains with an outlet that has since long been chosen to be the place for such thanksgiving merriment. In the traditional religion of the Oromos, the spirit is the power through which The Almighty God governs all over the world. Thus, people of Oromo believe that every creation of God has

its own spirit.

Most of the time, the Oromo people believe that this spirit, *through which Waaqa is supposed to govern all over its creature, which wallows over the sea and the great rivers of our world*. Besides, they do believe that the peak of the mountain is holly in nature, and that it serves as a host to the spirit of God.

As stated earlier, the Oromo people usually go to the river or to the mountain during the time of their worshiping rituals, or during *Irreechaa* celebration. The fundamental reason the Oromo people celebrate *Irreechaa* to thank God for the blessings and mercies they have received throughout the year before. The thanksgiving is celebrated at the sacred grounds of lakes, and the *Irreechaa* festival is celebrated every year at the beginning of the sunny new season, and is celebrated throughout Oromia and around the world where Diaspora Oromos live especially North America and Europe.

They believe that the heavy rain brings lots of things like swelling rivers and floods that may drown people, cattle, crop, and flood homes. Furthermore, family relationship will severe during winter rain as they can't visit each other because of the overflow of rivers. In addition, winter time could be a time of starvation for some because of the fact that previous harvest collected in January is running short and new harvest is not ripe yet. Because of this, some families may endure food shortages during the winter.

It is also well recognized that *Irreechaa* festivals bring people closer to each other and make social bonds. During this ritual, almost all the worshipers carry green grass and flowers to commemorate the event. Green grass is always regarded as an integral part of the ceremony, which is a sign of fertility and productivity, in Oromo tradition.

Along with the celebration, cultural exhibitions take place. Indeed, various cultural displays, including traditional clothing, crafts, and food, are showcased, allowing participants to immerse themselves in Oromo heritage.

On the occasion, speeches are aired and prayers are performed. Community Abba Gadas, Hadhasiinquees and elders address the gathering, sharing messages of peace, unity, and the importance of preserving Oromo culture. Prayers for a prosperous year ahead are also common.

As far as the procession of the ritual is concerned, upon reaching the lake, worshipers perform various rituals, such as immersing the green grass and the flowers they are carrying in the lake and sprinkling themselves as well as others around them. Though the day is a thanksgiving holiday of the Oromo people in Ethiopia, many others out the specific nation, have accompanied their brothers and sisters in due course of celebrating the festival with a view to sharing the bounties their brothers and sisters have been granted.

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

Editorial

Irreechaa upholds thanksgiving, forgiveness, peace, love, solidarity

We have just rung in a new year heralding the coming of a bright season—marked by sunny weather—that ousted a bleak one—characterized by heavy downpours and at times drizzly rains. A carpet of lush grasses punctuated by yellow daisies adorns Mother Earth while Brooks bubbles with lyrical music. Chirruping birds echo the feeling. People become ebullient with an uplifted mood, for they will not be forced to stay indoors to avoid inundated rivers, muddy roads, and dark clouds.

On such occasions, thanksgiving to the Almighty is called for. It is aware of this fact, for a long, carrying lush grasses and yellow daisies a major segment of the people of Oromia head to rivers to express gratitude to their creator—*Waaqaa*—for allowing them to open a new chapter promising a new beginning for the better. Singing “Have mercy,” and dipping into the water the bunch of grasses they carry, celebrants beseech the Almighty to forgive their transgressions and bless their harvests and livestock. They implore Him to allow them to thrive as He allowed greenery to take the upper hand that season.

Here in the capital, dressed to kill with embroidered colorful white traditional clothes some designed in modern and eye-catching ways, women and children flanked by their male counterparts of course directed by *Aba Gadaas* pour out on the streets that lead to the pool on the river that abuts ECA building. Attracted by the vivacity of the ceremony, its sentiment of fraternity and solidarity, the number of foreign and domestic tourists that attend the event is snowballing by the year.

The Oromo people are all-embracing by their nature. As such, as history testifies, they like to assimilate. This opens doors for clicking with a multitude of ethnic groups and fellow African siblings. The feeling of the event with a contagious effect has a high potential to ripple across Africa.

Facts on the ground suggest that it is high time *Irreechaa* is registered in UNESCO’s intangible heritage list. Given the growing number of touristic attractions in the city that accentuates the event.

Irreechaa is also a moment of forgiveness. It is an occasion when those at loggerheads decide to bury the hatchet. This exemplary act has the potential to go a long way to consolidate social cohesion, which is key to a nation’s tranquility. It proves a salient pillar of consolidating peace.

With the spirit of unity and oneness that is manifested by *Irreechaa*, forging chemistry with fellow citizens, the Oromo people are mobilized toward nation-building. This spirit must be stepped up for rosy days.

This thanksgiving festival of the Oromo people could be traced back in the *Gadaa* system, which upholds national unity, reconciliation, and solidarity. *Irreechaa*, one of the mammoth outdoor cultural festivals, showcases Ethiopia’s wealth of cultural heritages that must be properly tapped to augment the country’s hard-won currency. Its role in promoting local business, from the sale of costumes and artifacts, goes without saying.

Opinion

CFA implementation as a game changer in Horn of Africa’s development

BY SOLOMON DIBABA

In 1999, the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) was established by the Nile riparian states to manage and develop the shared Nile water resources sustainably and equitably. The NBI seeks to promote economic integration, poverty alleviation, and sustainable development for the 11 Nile Basin countries: Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea (as an observer), Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.

The NBI works to ensure that all the Nile Basin countries benefit fairly from the Nile’s waters, countering historical imbalances in water usage, such as those seen with Egypt and Sudan’s historic treaties.

The initiative aims to promote the development of water resources for food security, electricity generation, and climate resilience across the basin while maintaining ecological sustainability.

By managing the Nile cooperatively, the NBI hopes to foster regional economic integration, reduce conflicts over water use, and promote cross-border infrastructure projects such as hydroelectric power plants and irrigation schemes.

Through fostering dialogue and cooperation, the NBI acts as a forum to prevent conflicts between member states over water resources, which have historically been a source of tension in the region. The NBI had three basic programs which included a shared vision program that aims to build trust and capacity among the Nile Basin countries through joint training, education, and information exchange initiatives.

The Subsidiary Action Programs (SAPs) are investment-oriented programs designed to address regional development needs, such as hydropower and agriculture. The two main regional groups in this effort are the Eastern Nile Subsidiary Action Program (ENSAP) and the Nile Equatorial Lakes Subsidiary Action Program (NELSAP).

The NBI focuses on strengthening the technical and institutional capacity of the member states to manage water resources effectively and equitably.

What are the basic principles behind utilizing the waters of the Nile as provided by international law and the NBI?

The principle of Equitable Utilization of the waters of trans-boundary nature is based on from principle, derived from the 1997 United Nations Convention on

the Law of the Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses, which requires that all riparian states sharing a watercourse have the right to use it equitably and reasonably. Factors such as population, geography, and dependence on the resource are considered.

Under customary international law, including the 1997 Watercourses Convention, states are required to prevent activities within their jurisdiction from causing significant harm to other riparian states. Egypt and Sudan have invoked this principle in their opposition to GERD.

Ethiopia’s sovereignty over the Blue Nile, which originates within its borders, gives it the right to construct GERD. The principle of sovereignty is a key concept in international law, allowing states to use their natural resources for development, provided they do not cause harm to other states.

International law encourages states sharing trans-boundary resources to cooperate and negotiate in good faith. Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan have held numerous rounds of negotiations, including under the auspices of the African Union, to try and resolve disputes over GERD. However, an agreement on the dam’s operation and filling remains elusive.

In an attempt to ease tensions, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan signed the Declaration of Principles in 2015. This document acknowledges the importance of equitable and reasonable use, the obligation not to cause significant harm, and the need for cooperation. However, disagreements persist on the technical details of GERD’s operation, particularly during droughts and the filling phase.

The historical agreements, especially the 1929 and 1959 Nile Water Agreements, allocated the vast majority of the Nile’s water to Egypt and Sudan, leaving Ethiopia and other upstream countries. Ethiopia has rejected these treaties as being colonial-era relics that unfairly marginalize upstream states. Ethiopia’s position is supported by the notion that no single state should have a monopoly over a shared resource.

From the perspective of international law, the GERD dispute revolves around balancing Ethiopia’s right to develop its water resources and the downstream countries’ right to secure water access. The 1997 UN Watercourses Convention, customary law principles of equitable use, and the obligation to avoid significant harm all play key roles in shaping this debate.

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



The Ethiopian Herald

Established in 1943

Published daily except Mondays
By The Ethiopian Press Agency

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The Ethiopian Herald



“We need to be more creative and innovative in increasing membership”

Amb. Solomon Rutega

BY GIRMACHEW GASHAW

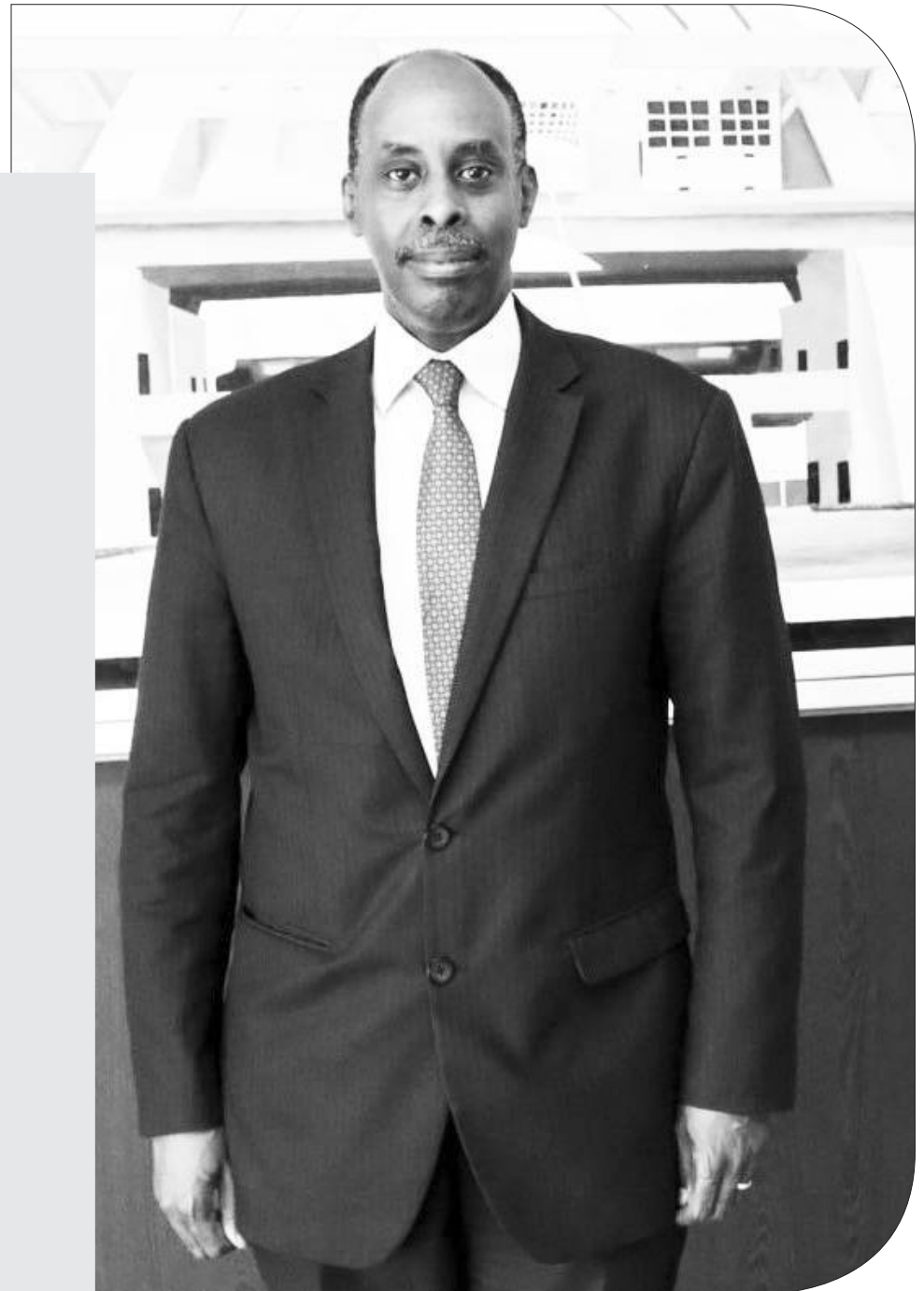
To highlight the central role of coffee in the socio-economic development of Africa, the Heads of State of 11 African coffee-producing countries, including Angola, Cameroon, Central Africa, Congo (DRC), Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, Gabon, Kenya, Madagascar, Uganda, and Tanzania, convened on December 7, 1960, in Antananarivo, Madagascar. They collectively decided to establish the Inter-African Coffee Organization (IACO).

Shortly after its establishment, all African coffee-producing countries joined IACO, recognizing the importance of unified efforts to address challenges within the African coffee industry, particularly in processing and marketing.

Today, IACO is an intergovernmental organization consisting of 25 African coffee-producing countries, including Angola, Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Congo, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Equatorial Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Our guest today is Ambassador Solomon Rutega, the Secretary-General of the Inter-African Coffee Organization (IACO). Before assuming his current role, Rutega played a pivotal role in establishing the African Fine Coffees Association (formerly the East African Fine Coffees Association). He is also known for his contributions to Chinese-African relations in the coffee sector, having served as Uganda's ambassador and consul general in Guangzhou, China.

During his recent interview with *The Ethiopian Herald*, Rutega discussed IACO's mission to promote coffee and explore ways to increase coffee export earnings. Enjoy reading!



What is the primary goal of IACO?

IACO is the organization representing 25 African coffee-producing countries on the continent. Its mission is to transform the African coffee sector through value addition, with a vision anchored on four strategic objectives.

First, we play a key role in advocacy, encompassing political, economic, and social aspects across the board. The second objective is to coordinate coffee research on the continent, primarily addressing productivity and production issues to combat the threats posed by climate change.

The third objective involves creating public-private partnerships to promote coffee consumption culture on the continent. Coffee consumption in Africa, aside from Ethiopia, remains low, and we aim to increase consumption, particularly among

the youth population, to reduce dependence on exporting green beans abroad.

The fourth objective is capacity building, focusing on training youth and women in areas such as coffee barista, brewing, and roasting. There is a need to educate people on coffee and instill a coffee culture, as many lack knowledge of its cultivation, processing, and roasting. With a growing number of cafes opening in urban areas, there is also a need for youth employment.

We are establishing training centers in member states, with Ethiopia leading the way with a successful coffee training center that serves as a benchmark for other countries. In summary, this is the role of my organization, and as the head of the mission, this is what I focus on.

How has IACO been performing its responsibilities since establishment?

IACO was established in 1960, making it one of the oldest intergovernmental organizations. This December marks its 64th anniversary.

The genesis behind its establishment was during the independence movement, as many African countries gained independence from colonial rule in 1960.

Initially headquartered in Paris to serve the European market, the headquarters were later moved to West Africa in Cote d'Ivoire, Abidjan in 1975. From 1960 to 1989, IACO operated under a quota regime, ensuring that Africa's quarter accounted for about 30% of global total exports.

With the liberalization reforms starting in 1989, IACO adapted to the free market regime. In recent years, the focus has shifted towards the transformation of the sector through value addition, moving away from

solely exporting green beans. A new vision has been implemented, and efforts are being made to fulfill this vision among member states.

With a specialized agency now in place, other African coffee-consuming countries on the continent can join the organization. The agreement made in 2020 allows consuming countries to become members, potentially increasing the number of coffee-producing countries from 25 to 55, which is the total number of African Union member states. IACO aims to reach this level in the future.

Can you mention some of the achievements that the organization has been able to achieve?

Yes, in the last 36 months, we have made

Continued to page 7



“We need to be more creative ...

Continued from page 6

quite a few remarkable achievements in all the areas mentioned earlier under the strategic objectives. The first one was getting the political leadership on the African continent to come together on a unified platform at the G25 Africa Coffee Summit.

This was the first time in AICO's history where heads of state sat down under the summit to discuss how to address industry challenges. Previously, discussions would only reach the ministerial or technical level. The biggest achievement, in my opinion, is this initiative of political heads of state meeting annually to tackle industry issues.

The outcome of this initiative is why we are here. The leaders agreed that coffee should be adopted as a strategic commodity due to its importance in the global market and the economies of African countries. More than 53% of our rural population relies on coffee for their livelihoods.

It's a half trillion-dollar business and a significant foreign exchange earner. So why wouldn't leadership invest in such a crucial sector? This summit has brought this issue to the forefront, making it one of the most notable achievements in the last 36 months.

At the advocacy level, the second achievement is the introduction of Africa Coffee Week. This initiative has brought the private and public sectors together for the first time to have discussions on one platform. The first event was held in February in Addis Ababa, where the Africa Coffee Association from East and West Africa participated along with government officials from member states and IACO. This merger of the private and public sectors will help address industry challenges.

Another achievement is the establishment of a coffee school. We have set up several affiliates in the region, working with universities to build capacity through training centers. We have opened a school in Abidjan with the private sector called the Inter-Africa Coffee Training Institute. The focus is on training youth, especially women, to be able to work in coffee shops, hotels, and restaurants. Employment and job creation are key goals, and we are pleased with the success of the school training centers.

Other achievements include intangible benefits like networking opportunities that bring people together to make deals. I am happy with the progress so far. The biggest milestone is being adopted at the African Union, marking the first time coffee will be on the African agenda. These are just a few of the highlights.

What does the Kampala Declaration mean for IACO?

The Kampala Declaration is where the heads of state met in Kampala again to



We have opened a school in Abidjan with the private sector called the Inter-Africa Coffee Training Institute. The focus is on training youth, especially women

recommend and request the African Union to adopt coffee as a strategic commodity.

The first one was the Nairobi Declaration, which took place in May 2022. That was the initial conversation starter. The second one,

held in Kampala and hosted by President Yoweri Museveni, was a continuation to galvanize and lobby more African leaders to support this request. The declaration was based on the request to adopt coffee as a strategic commodity under the AU. Six months later, the heads of state met in Addis and officially adopted it. The lobbying efforts, which involved bringing in heads of state, expedited the process at the African Union level.

Producing quality coffee is a significant challenge for many African countries. What support does IACO provide to these countries?

IACO collaborates with the national coffee authorities of its member states. For example, the Ethiopian Coffee, Tea and Spices Authority represent Ethiopia at IACO. We work directly with the Authority to explore ways to support the coffee industry at the national level. While we do not directly engage in technical capacity, we partner with the Authority to enhance quality, productivity, and address other value chain issues. The process involves IACO, the Authority, and the execution of quality and value-added initiatives.

What challenges has IACO faced so far in terms of coffee?

IACO is a non-profit membership organization, and one of the main challenges is getting members to pay their subscriptions on time. This is an internal challenge. Another challenge is collecting economic data to conduct economic analysis. We are working on developing a database to improve our economic analysis publications.

Inadequate funding to build capacity is another challenge, but this is a common issue for government organizations. We need to be more creative and innovative

in increasing membership and attracting people from other countries, particularly consuming countries. Being under the AU will provide us with a platform to achieve this. I am optimistic about the future.

The Africa Free Trade Area is now being implemented on our continent. What is the role played by IACO?

In light of this, what is IACO's plan to integrate all African countries in the coffee industry? We have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the AfCFTA, which will give us direct access to the organization as a specialized agency. In order to export coffee inter-regionally, we will need a certificate from the AfCFTA.

As a specialized agency, we will be able to assist our member states more effectively. We will collaborate closely with the AfCFTA to promote inter-regional trade, allowing coffee from Ethiopia to access other consuming markets, such as those in North Africa. This will be facilitated through the AfCFTA concession framework.

We are also working closely with other AU organs, such as the Africa Standard Organization, Trade Insurance, Africa Exim Bank, and Africa Development Bank. All AU organs will collaborate closely with us as the AU specialized agency.

You have already established excellent relations with the rest of the world regarding coffee. What is your plan for promoting African coffee worldwide?

We will strive to open new markets for African coffees. For example, China, with the second-largest economy in the world and a population of 1.4 billion, has a low per capita coffee consumption of 5 cups per year. However, coffee consumption is growing at 15% annually, presenting a significant opportunity for African coffees.

We will ensure aggressive promotion of coffees from IACO Member States and support African producers in establishing new partnerships and accessing markets in these regions.

Research and other tasks may be part of your responsibilities. What does your organization focus on in terms of coffee-related research?

Funding for research remains a challenge, as it is not adequately supported. However, we have the Africa Coffee Research Network, which operates under IACO. The goal is to facilitate collaboration among National Coffee Research Institutes in member states to exchange information and work together. More funding is needed for research and development, but we have a dedicated unit for this purpose, led by a director.

Thank you very much for allowing me your valuable time for the interview!

You're welcome!

Art & Culture

River

BY GOLDEN OROMIYA

The river has its own significance and meaning

It attracts people from all places to commemorate

And admire the change in seasonal warmth, singing

Attired in eye-catching costumes to maintain ongoing

Ceremony of Oromo ethnic group in African temperate

The river has its own significance and meaning

Women in the front, men in the back encircling

The rivers they approach it with slow and steady rate

And admire the change in seasonal warmth, singing

Everybody is seen ebullient chanting and dancing with attendees during

The procession and making friends laugh to accentuate the event

The river has its own significance and meaning

Kids playing football near the river and moms chitchatting

The dads talking about politics and the festival to snowball

And admire the change in seasonal warmth, singing



Yes, thanksgiving!

BY MENGESHA AMARE

*The Almighty God is thanked,
People were thanking, have thanked and will thank,*

Via being good for others and frank,

Yes, it is good to thank God,

For what He did, has done, will do, all good,

Every culture, tradition or norm,

Attracts gratitude, to the squares, to the room,

For thanking the creator;

God/Allah or the eternal being,

The Almighty,

Who allows those believe in it,

To have a happy transit,

From year to year,

From century to century,

Particularly from dark to bright,

From left to right,

To be gracious, to be cheery,

When we take Ethiopia, nations,

From Oromo,

Using rivers namely,

Abbay, Baro, Awash, Omo,

Soaking green grass into the water,

And sprinkle it outer,

To give thank to the creator;

Who transfers people from dark to light,

From ominous to bright,

Yes, thanksgiving is decisive,

With no grudge against fellow ones,



Devoid of deceive,

All have really to thank God,

To pave the apt undying road,

People have to be good to others,

Not only for paternal tie maternal affinity,

For every human race on earth,

Bedecked with amity not dearth,

As to what is gained from the Creator,

Who always does things for the better,

True, thanksgiving is sacred,

Everyone should walk the talk,

Love others, respect, and give what they deserve,

To make for their life the best reserve,

Yes, charity begins at home and pays off,

Make people happy instead of making them oaf,

The muddy weather, heavy and difficult,

Has already elapsed,

And the bright spring has taken over; substituted,

For giving a mesmerizing scene, rest and joyous,

God thanks!

Though a cultural cavity,

A thanks giving festivity! Irreecha!

Law & Politics



Unholy partnership only costs Horn peace

BY DANIEL ALEMAYEHU

The recent practices observed in the Horn of Africa must be seen carefully as some actors have been throwing gasoline on the fire on the already existed challenges of the region. Ethiopia, as one of the major actors in the Horn, has witnessed the issue carefully.

Coupled with economic challenges and conflicts, terrorism is one of the main setbacks in the Horn. Ethiopia, in this regard, has been fighting to end terrorism and support governments to stand on their feet.

Adversely, actors from various parts of the world have put their boots in the region to defend their interest, and some even try to affect countries in the Horn, like Ethiopia, negatively. As the region is the most crucial geopolitical sect of the world, everyone wants to find any space to be in the region.

For the past few years, Ethiopia has been deployed their troops to fight Al-Shabaab in Somalia and ensured the peace and stability of the country. Ethiopia has also lost its beloved sons and daughters in the process of fighting the terrorist group. In fact, peace and stability, by far, is ensured in Somalia. The international community has also praised Ethiopia's sacrifices in the peace keeping mission.

The recent accord between Ethiopia and Somaliland on allowing the former to access the sea created disagreement between Ethiopia and Somalia. Similarly, their dispute has created a favorable condition for those enemies of Ethiopia to put the country under pressure.

To rub salt into the wound, Mogadishu has agreed a military cooperation with some Ethiopia's arch enemies. In such unstable region, adding more actors on any matter will increase the tension. Those actors who got the accord with Somalia have done nothing or never stretched their supporting hands when Somalia was in trouble. On the other hand, Ethiopia has been there and sacrificed its people for its neighbor.

Besides, those around 9000 Ethiopian troops stationed in Somalia as part of the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) and bilateral agreements should

leave the country by the end of the year, the government of Somalia insisted.

Again, based on the military agreement that Somalia agreed with some entities, Mogadishu starts to receive a number of military armaments. According to reports, Egypt has twice delivered a significant amount of military equipment to Somalia after the disagreement with Ethiopia. Egypt also took the opportunity to move closer to Somalia, stoking concerns about rising tensions in the Horn of Africa.

Accordingly, weaponizing the region may cause severe consequences in the region where peace costs too much. In a country where terrorists roam around, it is a very reckless decision to bring more weapons to the region. Those entities who provide the armaments definitely know the upcoming danger. Rather than avoiding the imminent danger, those organs deliberately pushing forward to dismantle the peace that is gained by people's blood and bone.

Speaking on the 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA79) lately, Ethiopia's Foreign Affairs Minister Taye Atske Selassie called upon the actors to immediately stop their reckless actions in the Horn of Africa and urged the international community to recognize the imminent risk originating from this irresponsible act, a report from local media stated.

Foreign Minister Taye noted that the recent maneuvers of actors from outside the Horn of Africa region would undermine the hard-won war against terrorism.

"We therefore call upon these actors to immediately stop their reckless actions. We also call on the international community to recognize the imminent risk originating from this irresponsible act and to take concrete measures to prevent the loss of hard-won gains in combating terrorism in the Horn of Africa."

Explaining the recent security situation across the Red Sea region and Indian Ocean, FM Taye said we see a great need to chart a new path for inclusive maritime security engagement with equal participation of countries.

Furthermore, terrorism continues to be a grave threat to the peace and security of the

political dispensation in Somalia.

"Our objective is shared growth and prosperity in the region. Similar agreements have been concluded by other states, and there is no reason for the government of Somalia to incite hostility that obviously intends to cover internal political tensions." The Foreign Minister also rejected the unfounded allegation levied against his country.

"Ethiopia's name can never be associated with any one of the allegations. I rather call on the federal government of Somalia to join hands to eliminate terrorist groups that are causing chaos and mayhem on the people of the region."

The recent maneuvers of actors from outside the Horn of Africa region undermine these efforts, according to him. Nevertheless, Taye underscored that Ethiopia will not be deterred from its resolute commitment to combating terrorism.

And finally, the Minister reiterated Ethiopia's commitment for the maintenance of global peace and security, and upholding multilateralism.

In a similar vein, on the sideline meeting, Taye encountered with Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Under-Secretary General for Peace Operations. The FM Taye stressed that any post-ATMIS arrangement should be carefully deliberated, concerning mandate, size, financing, and coordination. The two sides discussed key issues related to peacekeeping, according to Foreign Affairs Ministry.

Lacroix also praised the contributions of Ethiopian peacekeeping troops and the strong relationship Ethiopia maintains with the UN and the Department of Peace Operations.

On preparations for a post ATMIS mission, the Minister reiterated Ethiopia's commitment to combating terrorism, stressing that any post-ATMIS arrangement should be carefully deliberated, concerning mandate, size, financing, and coordination.

The Foreign Minister expressed concerns about external weapons supplies worsening the security situation and potentially ending in the hands of terrorist groups.

Those actors who got the accord with Somalia have done nothing or never stretched their supporting hands when Somalia was in trouble

Horn of Africa, he pointed out. The Foreign Minister elaborated that the growing rise of violent extremism like Al-Shabaab and its international and internal affiliates have continued their vicious attack against civilians and security of the region.

He recalled that the East African region has reached a milestone in degrading terrorism through the resilience of the people of Somalia and the sacrifice of the sons and daughters of Burundi, Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda and his country, Ethiopia.

The authorization of the Security Council and the International Finance for the African Union peace Support operation has indeed played an instrumental role, he pointed out.

In this regard, the Minister urges Somalia's offices to recognize the tremendous sacrifices that have been made.

"I'm confident the government of Somalia will soon reckon with and recognize the sacrifice we made to Somalis liberation from the grip of terrorist groups."

Mentioning Ethiopia's Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Somaliland, Taye revealed that it is based on existing

Society

“Tourism, Peace”

BY TEWODROS KASSA

It is obvious that thinking about tourism without peace is impossible. Tourists will plan their trip after carefully identifying the internal situation of their destinations. Thus, peace is the predominant requirement to practice tourism.

Recently, the 27th World Tourism Day was marked globally. The Day is commemorated annually on 27 September to foster awareness among the international community on the importance of tourism and its social, cultural, political, and economic value. Since 1980, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has been marking the World Tourism Day as an international observance on September 27. This date was chosen to coincide with an important milestone in the global tourism. On that day in 1970, the Statutes of the UNWTO were adopted. The date also marks the anniversary of the adoption of the Statutes of the Organization in 1970, paving the way for the establishment of UN Tourism five years later.

In his message in connection with World Tourism Day, 2024, marked under the theme “Tourism and Peace”, António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General indicated that tourism brings people together.

“On this World Tourism Day, we reflect on the profound connection between tourism and peace. Sustainable tourism can transform communities – creating jobs, fostering inclusion and strengthening local economies. By valuing and preserving cultural and natural heritage, it can help reduce tensions and nurture peaceful coexistence.”

According to him, tourism can also promote economic interdependence between neighbors, encouraging cooperation and peaceful development.

At the same time, tourism broadens horizons. Every traveler can be an ambassador, engaging respectfully with local populations, recognizing our diversity and shared humanity, and the values that unite us all.

“As we celebrate tourism, let us travel responsibly, build bridges, and promote mutual respect among cultures and nations. Together, we can harness the power of tourism to advance peace and prosperity for all.”

The World Tourism Day 2024 as also marked in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia with various events at Entoto Park last week. At the program organized by the Ministry of Tourism partnering with the Great Ethiopian Run, several activities include sports events with the theme, “let’s use tourism to build peaceful coexistence and sustainable economic growth!”

On the event, it was indicated that over the last six years, the government of Ethiopia has been working aggressively



True, peace is the foundation of everything; and in the same way, Peace and tourism are the two sides of the same coin

in developing several tourist destinations across the country with international standards spearheaded by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

Speaking on the occasion, Tourism Minister Amb. Nasise Chali said that the government has developed new tourism destinations and launched of modern tourist services.

According to her, various websites and applications have been also developed to render services for tourists including Paying systems and descriptions of the tourist destinations before they come here.

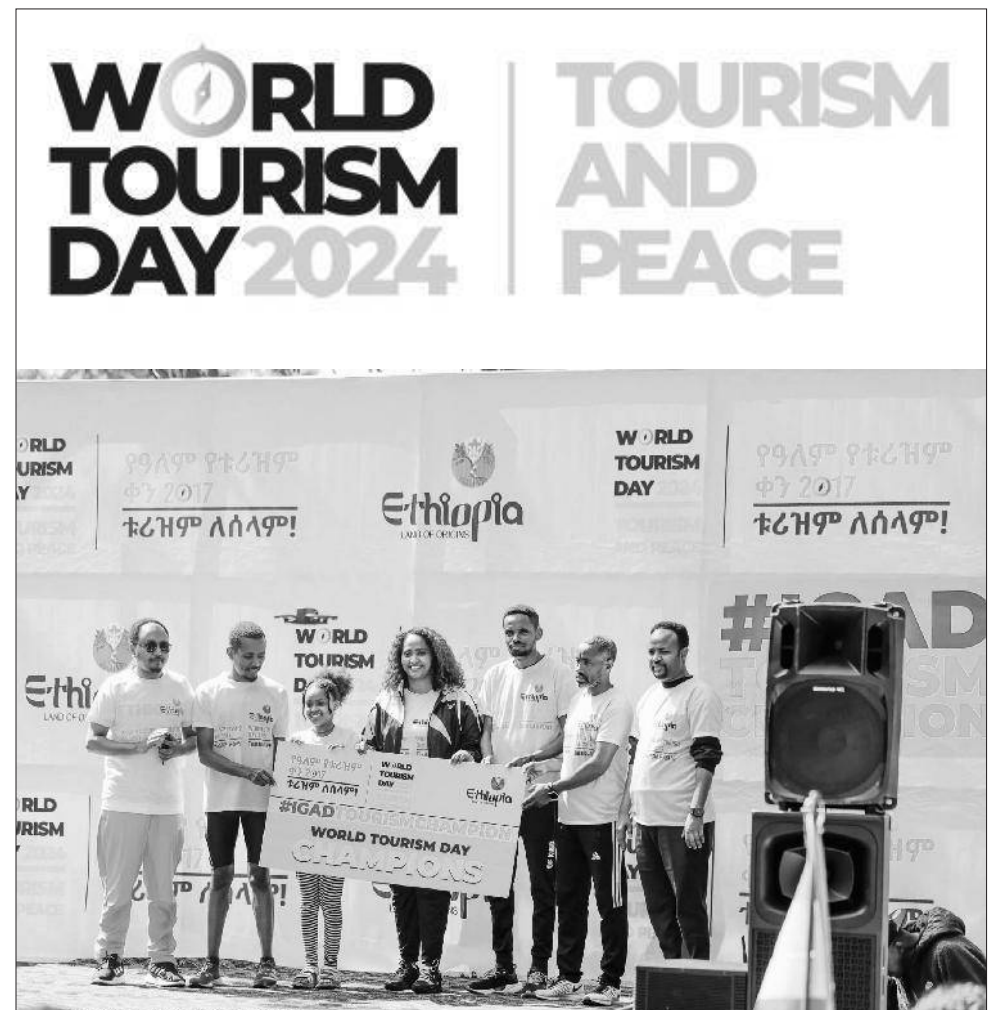
Noting a platform “One-stop Service” being developed, the Minister indicated that it will be implemented soon to provide all types of services.

During the past six years, the government has embarked on the development of new tourist destinations in various parts of the country including Addis Ababa through “Dine for Nation” by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

She added that Ethiopia’s recently launched Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) can be utilized as an instrument that measures the generation of tourism economic data (such as the direct contribution of tourism to GDP) that is comparable with other economic statistics among others.

Recalling that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has been named the new Tourism Champion of IGAD for a three-year term, Amb. Nasise said that this will be instrumental in bringing about economic growth among member states and conserving our heritages and environmental protection.

True, peace is the foundation of everything; and in the same way, Peace and tourism are



the two sides of the same coin. If there is no peace, promoting sustainable tourism and getting better income from the sector is unthinkable. It is only when there is peace that tourism can be realized and the country can yield substantial benefits from the sector. That is why governments, organizations, peace promoters, religious leaders as well as individual citizens often talk about the importance peace; and preach and teach in every occasions and available platforms.

In connection with the recently marked festival, *Meskel*, (Finding of the True Cross), the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahdo Church Patriarch His Holiness Abune Mathias underscored the need to ensuring sustainable peace and urged the faithful and other fellow Ethiopians to contribute their share in the efforts of maintaining unity and ensuring long-lasting peace in Ethiopia.

Speaking at the occasion, His Holiness Abune Mathias urged the faithful to promote coexistence and tolerance with a view to maintaining unity and upholding sustainable peace across the country.

“Currently, the world has been witnessing various challenges such as humanitarian crises, conflicts, various threats, tensions, and others.” He called on faithful to ensure peaceful co-existence, ensure unity, and maintain long-lasting peace across the country overcoming existing crises.

“Relentless efforts are needed to practice forgiveness and to spread love in order to overcome the ongoing devastating challenges in the country.”

As to him, the *Meskel* brings salvation and an occasion where peace, love, and unity are always preached. The teachings of the

cross and observe the *Meskel* holiday are an exemplification of love in harmony and solidarity. Living in peace, love, understanding, unity, and forgiveness are the symbols of the Holy Cross.

Moreover, the World Committee on Tourism Ethics (WCTE) also welcomes the decision of the World Tourism Organization (UN Tourism) to designate “Tourism and Peace” as the theme for World Tourism Day 2024. The theme is particularly timely in light of the current global climate of conflict and division.

Recognizing tourism’s significant influence in fostering cross-cultural understanding as a foundation for peace and sustainable development, the Committee reaffirms the vital role of tourism as a catalyst for peace, mutual understanding, and friendship among people worldwide.

Acknowledging the statement of the United Nations Secretary-General “building peace is a conscious, bold and even radical act.” and guided by article 1 of the UN Tourism Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, the Committee calls for all efforts to support peace negotiations in conflict-affected destinations, adhering to the fundamental principles of the United Nations Charter.

The World Committee on Tourism Ethics interprets, implements, and evaluates the provisions of the UN Tourism Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, promotes its ethical principles, and monitors their practical application by the private sector including the right to Tourism.

Tourism should always serve as a reminder of the importance of dialogue, peace, tolerance, and mutually beneficial interactions between people and countries.

Review of ECA Study to Shed Light on Closing Malawi's Land Administration Gaps

Lilongwe, Malawi, 4th October 2024 (ECA) - Land governance stakeholders have convened in Lilongwe, Malawi to review an assessment study of the gaps in land administration institutions, capacity and training needs. Organized by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the workshop aims to facilitate a collaborative discussion on challenges and gaps or inadequacies in the policy, legal and institutional frameworks governing women's land tenure security, and gender-responsive land governance.

The validation of the study will be followed by a high-level Policy Dialogue aimed at creating a multi-stakeholder platform to deliberate on women's land tenure security, and gender-responsive land governance and look into policy and legal issues affecting women's land rights and tenure security. It will also be an opportunity to secure necessary input into a policy brief that clearly shows the government's pathways towards implementing gender-responsive land governance and also draft a strategy, action plan and roadmap to ensure that women's land rights issues are addressed.

The workshop is taking place against the backdrop of commitments by the Government of Malawi to implement the AU Declaration on Land Issues and Challenges in Africa. This aligns with the AU Declaration on land, which calls on the AU Member States to review their land sectors and develop comprehensive policies to meet Member States' specific land needs. The review of the land sector includes mainstreaming gender in the development and implementation of national land policies that promote economic growth and preserve the livelihoods of African communities, as this is considered key to land policy growth for nation-states and the continent.

Between 2016 and 2018, Malawi was part of a six-country project examining opportunities to mainstream land governance issues in the agricultural National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP). One key recommendation of the study was to Empower Women and Vulnerable Groups in Agriculture to promote equitable agricultural investments including through programmes to allocate land and secure rights to land for women. Since then, Malawi has made great

progress in enacting laws to support land governance including women's rights to land. To show its continuous political will, Malawi made a request for technical assistance to ECA in 2019 through the Ministry of Lands, Urban Housing and Development. ECA responded by supporting Malawi in a project on Strengthening Women's Land Tenure Security and Entrepreneurship, with training of gender and land stakeholders conducted in December 2020.

With the outbreak of the COVID-19, Malawi -like many other countries - faces challenges of ensuring food security, particularly the availability of agricultural inputs to meet its demand in view of supply chain disruptions that emanated from COVID-19 related restrictions. Because of pre-existing gender inequalities, deep-rooted discrimination and feminized poverty, the multifaceted consequences of the COVID crisis impacted women more than men, while at the same time placing increased responsibilities on women's shoulders. In such an unprecedented and difficult context, ECA secured funding to continue supporting Malawi under the project

Gender-responsive Land Governance in Africa as a Pathway for Enhancing Women's Resilience in the Context of COVID-19. Under this project, the assessment study and policy dialogue are being undertaken.

The workshop has assembled a diverse group of stakeholders from the Ministries of Lands, Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Agriculture, Gender, Local Government, Parliamentarians; Representatives of parliamentary committees on agriculture; and legal practitioners. Others include representatives of farmer organizations, UN agencies such as FAO, UN Women, UN-Habitat, UN resident coordinator, OXFAM, Landnet, National Land Coalition, Centre for Environmental Policy and Advocacy (CEPA) and NGOs working on land and women. Gender advisory committee representatives, gender and human rights technical working groups and Representative of the women's caucus committee and the Land Justice Consortium will also be present, as well as representatives from academia (LUANAR, University of Malawi) and research institutes (such as Mwapata).

Source: UNECA

Verbatim and Caption

Irreechaa: symbol of unity, solidarity

Irreechaa, the Oromo people Thanksgiving Day is an annually celebrated festival where millions of people gather at Hora Finfine in Addis Ababa and Hora Arsede in Bishoftu. This year's *Irreechaa* festival is set to be celebrated on October 5, in Addis Ababa and October 6, in Bishoftu.



Irreechaa rooted in Gadaa system: *Hailu Adugna*

Irreechaa, a Thanksgiving festival of the Oromo people, rooted in the Gadaa system, maintains national unity, reconciliation and solidarity. Irreechaa is celebrated based on the key aspects of the Gadaa systems of national unity, reconciliation and solidarity.

This year's Irreechaa festival will be celebrated with a colorful ceremony on Saturday, October 5 and Sunday, October 06, 2024 at Hora Finfine in Addis Ababa, followed by Hora Arsede in Bishoftu city.

Hailu Adugna, Head of Oromia Communication Bureau



Irreechaa preaches peace, harmony: *Abba Gadaa Abdurazak*

Irreechaa brings together people to thank the Creator for guiding them through the challenging winter months. The people seek forgiveness with pure hearts, embracing the spirit of renewal and gratitude that Irreechaa embodies during the festival.

Irreechaa is a festival where peace is preached so that the year will be one of peace, love, success and prosperity. It promotes reconciliation and living in harmony.

Abba Gadaa Abdurazaq Ahmed, Secretary of Oromo Abba Gadaa Union

Irreechaa fosters social cohesion and unity: *Hirtu Kassaw*

Irreechaa, a significant cultural event for the Oromo people is one of Ethiopia's largest outdoor celebrations, marks the end of the rainy season and the beginning of the harvest. Irreechaa is a prominent occasion that not only showcases Ethiopia's rich cultural heritage but also contributes to the growth of local tourism, further positioning Addis Ababa as a major tourist destination

Addis Ababa is fully prepared to host Irreechaa.

Irreechaa fosters social cohesion and unity among the Oromo people and beyond, serving as a cultural platform to express values of thanksgiving, forgiveness, peace, and love. The festival also has an economic dimension, connecting communities and promoting local businesses.

Hirut Kassaw (PhD), Addis Ababa Culture, Art, and Tourism Bureau head



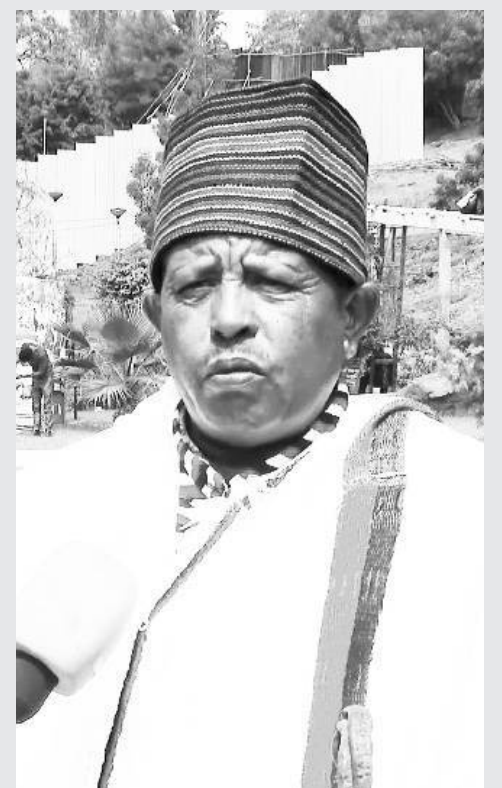
Irreechaa promotes social peace and stability: *Abba Gadaa Dechasa*

Irreechaa is a festival that reflects the unity and beauty of nations, nationalities, and peoples.

One of the key aspects that make Irreechaa a festival of peace is its ability to foster reconciliation among those in conflict, instilling love to prevail among humanity. The festival has significant contribution to promote peace and stability within society.

This festival represents humanity's submission to the natural laws that govern the relationship between individuals, their Creator, and the world around them.

Abba Gadaa Dechasa Wedajo



Irreechaa preaches peace, brotherhood, forgiveness: ***Oromia Tourism head***

Irreechaa is a festival of unity, love and togetherness. It is a festival to thank the Creator for the peaceful end of the winter season and beginning of sunny season. Irreechaa festival promotes values of gratitude, solidarity, love, peace, unity, brotherhood and forgiveness.

Reconciliation and forgiveness are the core values of Irreechaa festival. During the Irreechaa festival, friends, family, and relatives come together to celebrate with joy, strengthening social bonds. Preaching political agenda and support/opposition of any political party on the festival is totally forbidden.

Jamila Simbiru, head of Oromia Culture and Tourism Bureau