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Irrigation reforms: Building block of commercial farming, food sovereignty

BY YESUF ENDRIS

ADDIS ABABA – Ethiopia’s growing focus on irrigation development, backed by

legal and structural reforms, is becoming instrumental in promoting commercial agriculture and addressing food insecurity. The establishment of the Ministry of Irrigation marks a critical step in the

government’s strategy to enhance agricultural productivity, achieve food sovereignty, and position agriculture as a pillar of economic growth.

See Irrigation reforms:... page 3

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Nation’s livestock exports thrive amid macroeconomic reforms

• Over 109,000 livestock exported in quarter

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA-Ethiopia’s live animal export volume has seen significant progress following recent

See Nation’s livestock ... page 3

Photo: Engineer Habtamu Tegene



Ethiopia envisages exploiting NDB to step up dev’t

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA – Ethiopia has aspired to utilize the financial opportunities that the BRICS’ New Development Bank (NDB) offers to developing countries, Mines Minister, Engineer Habtamu Tegene expressed.

The Minister stated that the multilateral development bank that established by the

See Ethiopia envisages ... page 3

Initiative drives 25% annual growth in import substitution

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

ADDIS ABABA--The “Let Ethiopia Produce” initiative has recorded an impressive 25% average annual growth in import substitution since its launch, contributing significantly to the country’s home-grown economic reform, according to the project office.

The initiative, aimed at enhancing competitiveness, promoting import substitution, and boosting exports, has also addressed critical challenges in inputs, financing, infrastructure, and power supply. Over the past fiscal year, 247 new manufacturing projects benefited from improved power access, and 1,119 new investments were attracted to the country-of which 220 were foreign direct investments (FDI).

The manufacturing sector has grown by an average of 10% annually, creating 236,000 permanent jobs. However, the Project Office Head Ayana Zewde (PhD) noted that this figure falls short of the targets set

See Initiative drives ... page 3



News



Yonas Adaye(PhD)

ENDC commences agenda gathering in South Ethiopia

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

ADDIS ABABA- Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission (ENDC) has started collecting agenda in Wolita Sodo, South Ethiopia State.

Officially launching the consultation phase, ENDC Commissioner Yonas Adaye(PhD), mentioned that despite its long-cherished culture and values, the nation is facing challenge in settling ideological differences peacefully.

Thus, National Dialogue consultation phase is being held to identify the major differences so as to reach to national consensus, he stressed.

The commission has so far undertaken agenda gathering consultation and participant identification in seven states and two city administrations. He noted that the agenda gathering consultation in South Ethiopia is expected to last for six consecutive days while selecting participants that would take part in the main National Dialogue council.

Political parties, religious institutions, CSOs, public figures, influencers, representatives of the community that assigned from 96 districts of 12 zones are expected to take part in the agenda gathering consultation phase in the state.

Commissioner Yonas has urged the active participation of the participants for the success of the agenda gathering consultation phase.

Ethiopia underscores fair financing for developing nations

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA- Ethiopia underlined the need for ensuring equitable funding for Ethiopia and other developing nations through the international community cooperation.

This was noted while the annual meeting of the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund(IMF), as well as the meeting of Ministers of the G-7 African were taken place in Washington DC recently.

Finance Minister Ahmed Shide emphasized that the international community should work cooperatively to make available fair financing for Ethiopia and other developing countries.

During the course of the meeting, Ahmed stated that the importance of concessional financing to Ethiopia and other developing countries in a bid to meeting the growing needs of these economies.

He added that Ethiopia and other developing countries are in need of continuous international cooperation to benefit with extended and low interest financing to meet growing financial needs.

The meeting discussed African financial challenges that need urgent solutions, including the growing debt stock, the importance of enhancing pharmaceutical manufacturing capacity, and green development, it was learnt.

The participants agreed that the international community should strengthen its cooperation in order to ensure the sustainable and reliable development



of African countries, including the accumulation of resources such as self-led economic reform and investment plans, including raising resources independently.

Ahmed thanked the Italian Finance Minister for the invitation and briefed the participants on the ambitious pro-poor economic reform program Ethiopia is implementing under the leadership of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD), which is designed to modernize the economy and rebalance the sources of growth by shifting away from public towards private sector-

led economy.

The Roundtable meeting was held in the presence of Finance Ministers and representatives from Benin, Egypt, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mauritania, and Zambia, Finance Ministers of the G7, representatives of last, current and next Presidency of the G20 (India, Brazil, South Africa), as well as the African Development Bank President Akinwumi A. Adesina(PhD), the IMF Managing Director, Kristalina Georgieva, and the World Bank President Ajay Banga.

FTVTI aims for excellence

• *Employs new courses, global insights to shape workforce*

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA-The Federal Technical and Vocational Training Institute (FTVTI) has unveiled its plan to become a center of excellence by delivering quality services and enhancing organizational effectiveness.

FTVTI Director General Biruk Kedir (PhD) told the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA) that the institute is focused on providing high-quality training, conducting problem-solving research, and promoting technology-driven development through experimental approaches. These initiatives aim to position FTVTI as a premier center of excellence in technical and vocational education.

Ethiopia's technical and vocational

education and training (TVET) institutes have the capacity to enroll 500,000 trainees nationwide, with FTVTI alone capable of accommodating 10,000 students, including participants from its satellite institutes, Biruk indicated.

The director general further noted that the preparation and revision of training programs have been finalized to assess the performance and industry relevance of graduates.

"FTVTI currently offers 21 courses at Level VI and 19 courses at Level VII. We are also preparing to introduce new programs, including biomedical technology, aviation, maritime, mining, and railway engineering. Promotional efforts will be made to encourage citizens to pursue these trainings," he remarked.

The institute plans to launch fashion

technology courses at Level VI this fiscal year, with Level VII courses to follow. Additionally, short-term programs such as artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics will soon be incorporated into the regular curriculum, Biruk added.

He highlighted that Ethiopia is enhancing its TVET sector by learning from leading countries such as China, Germany, Finland, and Singapore, which have achieved significant economic growth by prioritizing technical and vocational training.

"By blending these international experiences with homegrown skills and knowledge, Ethiopia will be able to achieve rapid development, and FTVTI will realize its vision of institutional excellence in the coming years," the director general concluded.

News

Nation's livestock...

macroeconomic reforms, the Ethiopian Agricultural Authority (EAA) revealed.

Speaking to the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), EAA Animal Drug Regulatory Lead Executive Officer Solomon Kebede (PhD) stated that the reforms have been a turning point for the development of the livestock sector.

He explained that the authority has been actively monitoring the sector and providing support to animal husbandry farms through vaccine distribution and fodder supplies. Additionally, the EAA has extended incentives to local manufacturers, encouraging them to produce high-quality and effective veterinary medicine.

However, Solomon noted that many farms continue to struggle due to the lack of sufficient cold chain storage facilities across the country.

While poultry production shows notable progress, other sectors like dairy, aquaculture, and apiculture are still at a nascent stage.

The Animal Products and Input Quality Control Center, located in the Kality area, has been conducting laboratory tests for the past decade. "The center has expanded its testing capabilities and is now 93% complete in accrediting 13 tests, aiming to foster third-party trust," Solomon added.

Leveraging vaccines from the African



Union Pan African Veterinary Vaccine Centre (AU-PANVAC) regional lab, the center ensures the quality of animal feed and products such as eggs, milk, honey, meat, and more.

On the regulatory front, the Animal Quarantine Inspection and Certification Desk Head, Asayegn Bekele (PhD), reported that the government has taken bold measures to combat illegal livestock trade. Multiple checkpoints and inspection channels have been established over the past few years to curb smuggling activities.

Despite these efforts, challenges persist as discrepancies in currency exchange rates and cumbersome bureaucracy have driven illegal exports, negatively affecting official trade. "Livestock continues to be smuggled annually to neighboring countries, undermining the formal export

system," Asayegn said.

Looking ahead, Ethiopia aims to export 390,000 livestock products in the current fiscal year, with 109,038 already exported in the first quarter, surpassing initial targets. Last year, the country exported approximately 257,000 livestock.

"Saudi Arabia, Oman, Yemen, and Bahrain remain the primary destinations for Ethiopia's livestock exports," Asayegn added, underscoring the sector's strategic importance.

Ethiopia's livestock export sector is crucial to the economy, supported by one of Africa's largest livestock populations, including cattle, sheep, goats, and camels. The country ranks among the leading exporters of live animals, hides, and leather products, primarily to the Middle East.

Ethiopia envisages...

founding members of the BRICS bloc is a great financial opportunity for Ethiopia to hasten its development projects.

Speaking to local media, Eng. Habtamu said that Ethiopia, as a developing nation and member of the BRICS group, has to exploit the NDB as a financial source to effectively execute its development programs.

Eng. Habtamu, who gave the aforementioned explanation about the Ethiopian delegation's stay at the 16th BRICS Summit held in Kazan, Russia, pointed out that BRICS is a bloc that influences the world due to its population and economic potential.

According to him, Ethiopia is working with members of the group in various fields. Therefore, the BRICS' New Development Bank, which is financing infrastructure development of the countries attended the conference, will create a great financial opportunity for Ethiopia.

He also stated that Ethiopia's delegation has discussed with the business institutions in Russia where investors expressed keenness to invest their capital in Ethiopia in various investment sectors. Besides, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed used the conference as opportunity to convey Ethiopia's stance on BRICS and held sideline meetings with other leaders.

It is to be recalled that the purpose of the new development bank is mobilizing resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in emerging markets and developing countries. NDB was established in 2015 by Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa

Initiative drives...

in Ethiopia's Ten-Year Development Plan. Structural issues such as limited financing, inadequate infrastructure, skill shortages, and service delivery challenges initially prompted the launch of the initiative to enhance the manufacturing sector's contribution to the national economy.

"This initiative focuses on overcoming structural bottlenecks through better coordination, strong monitoring, and evaluation systems," Ayana explained. He emphasized that the program goes beyond boosting productivity by engaging key stakeholders and driving improvements in quality, exports, and import substitution.

Aligned with Ethiopia's Home-Grown Economic Reform agenda, macroeconomic adjustments, and the Ten-Year Development Plan, the initiative also aims to facilitate technology and knowledge transfer to support sustainable industrial growth. Officials believe that the "Let Ethiopia Produce" initiative will play a pivotal role in accelerating economic development and strengthening Ethiopia's position in both local and global market.

The 'Let Ethiopia Produce' initiative is a government-led program aimed at promoting industrialization and economic development in the country. It encourages domestic production of goods and services, reduces reliance on imports, and promotes exports.

Irrigation reforms:...

Over the past few years, the government has initiated more than 12 national irrigation projects, including high-priority sites in Oromia, Amhara, and Sidama states-Taba, Balchut, and Gidabo. These projects, part of the Productivity Enhancement Support for Integrated Agro-Industrial Parks and Youth Employment (PESAPYE) program, aim to irrigate 12,607 hectares of land, benefiting over 30,000 people.

"The projects will not only boost food production but also create jobs, providing opportunities for 3,000 graduates and 20,000 semi-skilled workers," said Abraham Belay (PhD), Minister of Irrigation and Lowlands. He added that the establishment of 250 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) linked to these projects will further stimulate economic activity. Additionally, approximately 100,000 hectares of river basins will be reforested, promoting environmental sustainability alongside agricultural development.

The irrigation projects also serve to strengthen Ethiopia's agro-industrial sector, which relies on a steady supply of agricultural inputs. "By connecting irrigation infrastructure with agro-industrial parks, Ethiopia is transitioning

to a commercial agricultural model that supports value-added industries," Abraham noted. This shift aims to replace subsistence farming with modern, technology-driven practices, making agriculture more sustainable and profitable.

Agriculture Minister Girma Amentie (PhD) emphasized that the adoption of modern irrigation technology and precision farming techniques will allow farmers to cultivate larger areas efficiently.

"A farmer managing 50 hectares with advanced irrigation tools is no longer a small-scale operator but part of a medium-sized enterprise, contributing to a competitive and self-sufficient agricultural economy," Girma remarked.

The ambitious irrigation agenda has attracted substantial international support, with financial backing from the African Development Bank and the World Bank for projects in Taba, Balchut, and Gidabo. However, challenges remain. Finance State Minister Semereta Sewasew highlighted that, while the government is heavily investing in these projects, financing constraints require careful budget management to ensure their completion.

Amhara State Deputy Chief Administrator, Abdu Hussein (PhD), acknowledged additional challenges, such as extended project timelines, cost overruns, and security concerns that have slowed resource mobilization. Moreover, youth involvement in managing irrigation enterprises has been limited due to organizational and training gaps.

Despite these obstacles, officials are optimistic about the future. Abraham expressed confidence that the ongoing initiatives, supported by international partners and local resources, will transform Ethiopia's agricultural sector in the long term. The government is prioritizing skilled labor development, technology integration, and collaboration between financial institutions and farmers to build a sustainable agricultural economy.

In the long run, these irrigation projects are expected to play a crucial role in achieving Ethiopia's food sovereignty goals. By expanding irrigation capacity and supporting agro-industrial development, Ethiopia is laying the foundation for a resilient, commercially viable agricultural system capable of meeting its food security needs and driving economic growth.

Opinion

From rapacious driven exclusive rights to inclusive growth

BY ADDISALEM MULAT

There is no time like the present for downstream nations to join the Nile Basin and implement a more yielding and step by step approach to manage resources for collective actions.

The pact's official endorsement marks a defining moment and a crucial juncture which is prone to end years of pointless debate and explaining the fact that collaboration is crucial to guiding a trajectory of collaborative success.

Downstream nations more often than not have been making the most of the colonial era agreement and bewildering the wider international community with their usual bogus news stories. In actual fact, within the context of heightening menace, joining the Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) plays a paramount role in guaranteeing equitable and reasonable utilization cooperation.

It appears clear that if CFA is put properly in place without doubt will serve as a stepping stone to a more environment friendly and collaborative destiny in which all nations have a share in the rational management of the river and shared resources. On the heels of the colonial-era treaties that granted Egypt and Sudan the exclusive ownership and priority over the shared resources, Ethiopia for years have been one of the victims of the pact.

Speaking to the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA), Adama Science and Technology University's Water Resource Engineering Professor, Mekonnen Ayana, recently stated that false allegations against Ethiopia and other upstream nations will diminish with the CFA's implementation. He emphasized that the CFA is a multilateral agreement designed to ensure equitable use of the Nile's water rather than granting supremacy to any single nation.

"Beyond promoting equity, the agreement plays a critical role in preserving water resources and fostering mutual benefits through joint projects, which will enhance cooperation among riparian nations," he explained. With the CFA in place, Ethiopia, often the target of unfounded accusations will be better equipped to defend itself.

The CFA's entry into force follows years of negotiations among Nile Basin countries. Prof. Mekonnen highlighted that the principles adopted in the final framework will be vital in resolving disputes. He pointed out that the colonial-era agreements that favored downstream nations have been legally invalidated by the new principles agreed upon by the majority of riparian states.

The significance of the CFA extends beyond legal considerations. There are over 276 trans-boundary rivers in the world that experience far fewer conflicts than the Nile. Frameworks like the CFA are essential



Nile Basin Commission will usher new era of collaboration among riparian countries - FBC

for fostering harmonious relations among countries.

It is quite clear that CFA offers a cornerstone for Nile Basin nations to collaborate and capitalize on the shared water resources unremittably. There is no doubt that getting CFA involved in tackling the mounting water challenges and ensuring the protection of their people, is vital for inclusive growth and taking the region to new frontiers.

As things stand now, the need for nations to collaborate, resolve differences through dialogue complying with the creeds documented in the CFA should be paid particular attention. In point of fact, truthful cooperation and comprehension of community of interest pave without doubt the way for ensuring difference of opinion through the agreement.

The Nile Basin nations should bend over backwards to successfully put into effect the CFA with the purpose of addressing widespread quandaries and assisting the entire people of the region.

It becomes apparent that the Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA) sketches values, entitlements and obligations for cooperative management and inception of the Nile Basin water resources.

Rather than quantifying 'equitable rights' or water use allocations, the Treaty intends to establish a framework to "promote integrated management, sustainable development, and harmonious utilization of the water resources of the Basin, as well as their conservation and protection for the benefit of present and future generations". For this purpose, the Treaty envisages the establishment of a permanent institutional mechanism, the Nile River Basin Commission (NRBC), according to source.

It went on to say the Commission would serve to promote and facilitate the implementation of the CFA and facilitate cooperation among the Nile Basin States in the conservation, management and development of the Nile River Basin and its waters.

CFA unambiguously disclaims colonial-era agreements that have been exclusively using the Nile River at the sacrifice of other

nations for the most part Ethiopia, which makes a contribution to the overwhelming majority of the Abbay River's water flow.

The CFA entry into force would be a foundation to determine equitable utilization of the Nile Basin and foster member countries shared future, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA).

In its social media page, the ministry stated that the principles enshrined in the CFA would manage to fix obsolete evil ideologies, comprehend equitable and rational utilization and foster mutual understanding and shared responsibility.

The Ministry has also highlighted that this remarkable achievement, which has been in the making for over a decade, is a testament of member state's dedication, perseverance, and collaborative spirit.

Ethiopia is confident that the entry into force of this agreement will yield significant benefits for the basin states and contribute to a more prosperous and sustainable future.

In addition to promoting equitable and sustainable management of the Nile River's resources among all riparian countries, the agreement would be a spring board towards enhancing collaboration on water sharing, energy production, and environmental protection.

Instead of sparing no effort to blemish the promising moves of Ethiopia, the country's foes should join the CFA and work for common growth and harmony. Failing to do that will not help foster regional integration and growth together no matter what the cost may be.

As the newly implemented CFA plays a paramount role in taking the region to new heights by bringing all pertinent nations to the forefront utilizing the Nile River, they should work in close collaboration more than ever before.

Despite the fact that Ethiopia is the dominant source of the Nile River, its adversaries every so often have been exploiting the river exclusively giving the cold shoulder to the country.

To everyone's dismay when Ethiopia laid the cornerstone for the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

(GERD), Egypt embarked on coming up with layers of conspiracies to halt its construction. However, through the commitment and hard work of the people of Ethiopia and the federal government, the Dam is going to be fully operational at some time in the future.

Though the voyage of the Dam has not been as easy as falling off a log, Ethiopia in the fullness of time ended up accomplishing its intended target. The whole thing on the subject of the construction of the Dam was not low-hanging fruit.

The implementation of the CFA ensures an equitable share of the Nile River water among the Nile basin countries, Feki Ahmed Negash, a researcher in water resource development said.

The Nile Basin Commission which will be established among Nile Basin States will serve as important institution for using, developing, protecting, conserving and managing the river basin and its waters. The CFA opened for signatures on May 14, 2010 and Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi and South Sudan have ratified. Following these ratifications by 6 Nile riparian countries, officially the CFA entered into force on October 13, 2024.

Feki Ahmed Negash told ENA that the agreement ensures to maintain equitable share of waters and benefits by nullifying the colonial treaties. The colonial agreement had made the major water contributors countries a spectator while unjustly benefited the non-contributors for years, he added.

Hence, the CFA ascertains the fair and equitable benefit of the Nile basin countries on legal basis, he pointed out. Feki Ahmed Negash added that any issues related to sharing of the Nile River waters among the upper and down-stream countries will be resolved through the CFA.

The water researcher emphasized that entering into force of the CFA is a milestone for the Nile Basin countries towards mutual cooperation. This will lead for the countries to mutually cooperate on sharing technological advancement, human power and water utilization.

The pact is as a noteworthy achievement for all upstream countries to stand up for justice and greater equality of opportunity to water resources giving a wide berth to Ethiopia, the main contributor of the Nile River, devoid of balanced utilization rights.

Embodying the CFA as the pillar of justifiable sustainable water resources marks a noteworthy divergence away from previously exhibited traits. Following the implementation of the agreement, Ethiopia and other upstream nations can cooperate with each other successfully on water utilization and plans for the development.

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

Editorial

Opinion

Multiples of gains out of Ethiopia, G7 partnership

Apart from working hard to register remarkable socio-economic records, Ethiopia has been undertaking a range of activities to well cement bilateral, trilateral as well as multilateral ties with a number of regional, continental and even international organizations.

The country's partnership with G7 is a case in point. The G7 is a casual bloc of industrialized democracies, the United States, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United Kingdom (UK), which convenes annually to discuss issues such as global economic governance, international security, among others.

The G7 countries make up around ten per cent of the world's population and generate about 45 per cent of global gross domestic product. Hence, Ethiopia's step to reinvigorate partnership with G7 is vital.

G7 Finance Ministers keeping a determined interval convene and discuss country-specific solutions to debt service and liquidity challenges and updates on initiatives for development revolving around various sectors, help boost green infrastructure, resilient and inclusive supply chain enhancement in Africa. Ethiopia is not exceptional in this regard.

The historic and bold economic reform program Ethiopia is implementing, which is designed to address macroeconomic challenges and rebalance the sources of growth by shifting away from public towards private sector-led investment, has been bearing fruits as the country has principally focused on promoting reliable development thereby declaring economic sovereignty. To make such a remarkable trajectory, the G7 is expected to support this rapidly growing and dedicated for change state. The reform has been rolled out to improve domestic resource mobilizations, rationalize public expenditure, and enforce fiscal discipline to ensure financial sustainability, floating exchange rate regime to correct distortions in the external balance of the economy, institutional reforms to improve productivity, generate decent jobs and accelerate economic growth.

Such a remarkable move has to be supported by either G7 or any other development partners since Ethiopia's commitment to sustainable growth and aspiration for the importance of continued international cooperation has attracted the G7 countries for further financing to the country. Hence, they need to attach due emphasis to the relentless effort of Ethiopia.

The support from G7 following a firm partnership Ethiopia has set up is of paramount importance in addressing the pressing financial challenges faced by the nation, including debt easing, enhancing green infrastructure development. This bold move would also help step up its support for country-owned reforms and investment plans, including domestic resource mobilization, which will progressively allow the nation to increase its fiscal space and support long-term development.

The countries also encourage Ethiopia to undertake activities under the framework of the African Union and through bilateral contacts, in accordance with international law and the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity as enshrined in the UN Charter.

Yes, the G7 countries encouraged lasting developments in the protection of human rights, protection of civilians, political dialogue to resolve tensions, reconciliation and national dialogue, transitional justice, and accountability for crimes committed. That is why their heads of state and governments most of the time discuss key global policy issues, exchange views and work together to develop constructive solutions.

The G-7 leaders are working to promote effective implementation of socio-economic programs and enhance investment coordination with partners like Ethiopia. As the G7 has focused on a range of issues such as food security, economic progress which in one way or another affect Ethiopian societies in particular, they are heartily supporting developing nations.

In a nutshell, as the fastest growing nation in Africa and which is fond of entertaining color blind diplomacy, Ethiopia needs to be supported via continuing finance provision thereby easing debt, boosting green economy initiative, reinvigorating green infrastructure which in turn helps foster reliable progress and development and dependable economic independence.

AI: A viable tool for Ethiopia's socio-economic development

BY SOLOMON DIBABA

By developing AI policy on June 2024, Ethiopia has realized that Artificial Intelligence (AI) holds significant potential for Ethiopia's socio-economic development, helping to address challenges in diverse sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, education and economic growth. AI is an important tool for accelerating Ethiopia's wholesome development particularly in the following sectors.

Agriculture is the backbone of Ethiopia's economy and AI technologies can improve productivity and resilience. Through precision agriculture—using AI to analyze data on weather, soil quality, and crop health—farmers can optimize yields and reduce resource use. This technology can also help predict crop diseases and climate events, improving food security and supporting exports.

AI-powered automation can increase efficiency in Ethiopia's manufacturing sector by reducing costs and improving productivity, helping the country compete in regional and global markets. AI can enhance supply chain management, quality control, and predictive maintenance of machinery, which boosts productivity and lowers operational costs.

AI has the potential to transform Ethiopia's financial sector by improving access to financial services for underserved populations. AI-driven credit scoring systems can evaluate creditworthiness more accurately by analyzing unconventional data, allowing banks to serve unbanked communities. Additionally, AI can assist in fraud detection, streamline operations, and enable mobile banking, essential for a largely rural population.

As Ethiopia seeks to create a skilled workforce, AI-based educational tools can provide personalized learning experiences and bridge skill gaps. Adaptive learning platforms can enhance education by tailoring content to individual learning styles, enabling students and workers to gain relevant skills in fields such as software engineering, manufacturing, and data science, which are essential in a tech-driven economy.

Rapid urbanization in Ethiopia demands efficient urban planning. AI can support smart city initiatives by optimizing infrastructure like traffic management, energy distribution, and waste management. AI-based analytics for urban planning can help Ethiopian cities grow sustainably, improving the quality of life and supporting environmental conservation.

Ethiopia is highly susceptible to climate-related challenges such as droughts and floods. AI can help monitor environmental changes, predict disasters, and manage resources, which is essential for a largely agrarian society. Through environmental data analysis and predictive modeling, AI can contribute to water resource management, land use optimization, and biodiversity conservation.

AI-powered tools can expand access to healthcare in underserved areas through

telemedicine and diagnostic support. AI can help bridge gaps in the healthcare sector by enabling early disease detection, improving diagnostics, and assisting healthcare providers with remote services, critical for Ethiopia's large rural population. Improved health outcomes positively impact the workforce and overall economic productivity.

A robust AI ecosystem can attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and foster local tech startups. As Ethiopia expands its tech sector, AI can enable new business models, attract skilled labor, and foster innovation, making the country more competitive in the regional and global economy.

As stated earlier, the country relies heavily on agriculture, with the sector contributing to nearly a third of the GDP and employing around 80 % of the population. AI can improve this sector by facilitating precision agriculture—analyzing soil data, predicting weather patterns, and managing water resources to enhance crop yields. AI-powered drones, sensors, and data analytics can help optimize resource use, leading to improved food security and resilience against climate variability, a critical issue for Ethiopia.

According to the EAI, access to healthcare in Ethiopia, especially in rural areas, remains a challenge. AI has the potential to enhance diagnostic capabilities, reduce patient wait times, and expand access through telemedicine. AI-driven healthcare applications can assist in diagnosing diseases, predicting outbreaks, and even training healthcare workers in remote areas. This is especially useful in combating endemic diseases like malaria and helping manage healthcare in underserved regions.

Ethiopia has a large youth population, making education and skills development crucial for economic growth. AI can provide personalized learning experiences for students, identify skill gaps, and help educators design curricula that better prepare students for the workforce. For example, AI-powered tutoring systems and adaptive learning platforms can assist students in rural and urban areas, bridging the digital divide.

AI can boost Ethiopia's economic efficiency and productivity. For instance, AI-driven predictive analytics can optimize supply chain management, manufacturing processes, and logistics. By adopting AI technologies, Ethiopian businesses can enhance operational efficiency, reduce waste, and expand markets. Additionally, the financial sector can benefit from AI through improved credit assessment, fraud detection, and the inclusion of underbanked communities.

Ethiopia faces serious climate change impacts, from droughts to extreme weather events. AI can help analyze environmental data to predict and respond to these changes, guiding resource management, conservation efforts, and infrastructure planning.

Rapid urbanization in Ethiopia requires smart infrastructure and effective city management. AI can support smart city initiatives, optimizing traffic flow, energy use, waste management, and urban planning through AI.

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The Ethiopian Herald

Business & Economy

Boosting inflow of Foreign Direct Investment

BY ABEBE WOLDEGIORGIS

In the last two decades, the government tried its level best to reform the economy through opening the space to the private sector to play pivotal role in the nation's development endeavor. In line with this, to pull foreign investment, it introduced laws by improving the previous one which hampered private sector activities, constructed infrastructure such as roads, telephone lines, airports, piped water, energy plants and of course industrial parks.

Attracted by the new developments, foreign investors particularly from China, Turkey and India came here and invested their money, technology and skills by taking shades in the industry parks and created job opportunities for thousands. These countries, not only in trade and business, they have also good diplomatic relation with Ethiopia.

The coming to power of the current government led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) in 2018 further strengthened the endeavor. It exerted much effort to revive the economy through the introduction of home grown economic reform. As a result, according to the Ministry of Planning and Development, the economy registered a remarkable growth and over a six-fold increase in per capita GDP to about USD 6 billion in 2022. This has been accompanied by a significant poverty reduction from 44.2% 2000 to 23.5% in 2022 and improvements in access to education, health, and infrastructure.

The primary objective of the reform is to sustain the economic growth through creating an economic environment supportive of higher private investment and structural transformation. It encompasses three key pillars at the macro-financial, structural, and Sectorial levels. Macro-financial reforms aim to reduce the risks associated with public debt, lower external vulnerabilities, arrest inflation, and enhance growth, investment, and exports.

Recently, the Ethiopian Investment Commission (EIC) announced that Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow has increased by 12% during the Fiscal Year compared to the previous similar period.

According to Officials from Ethiopian Investment Commission, members from the Industrial Parks Development Corporation and other pertinent officials visited companies operating in Eastern Industry Zone.

153 companies operating in the Eastern Industry Zone were visited by various stakeholders. The visited companies include three Chinese companies which are Linde Ethiopia Garment, Huajian Aluminum and Diyan Ceramics.

Over 3,300 Chinese projects are engaging in Ethiopia in various spheres by investing more than 8.5 billion USD. Those Chinese companies have created more than 325,000 permanent and temporary jobs in addition to their contribution in import substitution, skill and technology transfer and in trade ties.

Commissioner at the Ethiopian Investment Commission, Zeleke Temesgen (PhD)



East Industrial Zone in the city of Dukem, Ethiopia [Photo by Xinhua/EIZ]

affirmed that various reform activities have been undertaken to make Ethiopia favorable for domestic and foreign direct investment.

The Commissioner said that an environment conducive for business activities has been developed to make Ethiopia a preferred destination for FDI.

In order to increase the flow of foreign direct investment, remarkable achievements have also been registered in terms of availing vital infrastructures in the industrial parks built by the federal and state governments as well as Chinese investors, he added.

The Commissioner further underscored that the recent macroeconomic reform which is being implemented by the government is playing its crucial role for the FDI inflow in the country.

Understanding its immense contribution to supporting the national economy, the country has made remarkable achievements in attracting and retaining FDI, especially in recent years.

In doing so, the country secured 3.9 billion USD in foreign direct investment in the 2023/24 concluded budget year, which jumped 14% comparing to the same period last year.

As mentioned above, the government aspired side by side with achieving economic growth, exerted its energy to transform the economy that means to transcend the economy from agriculture led to industry led one. The viable sector that accelerates economic transformation is manufacturing. Because it creates job opportunities for millions, boost export, support import substitution, link with agriculture, inspire innovation and facilitates the emerging of self-sustain private economy.

Economists agree that in the past decades, the nation achieved double digit economic growth but the growth achieved very little in transforming the economy. The rural labor migrated to the urban centers mostly engaged as daily laborer in the construction and other informal sectors. Though the flourishing of manufacturing witnessed, most of them are import dependent because they are not linked with other sector domestically.

Still around 80% of the labor force is engaged in the subsistence farming which utilizes less input resulted less output. The sector is vulnerable to climate shake and when sever condition occurs crop failure is common which again leave farmers to survive by foreign handouts. According to the Ministry of Agriculture, almost half of the farmers' plot size is less than one hectare and the growing population further fragment the land size. Hence, attaining agriculture productivity and economic growth in such a way is unrealistic.

Therefore, shifting the stranded rural labor to none farming sector such as manufacturing and service is a priority matter to transform the economy. Expanding the manufacturing sector without absorbing local and foreign investment is unthinkable. It has a great importance by transferring technologies and establishing marketing and procuring network for efficient production and sales internationally.

According to the World Bank recent report, Foreign Direct Investment affects Ethiopian economic growth positively or directly. Therefore, it can be generally viewed as an engine for domestic country economic growth. Foreign direct investment plays an important role in economic growth.

It has a great importance and viewed as an engine for domestic economic growth. During the Derg era when the command economy was the order of the day, the role of FDI on Economic growth was negligible. But after the EPRDF government came to power, the government encouraged foreign investors and as a result the share of FDI on GDP has increased. Accordingly, foreign direct investment and economic growth are positively linked.

The growth of international production is driven by economic and technological forces. It is also driven by the ongoing liberalization of FDI and trade policies. In this context, globalization offers an unprecedented opportunity for developing countries to achieve faster economic growth through trade and investment.

In 1970's, international trade grew rapidly than FDI and thus international trade was

by far greater than other international economic activities. This situation changed dramatically in the middle of 1980's when world FDI started to increase sharply. In this period, the world FDI increased its importance by transferring technologies and establishing marketing and procuring network for efficient production and sales internationally through FDI.

Foreign investors are benefited from utilizing their assets and resources efficiently, while foreign receipts are benefited from acquiring technologies and getting involved in international production and trade networks. While global FDI flows increased by 25%, from 2020 to 2022, developing countries as a group showed an increase of 22% at constant price.

FDI flows to less developing countries increased by almost 5% of GDP. However, FDI provides much needed resource to developing countries, such as capital, technology, managerial skill, entrepreneurial ability, brands and access to markets. These are essential for developing countries to industrialize, develop and create jobs-tackling the poverty situation in their countries.

FDI flows to developing countries started to pitch up in the mid 1990's largely as a result of progressive liberalization of FDI Policies in most of these countries. Then the bulk of FDI in Least Developing Countries represent 1.3% of total FDI while 30.7% goes to developing countries as whole.

In Ethiopia, the gap between domestic investment and saving has remained wide due to the low level of income and domestic savings. FDI as a source of capital and other business know how, therefore, it is essential to finance growth and development. According to World Bank, among sub Saharan African countries, Ethiopia has liberalized its economic policies the most.

None tariff barriers have been eliminated and tariffs have been reduced progressively on a wide range of commodities. The country also enhanced the role of private sector through lifting investment restrictions such as licensing and investment capital ceiling.

In the Sphere of Diplomacy

Building bridges with Asian miracles

BY STAFF REPORTER

Ethiopia has been strengthening its diplomatic and economic relations with the so-called “Asian Tiger” economies, especially Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan. These relationships are strategically important as Ethiopia seeks to accelerate its industrialization, diversify its economy, and expand its infrastructure base. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed’s visits to these countries are crucial milestones in Ethiopia’s journey toward leveraging the experiences of these high-growth economies.

The term “Asian Tigers” refers to the four high-growth economies of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan. During the latter half of the 20th century, these countries achieved remarkable economic transformations, moving from low-income to high-income status through industrialization, export-led growth, investment in human capital, and a focus on high-tech industries.

Malaysia, often considered an emerging economy similar to the Tigers, has also achieved rapid development by focusing on sectors such as manufacturing, technology, and services. By building strong state and private partnerships, Malaysia, like the Tigers, has transformed into a diversified and middle-income economy. Each of these countries has important lessons for Ethiopia as it works to achieve similar developmental milestones.

Ethiopia has embarked on Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda. The goals include moving the economy away from its dependence on agriculture, fostering industrialization, and attracting foreign investment. Asian Tigers have already trodden this path and are valuable partners for Ethiopia in this regard.

Ethiopia is looking to learn from countries like Malaysia and Singapore, which have made significant investments in technology and infrastructure. Partnerships with companies from these countries bring opportunities for technology transfer, expertise, and efficient processes.

Malaysia, Singapore, and South Korea are all sources of FDI, which Ethiopia seeks to tap into. Singapore’s expertise in urban planning and infrastructure is particularly attractive to Ethiopia, given its ongoing projects to modernize Addis Ababa and other cities. Singapore’s smart city initiatives and integrated urban systems can help Ethiopia design cities that are not only modern but also sustainable.

The Asian Tigers have been models of investment in education and workforce development, which Ethiopia is keen to emulate. South Korea and Malaysia’s focus on skills training, vocational education, and workforce adaptability are areas of potential collaboration, which can enhance Ethiopia’s labor market.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has been paying high-profile visits to these Southeast

Ethiopia’s deepening ties with the Asian Tigers underscore a strategic push toward an economic model that emphasizes industrialization, technological adoption, and sustainable urbanization

Asia to strengthen Ethiopia’s ties with these economies. These visits have led to discussions on enhancing trade, attracting investment, and fostering partnerships across various sectors.

During his previous visit to Singapore, Prime Minister Abiy engaged with business leaders, government officials, and investors to discuss Ethiopia’s economic reforms and potential as an investment destination. Singapore’s interest in Africa has been growing, and the meeting led to several memorandums of understanding (MoUs) in fields such as finance, ICT, and urban development. Ethiopia’s aim to attract Singaporean expertise for its industrial parks, particularly in areas like logistics and warehousing, was a key discussion point.

As one of the original Asian Tigers, South Korea holds valuable insights for

Ethiopia. Prime Minister Abiy’s diplomatic engagements have strengthened Ethiopia-South Korea ties, particularly in the areas of education, technology, and infrastructure. South Korea’s government-backed programs for SMEs are of particular interest to Ethiopia, which seeks to build its local business base.

The diplomatic engagements with Asian Tigers have already started showing positive outcomes, as evident by growing interest from Asian investors in Ethiopia. Agreements and MoUs in areas like ICT, finance, and urban planning signal promising future collaborations.

Ethiopia has seen a rising inflow of investments from Asian companies, particularly in industrial parks, manufacturing, and energy. Malaysia and Singapore, known for their high-quality standards, are particularly interested in joint ventures that can serve as a base for African exports.

Through collaborations with educational institutions and technology firms from these countries, Ethiopia has enhanced its capacity in fields like ICT, fintech, and renewable energy. Singapore’s expertise in sustainable urban development and South Korea’s experience in digital transformation are expected to play key roles in Ethiopia’s plans.

Ethiopia’s exports, mainly agricultural goods, are finding newer markets in Asia. In turn, Ethiopia is importing technology and machinery essential for its industrialization efforts. The launch of direct flights by Ethiopian Airlines has further facilitated trade between Ethiopia and Asian countries.

Ethiopia’s deepening ties with the Asian Tigers underscore a strategic push toward an economic model that emphasizes industrialization, technological adoption, and sustainable urbanization. As Ethiopia continues to reform its economy, these partnerships can provide critical support, knowledge, and investment to help the country achieve its development aspirations. The ties with Malaysia, Singapore, and South Korea mark an important step in Ethiopia’s bid to become an African powerhouse, capable of driving growth across the continent.

Ethiopia and Malaysia are also working on strengthening trade, investment, and cooperation in sectors like education, healthcare, and manufacturing. The Prime Minister’s visit to Malaysia focused on creating mutually beneficial investment opportunities, exploring Malaysian companies’ interest in Ethiopia, and establishing direct flights to improve connectivity. Ethiopia Airlines has also considered routes that enhance business travel between these regions.

Last week, PM Abiy and his delegation visited Malaysia’s integrated economic and environmental protection activities that can also be taken as an experience for the wide-ranging environmental protection work Ethiopia is undertaking, Legese pointed out.

Malaysia carried out successful corridor development integrated with trade and tourism areas in its capital Kuala Lumpur, Legese noted, adding this will also provide lesson for the corridor development works in Ethiopian cities, reported local media.

In this regard, Abiy Ahmed and his delegation visited the corridor development activities in the Malaysian capital city allocating sufficient time, he stated.

The Premier also met with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim on ways of strengthening bilateral ties between the two countries in multiple sectors.

The two leaders have agreed to deepen collaboration between Ethiopia and Malaysia across several key areas, including in trade and investment, with particular focus on agriculture, mining, manufacturing, and renewable energy. The Premier encouraged Malaysian businesses to seize vast investments opportunities in Ethiopia’s rapidly expanding economy. Malaysia appreciates Ethiopia’s full and unequivocal support in its journey towards becoming a BRICS partner country, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Anwar said that Ethiopia, as a member of BRICS, has been an important pillar for Malaysia’s application to join the bloc, which collectively accounts for one-fifth of global trade.

Anwar noted that Ethiopia has achieved phenomenal growth over the years and has become an important partner for Malaysia on the African continent.

He highlighted some of the commendable advancements of the landlocked state, including its economy, governance, anti-corruption initiatives, quality of education and airlines.

“I believe that, in all humility, Malaysia should emulate your success, learn from your experiences, and strive to ensure that Malaysia remains a stable and peaceful country while preparing its economy,” Anwar said as quoted by Bernama.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Abiy said both countries agreed to deepen collaboration across several key areas, including agriculture, industry, mining, trade and investment.

“There are plenty of opportunities on both sides. The discussions were very fruitful in enhancing our cooperation across all sectors”

“I encourage Malaysian businesses to seize the opportunities in Ethiopia, which is a rapidly growing economy. There are many prospects available,” he said, adding that his government is committed to supporting the private sector from Malaysia. Abiy emphasized that the longstanding diplomatic ties between Ethiopia and Malaysia, which span more than half a century, need to be strengthened through visits of this kind.

He noted that the private sector, tourism and government-to-government relationships will bolster bilateral ties.

Law & Politics

Ethiopia's valid concerns behind its interest for sea outlet

BY STAFF REPORTER

Ethiopia, a landlocked country since Eritrea gained independence in 1993, has long faced challenges due to its lack of direct access to the sea. The absence of a coastline significantly impacts Ethiopia's economy, trade logistics, and political positioning. The country has relied heavily on neighboring Djibouti for port services, with over 95% of its imports and exports passing through the Port of Djibouti. Ethiopia's dependence on a single foreign port raises several valid concerns that are rooted in economic, security, and geopolitical factors.

Any political instability, natural disaster, or disagreement between Ethiopia and Djibouti could seriously affect Ethiopia's trade. The high cost of using Djibouti's ports, coupled with long delays due to congestion, adds to Ethiopia's economic strain.

Being landlocked significantly increases Ethiopia's transport costs. The distance from the main industrial centers in Addis Ababa to the port of Djibouti is over 900 km, raising the cost of goods and limiting export competitiveness. Reducing these logistical burdens is essential to Ethiopia's economic growth.

The country's reliance on a single neighboring country for sea access raises concerns about the potential for geopolitical leverage. Djibouti, despite a strong relationship with Ethiopia, holds a considerable degree of influence over Ethiopia's trade routes. Expanding access to alternative ports would reduce this dependency.

The country has shown interest in alternative ports in neighboring countries to ease the pressure on Djibouti. For example, it has pursued agreements to use ports in Eritrea, Somaliland (Berbera), and Kenya (Lamu). Diversifying trade routes is seen as a strategic goal to improve Ethiopia's regional integration and strengthen its economy.

There is a historical ambition tied to having access to its own port or sea outlet, a sentiment shared by many Ethiopians who view direct maritime access as crucial to national pride, economic independence, and security. Ethiopia has long had historical ties to the Red Sea, and regaining some form of access to it would address these historical aspirations. Ethiopia's interest in regional integration stems from its strategic goal to improve economic cooperation and trade connectivity. Regional infrastructure projects such as the LAPSET corridor (Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport) and the revitalization of the Ethiopian railway network aim to enhance Ethiopia's trade links with neighboring countries. These

initiatives not only support Ethiopia's economic goals but also strengthen its political ties with countries in the Horn of Africa.

Many Ethiopians view access to a sea outlet as a means to achieve greater economic independence. Port access would allow Ethiopia to control its own trade routes, reducing reliance on foreign nations and improving national logistics and trade competitiveness.

There is a sense of historical injustice associated with the loss of its coastal territory, and many Ethiopians feel that reclaiming some form of access to the sea is essential for restoring the nation's dignity.

Without direct control over a sea outlet, Ethiopia faces challenges in securing its trade routes. The ability to safeguard its maritime access is seen as crucial to Ethiopia's national security strategy, especially in a volatile region like the Horn of Africa.

Having a strategic sea outlet would allow it to strengthen its leadership role in the region. Access to a major port would enhance its ability to facilitate trade within the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), boosting its ambitions for greater regional influence.

Ethiopia's quest for access to the sea is rooted in practical economic needs and historical-national sentiment. As a landlocked country, its reliance on Djibouti's ports creates vulnerabilities that threaten its economic and geopolitical interests. By seeking alternative routes and potentially restoring direct access to the sea, Ethiopia aims to mitigate these risks while asserting its position as a major regional player. Regional integration efforts, such as securing access to multiple ports in neighboring countries, remain central to Ethiopia's strategy to reduce dependency and enhance its long-term development goals.

Given the region's busy maritime trade and security challenges like piracy and terrorism, countries establish military bases to safeguard trade routes and combat these threats, said Professor of Practice and International Consultant in Water Resource Engineering, Dr. Admasu Gebeyehu.

"Any issues rising in the Red Sea have significant implications for Ethiopia. The country's concerns in the Red Sea extend beyond mere port access, encompassing broader security issues. Given Ethiopia's close geographical proximity to the Red Sea, its development and stability are closely linked to the area", he said

It is to be recalled that Ethiopia has reorganized a naval force that was disbanded decades ago. The military wing came into being on the heels of the 2018 reform with troops trained in Russia and other countries.

"The expansion of military bases allows regional countries to train their own military forces, fostering peace and also attracting financial support," he added.

Mulualem Hailemariam is a lecturer in political science and international relations at Wachamo University. He believed that optimism about future sea access might be the driving force behind the re-establishment of the Ethiopian naval force.

"A naval force would enhance Ethiopia's defensive capabilities and enable better control over goods entering and leaving the country. Thus, the re-establishment of the Ethiopian naval force could potentially be a preparatory measure for future sea access."

As Ethiopia pushes for a call for regional cooperation to utilize the Red Sea, there have been fears of a possible war outbreak or regional rift, a claim dismissed by Mulalem. He argued that some individuals try to relate Ethiopia's recent military parade on the 116th National Military Day as a warming-up exercise. He emphasized that "such assertions are entirely false and that military parades, such as the recent one on the national military day, are customary events in every country, serving different purposes and the country is not trying to flex its muscles".

It is easy to imagine how much the costs affect the countries with no access to sea ports of their own because they have to pay for the various expenses related to the usage of the ports, the extra kilometers that they are required to cover in order to transport the goods they buy from outside or export goods they sell to foreign markets. These expenses are also susceptible of continuous increments depending on several circumstances some forecasted others not even dreamt of and how the international markets operate with inevitable fluctuations. Hence the dependence of landlocked countries on those who offer them the services is so big that the influence on the overall performance of the economy of a given landlocked country could be immense and cannot be dismissed as simple and negligible.

Having direct access to the sea means a lot of things to any country that especially relies a lot on import-export transactions affecting its economy deeply such as the case of Ethiopia. It means that these countries can have whatever kind of relations with anyone out there choosing whatever clients whereas those landlocked could be affected by the choice of the country that offers it access to a port service. They could limit the number of ships that dock on their ports or ban certain countries' ships that they consider as not friendly or with whom they do not have particularly good relations and this can hamper the kind of relations the landlocked country could entertain freely with their trading partner.

Regional integration efforts, such as securing access to multiple ports in neighboring countries, remain central to Ethiopia's strategy to reduce dependency and enhance its long-term development goals

Society

Africa bringing more youth to the forefront in the efforts to ensure food security

BY LEULSEGED WORKU

Food security, as defined by the World Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), is achieved when all individual citizens in a country possess the financial means and access to sufficient, healthy, and nutritious food necessary for leading an active and healthy life. Unfortunately, when it comes to the reality on the ground, in most cases, it falters greatly from this ideal. A World Food Organization report states that over 800 million people globally experience food shortages or insecurity. Furthermore, around two billion individuals lack essential vitamins and minerals, a condition referred to as “Hidden Hunger.”

Statistics reveal that 21 % of Africa’s population is grappling with food shortages, while the situation is even more severe in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the figure rises to 25 %. The International Nutrition Report cites alarming data: 13.7 % of infants are underweight due to malnutrition, and 30.7 % of children aged zero to five are stunted.

Although Africa is endowed with sufficient arable land capable of supporting up to nine billion people, many nations, including Ethiopia, have not effectively utilized this resource. This mismanagement presents a considerable challenge in liberating populations from food shortages, poverty, and ensuring reliable food security.

The Pan-African Bank asserts that if the continent capitalizes on just 65 % of its agricultural resources, it can feed the projected global population of nine billion by 2050. Yet, the continent continues to face persistent challenges linked to hunger and food insecurity. This chronic condition has long impeded the development of healthy, productive societies.

Despite the vast opportunities for African nations to profit from agricultural exports, numerous countries remain partially reliant on foreign aid and imported food grains for sustenance. The African Development Bank reports that the continent allocates approximately 75 billion USD annually for this purpose. Consequently, enhancing food security and self-sufficiency must be prioritized to address these challenges sustainably.

As part of this effort, recently, ‘The Thousand African Youth Summit 2024’ , which took place here in Addis Ababa, has deliberated on food systems and Agro ecology to facilitate Pan-African youth-centered movement focusing on concrete solutions in areas such as agro ecological entrepreneurship, technological innovations, indigenous knowledge, minimization of conflicts and conservation of biodiversity .

The Summit engaged thousands of young people from across numerous African nations both in person and virtually to

address the urgent challenges facing African food systems.

Planning and Development Minister Fitsum Assefa (PhD) emphasized that Africa’s inability to achieve self-sufficiency in food has led it to numerous challenges, with conflicts and instability featuring prominently. In her view, prioritizing food self-sufficiency is essential to ensure the continent’s sustainable development.

The Minister acknowledged that agriculture has not received due attention in Ethiopia over the past years, but recent initiatives aim to rectify this by prioritizing agricultural self-sufficiency. This commitment includes enhancing investment in agriculture, advancing mechanization, and expanding initiatives like effective agricultural extension system. She highlighted successes in resource allocation, noting an increase in fertilizer usage from 13 million quintals to a target of 24 million quintals in the current season. Fertilizer application in Ethiopia has doubled over the past five years, and the imports of agricultural machinery and agricultural inputs including tractors, combiners and milking machines, have been made tax-free.

With climate change significantly affecting food security, she proposed exploring agricultural practices that can alleviate these threats. She also asserted that hosting the conference in Addis Ababa allows Ethiopia to share its experiences from its tourism sector, irrigated wheat production initiatives, and green legacy program designed to reducing the impacts of climate change.

Chief Coordinator of the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), Million Belay (PhD), also said that the conference’s goals included safeguarding Africa’s agricultural ecology and biodiversity. He stressed the necessity of achieving food sovereignty and self-sufficiency throughout the agricultural value chain. He also highlighted the participation of over 250 young delegates from 45 different African countries, with thousands more engaged online.

Famara Conte, a youth from Gambia and Coordinator of ActionAid International’s Environmental Rights Program said that young people play critical role in ensuring food security in Africa. Emphasizing Africa’s rich potential, he remarked, “Africa is rich in resources; but its people still suffer from drought, famine, and conflict.” Conte believes that the younger generation must take responsibility and foster cooperation across sectors to tackle these challenges effectively.

Conte also spotlighted the need to reduce post-harvest losses, with a significant amount of produce wasted during harvesting. He also recommended the importance of adopting technology-assisted solutions to mitigate wastage. Furthermore,

African youth should stand at the forefront in the effort made to mitigate climate change and its severe impacts; including recurrent drought through advocating for the preservation of local ecosystems. Importantly, he emphasized the urgency of youths’ involvement in sustainable food security initiatives, stating that ensuring food sovereignty is one of the most urgent matters of the continent.

Senior Program Officer of Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) in Uganda, Juliet Katusime (PhD) echoed Conte’s sentiments regarding biodiversity and agro ecology. Katusime highlighted that biodiversity transcends beyond modernizing agriculture; it involves environmental protection, understanding natural systems, and fostering sustainability. She cautioned against the influence of foreign aid on the continent, stating that though Africa possesses abundant resources, they are often mismanaged. Katusime urged African youth to take decisive action to rectify these shortcomings and underscored the necessity of effective agricultural policies that encompass all stages from farm to market, which are critical for ensuring nutritional balance.

Another young participant, Nion Shkuza from Namibia, also noted that Africa’s youth constitute a significant portion of the population. He stressed the importance of empowering young people through education to tackle continental challenges effectively. Shkuza voiced that addressing food self-sufficiency requires exercising modern farming methods rather than traditional practices. He called for investment in local machinery production and emphasized the need for African nations to stop relying on external technological assistance. By doing so, countries can safeguard their sovereignty and ensure self-reliance.

The call for African governments to trust and invest in their youth is essential. Supporting them with access to credit and resources could unleash their potential. Young Africans’ commitment to their agricultural futures will be vital—extensive investment in agriculture, particularly in smallholder farming, can create innovative solutions to enhance food security.

In general, the collective voices of youth at the conference resonated with a shared vision for a prosperous Africa. These young leaders recognize their responsibility to shape a future where food security is not merely a goal but a reality for all. Their commitment to fostering economic independence and peace will be critical in realizing a nourished and thriving continent. It is clear that the youth must play an increasingly prominent role in shaping Africa’s agricultural landscape, striving to create a resilient future for generations to come.

Statistics reveal that 21 % of Africa’s population is grappling with food shortages, while the situation is even more severe in Sub-Saharan Africa

Planet Earth

Ethiopia's green development playing big role in promoting public health

BY GIRMACHEW GASHAW

It is difficult to prioritize health without creating a safe environment. Conversely, without a healthy environment, one may not stay long in life or lead a healthy life. In other words, health and the environment are two sides of a coin.

Human health is closely tied to the environment people live in, so efforts to protect the ecosystem directly or indirectly contribute to promoting health. Recognizing its numerous benefits, Ethiopia has been actively promoting environmental protection both locally and internationally for several years.

By providing due space for environmental health, Ethiopia achieved exemplary success in reducing the child mortality rate from 1000 to 78 simply by creating a safe and conducive environment in the previous Millennium Development Goals.

Healthy environment has the potential to prevent nearly a quarter of the global burden of disease. The COVID-19 pandemic serves as a stark reminder of the intricate relationship between people and our planet.

Clean air, a stable climate, sufficient water, proper sanitation and hygiene, safe chemical use, protection from radiation, healthy workplaces, sustainable agricultural practices, health-supportive urban areas, and preserved natural environments are all essential for good health.

Inadequate access to safe water, poor sanitation, and hygiene are still leading environmental causes of disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) and significant risk factors for diarrheal mortality globally. Diarrhea, a common childhood infection, is often caused by gastrointestinal infections spread through contaminated food or water, or poor hygiene practices.

In Ethiopia, diarrheal disease remains a major public health concern, with a prevalence of 12% in 2016 and 13% of child deaths attributed to diarrhea. Recent studies suggest a higher prevalence of 22%, indicating a potential increase in under-five mortality due to diarrhea.

The burden of infectious diseases like diarrhea contributes to high rates of stunted growth in low-income settings. Stunting, a prevalent form of chronic under nutrition, affects over one in five children globally, with higher rates in low- and middle-income countries.

Ethiopia continues to struggle with childhood under nutrition, with a stunting prevalence of 37% despite notable declines. Stunting has long-term consequences, including higher mortality,



lower education attainment, and reduced economic productivity in adults.

There is a cyclical relationship between childhood under nutrition and diarrheal disease. Under nutrition weakens the immune system, increasing susceptibility to infections like diarrhea, which in turn exacerbates under nutrition due to reduced appetite and mal absorption.

Identifying factors and interventions targeting stunting and diarrhea can have mutual benefits. The WHO framework on childhood stunting emphasizes a multi-sectoral approach to address poor diet quality, infections, and societal factors contributing to under nutrition.

While evidence on the effectiveness of WASH interventions in reducing childhood stunting is mixed, promoting improved WASH practices remains crucial for child nutrition, health, and development. The Sustainable Development Goals recognize WASH as central to development, aiming for universal access by 2030.

Working against climate change is another focus for Ethiopia, as it aims to improve the health of its citizens. Understanding the socioeconomic impact it could have on human life, Ethiopia has been giving serious attention to climate action. By mobilizing the general public, Ethiopia is now a model for Africa and other parts of the world in making climate mitigation by simply planting trees.

For instance, the nation has planted more than 50 billion tree seedlings in two phases of the campaign. During the first phase of the initiative, the country was able to plant 25 billion seedlings of agroforestry, forestry, and ornamental varieties, surpassing the set ceiling by mobilizing more than 20 million people in four years. The country also launched the second phase of the initiative to plant

another 25 billion tree seedlings in four years.

As a consequence, this broad green culture has taken root, matured, and flourished during the last five years, resulting in a major decrease in the pace of deforestation and the formation of new forests. These new forests will be critical in carbon sequestration as Ethiopia moves forward in its attempts to combat climate change.

As a result of its engagement, Ethiopia will be able to advocate for its unique needs and concerns connected to climate change through green legacy projects. The upcoming COP29 is also vital for the world to share the vision of Ethiopia's Green Legacy program, which aims to tackle climate change and deforestation by planting billions of trees. This enormous reforestation initiative not only aids in mitigating the effects of climate change but also adds to the country's long-term development goals.

By actively participating in global climate negotiations like COP29 and implementing domestic initiatives like the Green Legacy, Ethiopia is demonstrating its commitment to addressing climate change and promoting environmental sustainability. These efforts not only benefit Ethiopia but also contribute to global efforts to combat climate change and protect the planet for future generations.

Ethiopia's Green Legacy initiative is critical to battling climate change and avoiding and managing global carbon emissions. Nigeria's Environmental Protection State Minister, Dr. Iziq Salako, who participated in last year's COP 28, stated that Ethiopia, through its climate action activities, has conveyed a powerful message to the international community to fight climate change. Ethiopia is a place where a significant message has

been conveyed, urging people all around the world to return to nature. Ethiopia's Green Initiative, which is working to save the globe from the crisis of climate change, is an excellent example to follow.

Dr. Maria Nera, Director of Environment, Climate Change, and Health at the World Health Organization, said that Ethiopia's Green Legacy Initiative is a key driver of environmental development and health improvements. Dr. Maria Nera highlighted the challenges posed by climate change and seasonal fluctuations, emphasizing the importance of initiatives like Ethiopia's Green Legacy to combat climate change sustainably.

Ethiopia's achievement of planting 40 billion saplings in six years showcases its commitment to building a climate-resilient economy and environmental stewardship. The increase in forest cover to 23.6% demonstrates Ethiopia's dedication to environmental sustainability.

Protecting water bodies is crucial for reducing waterborne diseases and climate-related health issues. The Green Legacy Initiative, focused on tree planting and afforestation, plays a vital role in safeguarding health by mitigating climate change and protecting water resources.

Dr. Maria emphasized that Ethiopia's initiative sets a global example for mitigating climate change and protecting biodiversity. Planting saplings not only benefits the environment but also reduces air pollution, lowers the risk of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, and contributes to overall health.

Ethiopia's efforts to improve maternal and child health, reduce mortality rates, and increase vaccine access are commendable. The WHO will continue to support Ethiopia in these initiatives to enhance health coverage and public health protection.