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Ethiopia's tourism taking great leap with new destinations

BY YESUF ENDRIS

In step with global tourism trends, Ethiopia is revising its tourism policy and expanding destinations to unlock its vast potential and generate significant income, according to the Ministry of Tourism. The government plans

to invest heavily in infrastructure and amend restrictive policies to fully realize the sector's promise.

The revised policy will target previously untapped opportunities, with the aim of transforming Ethiopia into a top tourist

destination. Despite recent growth in tourism revenue and visitors number, Ethiopia's infrastructure remains underdeveloped, preventing the country from securing its share of the global tourism market. According to the

See Ethiopia's tourism ... page 3

Nat'l Dialogue: Political parties unite for inclusive solutions

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

In Ethiopian culture, close communication and collaborative problem-solving are deeply rooted traditions. Building on this foundation, the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission (ENDC) has been working to address issues that cannot be resolved through the

See Nat'l Dialogue: ... page 3

Ethio-telecom leads cybersecurity drive for digital sovereignty

BY HAILE DEMEKE

ADDIS ABABA- Ethio-telecom has announced that its annual Cybersecurity Awareness Program has significantly bolstered Ethiopia's defenses against cyber-attacks, creating a resilient digital ecosystem at both the company and national levels. This initiative plays a key role in ensuring the nation's digital sovereignty.

Ethiopia recently launched its National Cybersecurity Month under the theme "Critical Infrastructure Security for Digital Sovereignty," reflecting its commitment to digital transformation and combating the rising threat of cyber-attacks. Throughout the month, activities such as expert consultations, discussions on cybersecurity, and highlights of the "5 Million Coders Initiative" are taking place to enhance national cyber resilience.

Ethio-telecom is a pivotal contributor to



Ethiopia's digital transformation journey and has been instrumental in raising awareness of cybersecurity among

institutions and citizens. The company underscores the importance of coordinated

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Photo: Gebabo Gebrie

Girma Amente(PhD)

Ministry invites investors to join Ethiopia's lucrative agribusiness

News



Offices ink MoU to play part in Digital Ethiopia 2025

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA – Five government institutions have joined hands toward providing integrated and improved public services thereby contributing to the realization of Digital Ethiopia 2025.

The Ethiopian Artificial Intelligence Institute, Information Network Security Administration, National ID Program, Addis Ababa Civil Registration and Residency Service Agency and the Addis Ababa Innovation and Technology Development Bureau have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) yesterday to join hands for efficient, innovative and improved service delivery.

During the signing ceremony, Ethiopian Artificial Intelligence Institute Director General, Eng. Worku Gachena said that working collaboratively enables the offices to undertake their daily activities in an advanced manner.

“We will facilitate integrated government services to mitigate the society’s problem through providing verified residence ID and National ID, crucial to ease all other activities. We are also consulting stakeholders on AI solutions to boost their efficiency and provide secured, instant and quality services,” he expressed.

Information Network Security Administration, Director General Tigist Hamid said that developing local technologies that automate processes and meet standards is needed to realize Digital Ethiopia 2025.

Addis Ababa City Administration Innovation and Technology Development Bureau Head, Solomon Amare also noted that working hand in hand with local technology developers helps to shortly finalize the distribution of digital ID to all citizens since most of the public services are requiring this ID.

The main objective of National ID program is to increase collaborative work amongst all sectors thereby achieving a smooth transition to digital economy, National ID Program Executive Director, Yodahe Arayaselassie said.

“The MoU is key indicator of prosperity and development. When the five offices work together, they facilitate the service provided to society in a computerized and convenient way in the near future,” he expressed.

So far, he stated that the National ID Program is connecting offices and public service providers while initiating various stakeholders to work together with Civil Registration and Residency Service Agency in relation to documenting the citizens’ identification cards.

Addis Ababa Civil Registration and Residency Service Agency Director General Yonas Alemayehu on his part said that activities are underway to conduct institutional reforms with an ambition to provide improved services including delivering identification cards to residents.

He added that electronic ID and mobile ID project is central to the realization of the smart city initiative as e-government work is improving time to time.

COP 29 Kicks off in Baku, Azerbaijan

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA - The 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) commenced in Baku yesterday, bringing together world leaders, policymakers, and activists with a renewed commitment to address intensifying climate crises.

The conference has big significance as it plays a major role in the implementation of global climate change.

Ethiopian delegation participating in this international conference is in Baku. Leaders of various countries are also expected to attend this prestigious conference.

Running until Nov. 22, the event will focus on urgent discussions around global warming, climate adaptation, and sustainability.

With extreme weather events on the rise and average global temperatures reaching unprecedented levels, COP29 presents a crucial platform for advancing solutions.

The COP 29 summit will deliberate on ways to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening financial capacity for climate change, and ensuring sustainable climate change.

A primary focus at this year’s conference is climate finance. The UN highlights the need for trillions of dollars to assist nations in significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions while building resilience against climate-driven threats.

Energy supply, human development, food security and biodiversity are this year’s other main agendas of the conference.

Ethiopia’s efforts being carried



out in its Green Legacy Initiative, agriculture development, ecotourism and renewable energy, are making a significant contribution to maintaining a sustainable climate in this regard.

Thus, Ethiopia’s commitment to rehabilitating degraded lands with forests and the ongoing activities to ensuring sustainable land use will be presented at the conference.

Ethiopia will use this international event to get support and partners to expedite its efforts in mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Established in 1992, the UNFCCC treaty arose from the initial findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), with the goal of stabilizing greenhouse gas concentrations to prevent severe human-driven disruptions to the climate.

Since its inception, the UNFCCC has underpinned global climate agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 and the Paris Agreement in 2015.

The convention’s 198 member countries meet annually to assess progress and negotiate collective responses to the climate crisis.

This year’s conference in Baku promises a renewed emphasis on actionable commitments and innovative funding mechanisms to drive global progress.

KEFI offers 30 mln USD worth investment opportunity to Ethiopians

BY STAFF REPORTER

ADDIS ABABA –UK-based miner,KEFI Gold and Copper PLC, announced that it has offered Ethiopians a 30 million USD investment opportunity under its 500 million USD worth mining investment in Ethiopia.

Of the original 500 million USD required to finance its Tulu Kapi Gold Mines SC project in Ethiopia, KEFI and its consortium of international banks, contractors, and investors have collectively conditionally approved 470 million USD following a recent increase in proposed funding contribution from international banks to 240 million USD, up from 190 million USD, the company said in a statement sent to *The Ethiopian Herald*.

With this milestone, KEFI said it is advancing its commitment to facilitate Ethiopian participation by having invited local qualified investors to participate in the project’s remaining 30 million USD in



accordance with the current capital market rules and regulations.

Ethiopian governmental entities, including the Federal Government and the Oromia Regional State, have already committed 20 million USD in the project as part of the assembled 470 million USD, it added.

“We have always been dedicated to fostering local ownership in Ethiopia.

By having offered the last 6% of the 500 million USD, or 30 million USD, to Ethiopian investors, we’re striving to align with the country’s vision for economic inclusivity and strengthen our relationship with Ethiopian stakeholders. Formal expressions of interest have already been received and we now move to wrap up in accordance with Ethiopian regulations and practice,” said KEFI Executive Chairman

Harry Anagnostaras-Adams.

KEFI’s innovative gold-linked investment structure is designed with Ethiopian investors in mind, offering returns in either gold or USD to hedge against inflation and currency fluctuations. Tulu KapiGold Project is one of the country’s first large-scale, locally inclusive investment opportunities. The project exemplifies KEFI’s goal to align with Ethiopia’s evolving capital market, providing local investors with unprecedented access to a high-value asset. The Tulu Kapi project is expected to generate substantial economic impact in Ethiopia, boosting export earnings, creating thousands of direct and indirect jobs, and elevating Ethiopia’s profile in industrial-scale mining. KEFI estimates that, by 2027, Ethiopian gold exports will surpass coffee and the country could emerge as one of Africa’s top 10 gold producers, a significant and rapid initial achievement in line with the country’s mining and export potential, according to the company.

News

Ministry invites investors to join Ethiopia's lucrative agribusiness

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

ADDIS ABABA- Ministry of Agriculture expressed readiness to engage development partners and investors in various agricultural investment areas thereby scaling up the success stories registered so far.

Sharing the best experience of the country in Green Legacy Initiative (GLI), national wheat and 'Ye Lemattirufat' (Bounty of the Basket) initiatives and agri-food system approach, Agriculture Minister Girma Amente(PhD), stressed that the country is on the right track.

He disclosed that the nation is ready to attract investment in the aforesaid areas particularly in input production, mechanization and agro-processing. Thus, he called on development partners to support end to end implementation of food system approach and scale up the successful journey.

GLI, which has so far planted 40 billion seedlings and created one million green jobs,

has increased forest coverage from 17.2% in 2019 to 23.6% in 2023 with the plan of making the coverage 30% by 2030, Girma stated, adding that the initiative has similarly decreased deforestation from 91,000 hectare per year in the early 27,000 per hectare.

The impact of GLI goes beyond forest coverage as it has reduced soil erosion and soil sediment into river 10 times. "We have managed to rehabilitate 33.6million hectares of land," he said.

Following the initiative, coffee production has now reached one million tons per year which doubled the production in the last five years.

The initiative is also increasing coffee plants with over 8.5billion seedlings have been planted in the past six years. Earning over 1.3billion USD in last season, Girma believed that the nation is taking position of the third largest coffee producer in the world.

He also expressed that the national wheat initiative which is designed to increase production, and substitute import, the nation is putting effort to create farmers access to technology into a commercial cluster.

So far, the nation has clustered 11.8million hectares and 9.2million farmers are now in the commercialization which account for half of the total land. The Minister highlighted that the commodities include wheat, maize and horticulture crops as well.

He emphasized that the commercialization approach has allowed the application of improved seed and fertilizer by 37percent and 60percent respectively in the past five years. Besides lifting taxes on all mechanization and irrigation equipment so as to make it affordable to farmers, it has established mechanization service centers close to farmers.

So far, he indicated that over five million hectare land is mechanized. "Ethiopia has become the leading wheat producer in

Africa because of this initiative. We covered 6.6million hectare last year but now it will be 8.3million planning to produce 30million tons of wheat this season," he said.

More importantly, Girma underlined that following the commercialization initiative, the country has fully replaced malt barley and wheat, and in the process of replacing rice import in the coming two years.

During the first phase of the implementation of 'Bounty of the Basket initiative', Ethiopia was producing only 26million day-old chicks but currently, a plan is set to make it 150million this year, according to the Minister.

Recently, the nation inaugurated a grandparent stock farm with a capacity of producing 110million day-old chicks. Due to the steps taken, Ethiopia's undernourishment rate has become better than the East African average while the rate of stunting has also decreased from 42.1 to 34percent, he underlined.

Nat'l Dialogue: Political parties ...

regular legal system by conducting agenda-gathering forums at the state level.

One such forum was recently held in Bonga town, focusing on collecting agendas from stakeholders in the Southwest Ethiopian People's State. This event brought together community representatives from 57 districts and city administrations, political parties, institutions, associations, government representatives, and influential individuals.

Key questions arise: What are the views of competing political parties about the National Dialogue process, and how is their involvement defined? Representatives of political parties participating in the dialogue shared their perspectives with the Ethiopian Press Agency (EPA).

The Kaffa Green Party President and the State's Joint Council of Political Parties Chairperson Solomon Ayele, emphasized that all 11 political parties in the Southwest Ethiopian People's State have been involved in the agenda-gathering process through

their elected representatives. Solomon highlighted the significance of dialogue in addressing Ethiopia's economic, political, and social challenges, urging political parties to foster unity and collaboration rather than division.

"This dialogue process is historic for Ethiopia," Solomon remarked. "Unlike in other countries where government interference undermines national dialogues, here the government participates as a stakeholder, not an intervener. This gives us hope for genuine progress."

Similarly, EZEMA Party leader and the Bench Sheko Zone's Joint Council of Political Parties Chairperson Kifle Shiferaw underscored the importance of inclusive discussions. "The country does not belong to one person or a few groups; it belongs to all of us. Solutions come when everyone has the freedom to voice their concerns," he said.

Bench Sheko Zone's Amhara National

Movement Party Chairperson Temesgen Solomon expressed confidence in the commission's ability to gather agendas from diverse societal groups and address pressing issues. "Our party supports the commission's activities both within and outside the state, from the initial screening of participants to the ongoing dialogue," Temesgen affirmed.

As Ethiopia embarks on this unprecedented National Dialogue process, political parties in the state demonstrate a shared commitment to resolving public issues through open and inclusive discussions, setting a hopeful tone for the nation's future.

Initiated by the Ethiopian government, the National Dialogue is a country-wide consultative process designed to address and resolve deep-rooted political, ethnic, and social tensions. Formed in response to years of internal conflicts, political fragmentation, and calls for inclusivity, the dialogue aims to unite Ethiopia's diverse communities and foster long-term stability.

Ethio-telecom ...

efforts to fortify cyber sovereignty and align with the nation's Digital Ethiopia 2025 strategy, which seeks to transition Ethiopia into a knowledge-based, innovative economy.

Ethio-telecom's Chief Information System Security Officer Tsegaye Emmanuel emphasized the company's role in expanding Ethiopia's digital ecosystem and driving the country into the digital era. He acknowledged the increasing cyber threats associated with the rise in digital services and highlighted the importance of proactive measures to ensure safety.

As part of its commitment, Ethio-telecom hosted its fourth annual October Cybersecurity Awareness Program with themes focused on building a cyber-resilient ecosystem and safeguarding critical infrastructure. Tsegaye noted that the company has made strides in protecting customers' money and privacy, regulating digital banking, and mitigating financial fraud at banks and other institutions.

Ethio-telecom's Cybersecurity Director Jemal Mohammed, stated that with over 51 million digital users, the company has become a leading actor in Ethiopia's digital sector. The awareness program addresses key cyber threats such as account takeovers, subscription fraud, identity theft, and social engineering scams.

Jemal stressed the need for a collective effort to combat the growing sophistication of cyber-attacks, which pose significant risks to national security. "Building digital trust and fostering a culture of information security compliance within organizations are essential for Ethiopia's journey to a secure and sovereign digital future," he added.

The initiative underscores the importance of cybersecurity in Ethiopia's digital transformation, ensuring that individuals, businesses, and institutions are equipped to navigate and thrive in an increasingly interconnected world.

Ethiopia's tourism taking great ...

2023 International Congress and Convention Association report, Ethiopia, despite being the third-most diplomatic country in the world, lags behind in attracting conference attendees and other visitors.

Ethiopia boasts a wealth of tourism assets, including cultural, historical, and natural sites. Newly completed and ongoing projects, such as Beynouna Village near Metehara, are expected to draw more visitors. Beynouna Village, inaugurated by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD), has become a key attraction. "Though challenging to build, it now stands as a beacon for tourism growth," the Prime Minister remarked. He noted that while current tourist numbers are modest, rapid growth is anticipated.

World Bank Country Director Maryam Slim

commended Ethiopia's efforts in tourism development, highlighting the impact of infrastructure improvements across the nation, particularly in Addis Ababa. Beynouna Village, for example, is generating government revenue while providing economic benefits to local communities involved in cattle breeding and hospitality services.

Tourism Minister Selamawit Kassa stated that the government is prioritizing projects to position Ethiopia as one of the busiest tourist destinations. Addis Ababa is emerging as a hub for conference tourism, supported by recent projects spearheaded by the Prime Minister.

Agricultural tourism, a growing segment in Ethiopia, is also set to expand. Tourism

State Minister Sileshi Girma noted at the recent World Without Hunger Summit in Addis Ababa that the revised policy will tap into this sector's potential.

A report from the Ministry of Tourism projects that within a few years, tourism will contribute significantly to Ethiopia's economy. The United Nations World Tourism Organization's 2024 outlook predicts a substantial rise in tourist numbers for Ethiopia and other African nations, signaling a promising future for the sector.

As Ethiopia continues its path toward becoming a global tourism destination, its focus on policy reform, infrastructure development, and new initiatives reflects a bold vision for economic transformation through tourism.

Opinion

Bold step for pushing the national dialog into fruition

BY MENGESHA AMARE

The long-heaped grudges, rivalries, unknowingly or calculatingly orchestrated resentments among citizens of the same country, if any, and even political, as well as historical disagreements can be dealt with via dialog and close consultation as nothing could be beyond such a plausible public session domains. It is crystal clear that in an increasingly polarized and already tense political landscape, the government needs to create a platform that truly opens the way for a negotiated political solution to break the current stalemate and for promoting peace and tranquility across the nation.

It is obvious that national dialog can be complex and delicate process, and several factors can either contribute to its success or impede its success. To make it a triumph, there are of course, key elements; one is inclusivity. True, a wide range of stakeholders should be involved, including political parties, civil society organizations, marginalized groups, and representatives from different sectors of society, and even those who reside outside of the place of origin.

Inclusivity ensures that miscellaneous perspectives are considered and enhances the authenticity of the process. Tunisia's experience with national dialogue is often cited as a very good example, of course, as it is one of the most successful examples of peaceful democratic transition in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. It brought together a wide range of stakeholders, including political parties, civil society organizations, labor unions, business leaders, and representatives of marginalized groups such as youth and women.

National dialogues have been undertaken in Sudan, Kenya, Tunisia, Senegal, Yemen, the Central African Republic, and other conflict-affected countries in recent years to develop agreements among numerous national players and prepare the way for long-term peace and political changes.

Here, our country, Ethiopia, had better draw important lessons from this nation. Taking a neutral stance is also the substantive aspect, indeed! Yes, neutral facilitators and mediators play a crucial role in managing the dialogue process impartially, ensuring fairness, and building trust among participants. Their neutrality helps create apt environment for constructive dialogue and negotiation.

Equally and importantly, national dialogues should have clear goals, objectives, and a distinct schema. Clear objectives help focus discussions, prioritize issues, and guide decision-making. Here, all parties have to develop commitment and run peaceful resolution as all participants must demonstrate a genuine commitment to non-violence, peaceful coexistence, and the resolution of conflicts through dialogue, close talks, round table discussion and concession.

In spite of deep political divisions and tensions, stakeholders in the country under concern, i.e. Ethiopia, have to demonstrate a commitment to non-violence and compromise. They should well recognize the importance of dialogue and negotiation in finding peaceful solutions to political differences and are expected to be willing to make special consideration for the greater good of the country.

The government, political parties, the general public, even warring parties whatever their ground may be, have to be willing to engage in dialogue, seek common ground, and make indulgence to reach mutually acceptable solutions to the common national problems. Dialog actors have to be engaged in constructive dialogue, identify common ground, and reach agreements on cardinal issues which have been attracting disagreement among Ethiopians about such as the history of Ethiopia, heroes, flags, constitution, anthems, and other national symbols.

Unquestionably, mutual delight results from win-win solutions, where each party benefits and does not use a loss to the opposite. Addressing all the queries has to be framed in a way that addresses all forms of objections if citizens of the country would like to get the wounds of the nation dried for good.

Bigotry, intrigue, and political intrigue have become important elements of Ethiopia's political elite and their leaders, resulting in irritation, disappointment, and rejection of common people across the country. In other words, political elites are more active in bridging gaps than in forming coalitions, and their vision is hazy when it comes to combining social advantages for national development goals.

The national dialogue has long been advocated in Ethiopia as a means of resolving contentious problems and laying the groundwork for national agreement.

Ethiopia has also been influenced by a lack of belonging, ethnic strife, and catastrophic economic deterioration. Meanwhile, in Ethiopian culture, fraternity, and solidarity, communication and links of solidarity between ethnic groups and their members are diminishing.

Overall, the Ethiopian National Dialogue blew a historic chance to create a new and inclusive society based on shared values and mutual respect.

More importantly, in an increasingly polarized and already tense political landscape, the government needs to create a platform that truly opens the way for a negotiated political solution to break the current impasse and for peace. To this end, a nationwide dialogue forum should be convened with the participation of political leaders, traditional and religious leaders, youth representatives, and other stakeholders.

Ethiopia's National Dialogue Committee should also quickly develop a clear business

plan and commit to implementing it. To ensure a free and fair national dialogue, the government should expedite preparations for the upcoming national dialogue, including logistical and other preparations, as well as provide other mechanisms governing the dialogue's conduct, such as the publication of the main agenda on which the national dialogue will take place.

The national dialogues would be instrumental in bringing together all relevant national stakeholders and actors based on a broad mandate to foster nationwide consensus with respect to key conflict issues. The National Dialogue has, thus, gained considerable importance as a platform for peaceful transformation.

It further reflects the belief that conflict resolution processes must be as inclusive as possible, involving a broad range of political actors and extending beyond a limited set of political players to include society at large. The onus of conflict resolution has therefore recently shifted from the national to international level. If a process excludes important stakeholders or is perceived to serve the short-term political goals of the government, constitutional reform proposals are unlikely to gain impetus. Thus, it has to be made inclusive and participatory.

It is well recognized that Ethiopians have indigenous cultural and traditional assets that they have long used to foster solidarity, togetherness, peace, and a sense of belonging among themselves. All religious people, mostly Christians and Muslims, have similar principles. They, for example, stand by one another in both happy and sorrowful moments. This is an opportunity that must be taken advantage of. This sort of arrangement was made possible by the federal government's quick growth strategy. When this chance is denied, it might be a formula for simple mobilization based on religious group membership, and hence a prescription for violence. Existing discussion and encounter mechanisms should be used to promote understanding and awareness among individuals of all religions.

Religion and social cohesiveness also play a part in integrating the country's ethnic populations and have been blamed for inter-ethnic and inter-religious trust and cohabitation. We are closely monitoring Ethiopia's plans to begin a national dialogue process to promote talks among all stakeholders on critical national problems.

The decision-making processes within the dialogue should also be transparent, inclusive, and accountable as following such an agreeable fashion helps enhance trust among participants and ensures that the outcomes reflect the interests and concerns of all concerned.

Some are heard of saying that the national dialogue commission itself is appointed by the state since the officials are known for their close relationship with the prime minister and have been witnessed to positively support the current regime, but

what matters is they are tasked to organize a platform in which all representatives of all citizens can genuinely raise their concern and give the judgment to the general public, not a matter of reflecting intimacy along this line.

The very crucial aspect that has to be well comprehended in this regard is political leaders must demonstrate a willingness to engage in dialogue, implement agreements, and prioritize peace over narrow political interests as without genuine political will and commitment from the government and key stakeholders the national dialogue could hardly be pushed into fruition.

That is why Ethiopians at every corner like in Jigjiga, Hawassa, South-west state etc. held varied public discussions so as, for the commission, to critically explore the opportunities and challenges of the process with a view to devising possible solutions to the problems.

Bear in mind that despite the major hurdles, resistance, futile attempts to overlook the significance of conducting a national dialog, the national conversation initiative is highly likely to foster situation in due course of uniting Ethiopians. Needless to state, Ethiopia will endure if leaders and elites unite to forge a new countrywide consensus and build a new political order that guarantees the honor, coexistence, fraternity, peaceful co-existence and solidarity of its people.

Yes, a national dialogue could allow rival ideologies and communities in Ethiopia to redefine their relationships and promote higher expertise on the troubles that divide and polarize. A national dialogue ought to help bridge the space between different actors and foster a subculture of communication, interface and collaboration.

In general, as a solution to the long and existing widespread political, social, economic, and historical problems Ethiopia has been facing, the national dialogue has to be well strengthened and put into practice at any cost as it has been a helpful approach for ending extensive divergence.

The initiative and commitment of the current government to the formation of national dialogue commission are crucial steps toward reducing tensions that may arise because of political disagreements and ethnic polarization. In general, the country is prepared for a national dialogue.

However, as seen by the facts presented above, Ethiopia's approach to developing a national discourse is difficult. An open and thorough dialogue is a constructive solution to address Ethiopia's multiple political challenges. Immediate halt of hostilities followed by complete ceasefire agreements between Federal Government and all armed groups in the regional states of Amhara and Oromia are essential.

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

Editorial

Marching towards doable Russia-Africa amity

Being the ever transforming continent, Africa has been hunting development partners and allies with a view to fostering its growth and changes in all aspects centering a communal advantage. Its close ties cemented, since recently, with Russia is a case in point in this regard. Yes, the long-standing historical ties between Africa and Russia has been bearing fruits as the former is willing to work with the continent which has been running towards meeting its insightful objective, Agenda 2063, under its umbrella club—African Union.

The firm and consistence advocacy rendered by Russia to African countries has always strictly adhered to the principle of 'African solutions to African problems.' Such a fruitful association would help the continent meet its golden goals, indeed!

The importance of spiraling economic cooperation between Africa and Russia is also of paramount importance in buttressing the fields of science and technology, education, investment, trade, among others. Unequivocally, the need for increased collaboration in science and technology so as to maximize mutual benefits has dramatically risen. True, such an enhanced partnership is pivotal in boosting agricultural productivity, adopting emerging technologies, expanding Africa's industrial base, addressing climate change challenges, too.

Obviously, Ethiopia has all the time welcomed the readiness of the Russian Federation to expedite a comprehensive reform at the UN and in support of Africa's rightful permanent representation at the UN Security Council. The dedication of this east African nation, Ethiopia, is also highly valued towards fostering peace and stability in the Horn of Africa.

Under the aegis of Russia, the partnership would be instrumental in ensuring common change. Unequivocally, the Russia-Africa summits have brought together decisive personalities of Russia and African countries, the African Union Commission, as well as the executive bodies of regional integration associations from the continent. This by itself is a major player in due course of coming up with collective thought and expertise for real change.

The recent summit, too, would be an opportunity to review the culmination and foster the implementation of a number of socio-economic projects like energy, food security, bilateral trade and investment, science and technology as well as tourism and education. Russian respect for the sovereignty of African states, values and destiny has its contribution to the firm connection of the two sides. Hence the summit has to be made a viable weapon for trustful, forward-looking, constructive and long-lasting.

Having a long time-tested relationship with Africa, Russia has been contributing a lot to the overall development of the continent. Since a few African countries have adopted import substitution, agricultural policy transformation, undertaking a range of deeds leading towards self-sufficiency, Russia is there to support them so.

In sum, both Russian and African leaders are expected to reaffirm their collective stance to sort out prioritized areas and capitalize on them to make a difference in all aspects. The history of Russia-Africa Summit is the highest-profile and largest-scale event in Russian-African relations, aiming at bringing about a fundamentally new level of mutually beneficial partnership to meet the challenges of the 21st century. The goal of the summits undertaken, being carried out, is to promote efforts to strengthen comprehensive and equal cooperation between Russia and African nations across all areas of society including politics, security, economic relations, science and technology, and the cultural and humanitarian spheres. What matters hereafter is thinking of the steps to be further taken to give a new impetus to bilateral economic relations and the way how could these lucrative measures be reinvigorated. In so doing, it would be easy to create a deeper strategic partnership between Russia and Africa and move forward. That is why it is recurrently heralded that the partnership between Africa and Russia needs to be strong, deep-rooted, and has always been distinguished by stability, trust and good will. It would also be possible to set up doable bilateral intergovernmental entities for trade, economic, science and technology and other decisive sub-sectors.

Opinion

Africa needs stronger advocacy for locally manufactured vaccines

BY SAKHILE KHAWEKA

--- Policy and Advocacy Project Manager
at the South African Health Technologies
Advocacy Coalition (SAHTAC)

Prioritizing local vaccine manufacturing, distribution, and rollout is crucial for addressing the challenges faced by Africa's health systems. Ensuring vulnerable communities have access to life-saving health innovations will not only help millions live longer but also yield economic benefits for developing economies.

The African health landscape is riddled with complex challenges stemming from colonialism that persist today. Malnutrition, social inequality, uncoordinated regulatory bodies, poor health infrastructure, and declining government healthcare funding are some of the challenges call for urgent action.

While progress has been made in addressing these challenges through frameworks like the Framework of Actions (FAS) for Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Africa, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in many health systems on the continent.

In addition to existing challenges, the climate change emergency has led to an increase in emerging infectious diseases spreading beyond their endemic locations. Africa has faced outbreaks of diseases like Ebola, measles, yellow fever, Zika virus, chikungunya virus, rift valley fever, and coronavirus, adding to the burden of diseases like malaria, tuberculosis (TB), and HIV.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) high burden diseases like malaria is responsible for an estimated 608 000 deaths in 2022 with 95 percent of cases in Africa, TB was responsible for an estimated 424 000 deaths in 2022 and an estimated 25.6 million people on the continent are living with HIV with up to 380 000 deaths caused by AIDS-related illnesses. These three diseases and other infections are responsible for the loss of economic productivity amounting to more \$800 billion annually.

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension and obesity have also reached catastrophic levels with devastating outcomes resulting in more than 41 million deaths annually with 77 percent of premature deaths caused by NCDs occurring in low-middle-income countries. For the human papilloma virus (HPV) which has the potential of causing cervical cancer in women, the HPV vaccine remains crucial in preventing 90 percent of cervical cancer-related deaths.

Furthermore, prioritising vaccine manufacturing in Africa would curb maternal mortality ratio (MMR) by at least 20.3 percent to achieve the SDG target by 2030. Africa currently accounts for 69 percent of the global maternal deaths. Child mortality on the other hand accounts for up to 50 percent of deaths of children under five who die from pneumonia, malaria, measles, diarrhoea, HIV and tuberculosis.

The state of Africa's vaccine industry which

makes up less than one percent of the global demand and the growing threat of infectious diseases like Mpox, cholera and meningitis calls for swift action to grow the industry. Mpox has become the latest public health emergency with more than 74 000 reported cases and 193 deaths globally.

Africa has since 2022 reported over 6800 cases and 173 deaths. The resurgence of these diseases is currently a public health emergency that requires the urgent strengthening of local vaccine manufacturing capabilities that will foster sustainable equitable access to life-saving products that will restore the continent's health. On the other hand, the hepatitis B vaccine can prevent the over 1.1 million deaths caused by cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma (primary liver cancer) in 2022.

Strides have been made to turn Africa into a self-reliant region that is capable of having a thriving vaccine manufacturing industry. This has been demonstrated through the 13 operational companies in South Africa, Egypt, Morocco Senegal, Ethiopia and Ghana - that either have fill and finish capabilities or are manufacturing drug substances. Nigeria, Ethiopia, Algeria, Rwanda and Uganda are also making efforts to establish their own manufacturing capabilities.

These strides are encouraging but more needs to be done to boost the research and development capabilities that are crucial to countries succeeding in their efforts to manufacture vaccines locally. Enabling framework like the Priority Vaccine Manufacturing (PAVM) Framework outlines the continent's strategic direction to address the 22 legacy diseases, expanding diseases and outbreak diseases. The framework seeks to scale up local vaccine manufacturing to address the reliance on global suppliers.

Some of the notable milestones that align with the PAVM include the RTS, S/AS01 malaria vaccine for children in areas with moderate-to-high malaria transmission and the WHO recommended R21/Matrix-M malaria vaccine. While there is currently no vaccine for HIV, the development of the longstanding, twice a year injectable Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PreP) Lenacapavir, changes the landscape in the prevention of HIV transmission amongst key populations in Africa. The third priority disease for Africa, TB currently has 11 vaccine candidates that are undergoing clinical trials that are critical to reducing the global burden of TB.

The African Medicines Agency (AMA), African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan for Africa (PMPA) are some of the mechanisms that will play a crucial role in improving access to locally manufactured vaccines by addressing the challenges of poor access to market, financial mechanisms to support vaccine manufacturing, streamlined regulatory processes to fast-track the approval of vaccines, training and equipping the local workforce with practical experience and global collaboration, and developing partnerships with multinational companies to create an enabling environment that will support local manufacturing.

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



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The Ethiopian Herald

Business & Economy

Gold market showing encouraging progress

BY BACHA ZEWDIE

It is obvious that Ethiopia is a country with high reserves of mineral resources. One of these minerals is gold and research has confirmed that the country has a large amount of gold reserves. According to the data obtained from the Ministry of Mines, more than 517 tons of gold reserves have been found in the survey carried out so far.

As evidences indicate; there are two types of gold: gold ore and alluvial gold. Alluvial gold can be extracted from the rock above it when it decays and breaks down due to various reasons. As this type of gold is usually found in the mountains, it is carried by water or wind to a lower place and accumulates. It can be produced traditionally with low technology and low cost. Alluvial gold is temporary and can be depleted in a short period of time.

Gold ore is mined deep into the ground and mined and produced using large-scale technology. According to the current data, the presence of alluvial gold at this level is an indication that there is a large deposit of gold ore. Research conducted in the sector indicates that the reserves are not easy to find because the gold ore requires deep technology and a long time.

As the gold ore requires a lot of resources and investment, it is operated by large companies with high potential. Gold ore resources are widely available in Tigray, Benishangul, Gambella, Oromia, Southwest Ethiopia and other regions. Few companies in the country are engaged in this development.

The mining sector has been made one of the five pillars of the economy due to the government's focus on its contribution and job opportunities it creates for citizens. Following this, many works are being done to make use of mineral resources as an economic source and earn foreign currency.

The amount of gold owed to the National Bank has decreased over the years due to illegal production and trading. The gold production was illegally taken to foreign countries. Since the government established a task force to prevent and control this illegal activity, however, many illegal actors were arrested. It is also known that action has been taken against foreigners suspected of the act.

According to the data of the National Bank, gold production is one of the export products that play a key role in Ethiopia's economy. A few years ago, more than 600 million dollars was earned from gold exports alone; in 2022, the foreign exchange income from gold alone reached 672 million Dollars.

This gold-earning foreign currency has dwindled to the point of becoming issue of discussion. Though Gold reserve is available and production was underway, the product has not been delivered to the National Bank due to various reasons. Especially, with the fact that gold is vulnerable to smuggling and illegal trade and circulation, years have passed without much success.

Among the reasons for this is the fact that the payment given by the National Bank to gold suppliers was not fair. This situation



Ethiopia earns encouraging foreign currency by marketing gold

has forced the National Bank to constantly improve the price it gives to its suppliers. Especially in the gold-producing regions of Benishangul, Gambella and Tigray, illegality was rampant and gold was traded illegally and smuggled to neighboring countries.

Although the government has established a task force consisting of security forces to prevent smuggling and illegal trafficking and operations are being carried out and monitored; it has not been possible to stop the increasing smuggling of gold and minerals in the regions.

To solve this problem, the government has been focusing on solving the problems faced in the mining sector, especially in gold development and marketing. It is conducting strict monitoring and control over mineral producers and dealers, taking action against illegally and making various reforms.

Months ago, the macroeconomic reform, which is believed to be of great benefit to the country's economy, has been fully implemented. This is of great importance to the export business, increasing the flow of foreign direct investment, etc. Following the reform, the National Bank has reformed the foreign exchange management system that allows the foreign currency transaction to be carried out outside the national bank or managed by the market.

It is recalled that the National Bank of Ethiopia has issued revised guidelines as it is believed that the reforms in foreign exchange transactions will create a lasting incentive for gold suppliers and it is necessary to improve the supply of gold in a sustainable manner. Regarding the price of gold, the bank stated that according to the procedure in force since July 31, 2024, the purchase price of gold is determined based on the selling rate of foreign currency that is stated on the bank's website every day.

Data indicates that such reforms are causing changes in the amount of gold entering the

bank. During the review of the first 100 days of the 2024/25 fiscal year in the presence of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD), Minister of Planning and Development, Fitsm Assefa (PhD) said that it is planned to achieve a growth of 8.4% in the current fiscal year.

In the first 100 days of this fiscal year, the complete macroeconomic reforms have recorded better economic performance in exports, government revenue, foreign direct investment and foreign exchange earnings. She explained that in terms of export trade, a very successful work was done, especially in the gold trade.

For example, in the 2023/24 fiscal year, the amount of gold entered the National Bank was only four tons, the minister said. In the first three months of the current fiscal year, seven tons of gold has entered the National Bank. This is an indication that the macroeconomic reforms have brought changes in a short period of time.

According to data obtained from the Ministry of Mines, the macroeconomic reform has brought about a change in itself. State Minister of Mines, Million Mathewos said; the macroeconomic reforms being implemented by the government are significantly increasing the productivity of minerals, especially gold production.

According to the State Minister, Due to the reform, it is planned to produce 8.6 tons of gold in the current fiscal year, and in the first quarter of the fiscal year /in the last three months/ alone, 70% of the plan has been achieved. The reform is benefiting the mineral producers as they have bought better machineries and utilizing technologies.

The State Minister said that work is underway to increase production by making traditional producers use technology, improve their income and accumulate capital. Of the planned 8.6 tons of gold to be produced in the current fiscal year, 3,600 kilograms will be produced in traditional ways. The traditional mining is being

developed into a small, medium and large scale industry. Measures are being taken to modernize the traditional production to reduce product and labor wastage.

He further explained that, efforts are exerted and changes are being made to achieve the plan for gold production at the regional level. In Tigray Region, for example, encouraging changes have been seen since the last months, according to the data of the Land Use Management and Mining Bureau of the region.

In general, the amount of gold entering the National Bank and the amount of gold that has been brought to the foreign market earns more than 500 million Dollars. Especially, after the full implementation of the macroeconomic reforms, results are being recorded. This is indicated by the fact that the amount of gold provided to the National Bank in the first quarter of the 2024/25 fiscal year alone is almost twice the amount obtained in the entire year last year.

It is believed that the change in gold trading as a country is due to the macroeconomic reforms implemented months ago and the reform of the foreign exchange management system issued by the National Bank.

The implementation of the reform will play a vital role in ensuring that the country gets the appropriate benefits from its potential gold mines and gold resources that are being developed in a traditional and modern way. As soon as the reform was implemented, significant results could be seen. This result also indicates that a large change can be registered in the future.

To make this result sustainable, all stakeholders must fulfill their responsibilities in the implementation of the reform. In this way, it is possible to make the efforts started to save gold from illegal activity when it is done. If gold continues to rise in value at this rate, producers will be more motivated to supply it to the National Bank than to illegal traders thereby the foreign currency that the country earns from gold will increase.

In the Sphere of Diplomacy

Putting all hands on deck to eradicate hunger

BY EYUEL KIFLU

The World without Hunger Conference held from November 5 to 7, 2024 in Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa brought together leaders and experts from various sectors to address the pressing issue of global hunger. Co-hosted by UNIDO, the Government of Ethiopia and the AU, in collaboration with FAO, the meeting sought to deliberate on approaches towards addressing hunger that affects about 8.2 billion people globally today and could rise to 10 billion by 2050.

An important issue discussed at the conference was the necessity to increase international collaboration and investment in the field of agriculture. In the last session, President Taye Atskeselassie voiced the major possibilities bottomed on which most effort could be made towards taking zero hunger commitment.

He said that, the contingencies were mobilization, and engagement of society, and most importantly, strong resource. He highlighted the importance of the leaders to bring major transformative change on the results of discussions held during the conference. "The only way out is for several different parties relevant in making money and other resource investments to get together work towards the elimination of hunger through presentation and emulation of what others are doing and a clear determination of areas of need for investment," he said.

President Taye thanked the participants for their commitment exhibited throughout the conference stating it was importance in Search of Ending Hunger in the World. He went further to explain the difficulties that are seen as being in the process of realizing zero hunger and the coming of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The President also highlighted that sustainable agriculture; agro-industrialization and management of climate related risks are also part of solutions to the problem of hunger. He supported for lending for agricultural producers, especially for smallholders and development of community institutions, enhancement for infrastructure including transport as well as communication to transform agriculture and manufacturing sectors.

There was also discussion of Ethiopia's support for the Green Legacy Initiative, aimed at bringing the forest cover to 26 %: there is also an emphasis on the reforestation work, especially the work done through agroforestry. Integrated agro-industrial parks are necessary and underway while the country is trying to boost food security through deploying drought-resistant crops like wheat and sorghum. "I beseech all nations to decisively, place zero hunger at the top of their national development frameworks as enshrined in the vision of SDGs," he said.



This conference marks a significant step forward in the collective effort to address one of humanity's most critical challenges, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and innovation in the fight against hunger

The conference recalled that the fight against hunger requires joint actions of people across the world. With the new administration of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) in Ethiopia, the country's experiences in agriculture innovation and climate change are important lessons for other nations. Perhaps the most obvious example is the Green Legacy Initiative that called for planting 40 billion seedlings to vie with the issues of climate change that are a threat to agriculture in the area.

Moreover, in a speech delivered during the conference, Prime Minister Abiy highlighted that the Green Legacy Initiative laid a much firmer footing towards sustainable agriculture addressing issues of deforestation, ecosystem regeneration, and improved soil health enabling coverage's all linked to the original research. He pointed to the specifics of how Transforming Food Systems needs to go through agro-industrialization by improving the inputs, energy, and processing technology.

Besides environmental conservation, Ethiopia has also taken its wheat production to export level, where it used to be a consumption level only. Some of the success made in attaining food security was acknowledged and applauded during the conference.

During his speech, Sierra Leone President Julius Maada Bio applauded Ethiopia for achieving the production of wheat during the event, calling it as light at the end of the tunnel for the African nation.

He pointed out that the Ethiopian experience of the success is most compelling evidence of what can be achieved through consistent applications of appropriate technologies, robust institutions and suitable policies required

for attaining food security.

"That definitely is something we have seen being implemented in Ethiopia, and as such, the work that has been done underscores what can be done if there is sound planning, coupled with visionary planning, and strong political will" President Julius Maada Bio said. "For Africa the real opportunity is to unlock potentially the largest arable land in the world combined with growing population complemented by a commitment such that every individual in Africa should be able to make his/her next meal including seeing to it that no child goes to bed a hungry."

Speaking at the event opening, UNIDO Director-General Gerd Müller pointed out that hunger should be made a priority of the global political agenda, especially in Africa. He pointed out; Africa has 60% of the world's arable land with six of the worlds' fastest developing economies. Müller noted that Africa is capable of generating renewable energy, and about the possibility of the country going from an importer of food to an exporter like Ethiopia.

On his part, Moussa Faki Mahamat, the Chairperson, African Union Commission has acknowledged the above statement, more so given the fact that Africa, endowed with so many natural resources is still struggling to fight hunger to a standstill. Data obtained from FAO show that more than 280 million Africans are suffering from Hunger and 850 million people in the continent cannot even afford a nutritious diet.

The President and CEO of the Africa Finance Corporation (AFC), Samaila Zubairu reaffirmed the need for investment, import substitution and backing of farmers and investors in the agricultural sector. On the side, Ethiopia's Industry Minister Melaku Alebel presented his country's success stories in agricultural growth and value addition. He said that programs such as the "Made in Ethiopia" investment has drawn investors and enhanced food security. Such intricate issues as climate change and scarcity of resources did not stop Ethiopia from revolutionizing processed foods, honey and coffee with successful case of public private partnership and set an example for all struggling against hunger.

During the conference, it was revealed that an additional annual investment of 50 billion dollars is necessary over the next decade totaling 500 billion dollars to eliminate global hunger.

This conference marks a significant step forward in the collective effort to address one of humanity's most critical challenges, emphasizing the importance of collaboration and innovation in the fight against hunger.

Law & Politics

Laying the blueprint for a unified continent

Agenda 2063

The Africa we Want



BY DANIEL ALEMAYEHU

Africa has been toiling to put in place a more favorable condition for its people and its states putting forth umbrella plans to create a unified continent. The continent has already embarked on various initiatives to expedite overall integration efforts under the auspices of the African Union.

The Agenda 2063 of the Africa Union, 'Africa We Want' is an abiding set of objectives the continent wishes to achieve in the coming decades. The agenda is Africa's blueprint and master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future. It is the continent's strategic framework that aims to deliver on its goal for inclusive and sustainable development and is a concrete manifestation of the pan-African drive for unity, self-determination, freedom, progress, and collective prosperity pursued under Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance.

The genesis of Agenda 2063 was the realization by African leaders that there was a need to refocus and reprioritize. The African Union Agenda is comprised of seven major aspirations, twenty goals, and several priority areas. All those divisions are meant to bring the Africa we want.

Similar to the other sister continents like the European Union (EU), Africa and its member states have been working hard to make life easy and comfortable. Those set of goals are more likely cognizant of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which are all about making the world better for all without any discrimination.

Specific to Africa and its continental bloc, the African Union (AU), achieving the Agenda 2063 needs more consistency

and integrity among member states. Again, it also requires stronger political decisions to make them effective as those issues that we want to address are concrete and they need bold moves from leaders.

From its inception back in 2013 to realizing 50 solid years of progress and changes, the African Union coupled with its member states has been involved in numerous activities towards the objective. One of the main cooperation should be economic integration among member states to build sustainable economic partnerships. To achieve this, the continental bloc has put activities in place to meet economic partnerships among countries. In the recent scenario, the African Union and member states have designed to implement the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

As every aspiration, goal, and priority area is interconnected, the notion of free movement is the most crucial to increase the connection of African people. Free movement of people in the continent is the other issue that needs to be addressed in a short period. Africans, like other continents, should have the freedom to roam the continent without any hindrance. The issue of issuing one passport to all Africans is the key to the upcoming economic and societal togetherness and prosperity.

As the dust of implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is not settled well, the one passport issue must also be in progress as the continent needs some bold majors in ratifying the notion. The idea was also reignited during the seventh edition of The Africa We Want Parliament 2024, held this week at the African Union (AU) headquarters.

Speaking to *The Ethiopian Herald*, Ambassador Young Piero, Africa

Coordinator and Director of Parliament Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific Joint Session at the AU, emphasized that economic freedom cannot be achieved without a shared agenda and integrated policies that enable the free movement of African citizens across the continent.

"We talk about economic freedom, but nations still uphold laws and policies that hinder Africa's development. Import duties for Africans should be abolished, and the free movement of goods, commodities, and people must be prioritized," he said.

According to Ambassador Piero, Africa needs a comprehensive blueprint for integrated policies that favor individuals, companies, investors, and industrialization while promoting the free movement of people. Speaking on the need for a single passport, he stated: "We can create an integrated Africa. The AfCFTA, for example, is an ambitious agenda, but the free movement of people within Africa remains restricted."

He stressed that regardless of the political systems in individual countries, collective efforts are essential to build a better future for the continent. "A 'mine-first' mentality only benefits one country, not the entire continent. Africa must prioritize unity and shared progress."

Ambassador Piero pointed out that while the ideal time to implement such policies was 50 years ago, the present is the next best opportunity. "Africans, particularly the youth, cannot wait any longer. The continent's current state is unacceptable because we are not acting or taking responsibility," he said.

He called on African youth to take responsibility for shaping the continent's destiny. "Africans must work together with respect and unity. The AU's

Agenda 2063 will remain unrealized unless citizens actively contribute to this vision. Citizens must commit to building functional systems, governments, policies, and a unified continent."

He also emphasized that without free human mobility, the vision of Agenda 2063 cannot progress. "Ten years of Agenda 2063 have already passed. It's time to stand on our feet and harness the power of collaboration. A single passport is critical, even if it starts regionally with Eastern, Western, and Southern African passports as intermediate steps."

Bernard Kasekete (PhD), CEO of GOHORI Resort in Zimbabwe and recipient of the African Union's Young Ambassador of Africa award, echoed similar sentiments. He highlighted the critical role of youth in shaping Africa's future and urged them to embrace entrepreneurship and resource utilization.

"Africa is endowed with abundant natural resources. The younger generation must seize these opportunities. In Zimbabwe, for instance, the government is empowering youth in agriculture and encouraging them to contribute to nation-building. Young people are beginning to take control of resources," he noted.

Kasekete also stressed the importance of changing young Africans' perceptions, urging them to leverage their capacity and build their own legacies. "The youth must take ownership of Africa's resources. We cannot wait for others to act for us. It is time to step forward and lead."

While key sectors such as mining, farming, and entrepreneurship remain underdeveloped, Kasekete concluded that the youth bear the greatest responsibility for addressing these gaps and forging a prosperous future for the continent.

Society

ICT competitions: Shaping the future education, innovation skills

BY MENGISTEAB TESHOME

In the 21st century, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has significantly transformed the way we live, work and lead our day to day activities. From communication to production and marketing, these days, ICT has become the driving force behind innovation as well as shaping our activities and interactions in profound ways.

Countries around the world are making substantial investments in digital platforms to provide services that are faster, more reliable, and cost-efficient. Both international and local organizations, particularly in sectors like health, education, and finance, are allocating substantial resources to nurture human development in ICT.

At the same time, educational institutions are striving to create a skilled workforce by providing quality education, both formally and informally. Today, ICT competitions are becoming common trends with students and professionals alike participating in events that promote technological progress. These competitions play a crucial role in developing students' skills and knowledge in the increasingly digital society, while encouraging innovation, teamwork, and problem-solving—skills that are essential for success in a tech-driven world.

Recently, the annual “Huawei ICT Competition” that was designed to enhance students' knowledge and skills in ICT was held here in Addis Ababa. At the ceremony, Huawei honored national and international finalists of the annual ‘Huawei ICT Competition’ and recognized the exceptional skills of college students.

It has also launched the 2024–2025 Huawei ICT Competition.

Speaking on the occasion Chief Executive Officer for ICT and Digital Education at the Ministry Zelalem Assefa (PhD), stressed the significance of this collaboration. He emphasized that the Ministry would continue its partnership with Huawei; and highlighted how the competition is vital in fostering entrepreneurial thinking among students and creating job opportunities.

He also extended his gratitude to Huawei for its commitment to develop students' skills in partnership with the Ministry of Education.

Huawei's Head of Public Relations in Ethiopia, Liming Ye, also underscored the importance of such initiatives (staging ICT competitions) in terms of encouraging and engaging young people in driving development. He reaffirmed Huawei's commitment to supporting ICT education in Ethiopia.

In an exclusive interview with *The Ethiopian Herald*, Addis Ababa Education Bureau Information Technology Development



Director Dereje Dagne said that, ICT competitions are a cornerstone of Ethiopia's digital strategy for 2025. These events provide students with practical exposure to technology and equip them with skills for the digital economy.

ICT is essential in shaping modern lifestyles and careers. It has also revolutionized communication, streamlined production processes, transformed marketing strategies, and enhanced accessibility and convenience. As the world becomes increasingly digitalized, the need for ICT skills and knowledge is more critical than ever before. So embracing these technologies not only simplifies lives but also empowers to navigate and succeed in an ever-changing landscape. In this regard, schools are the ideal place to materialize it

According to him, ICT competitions provide students with opportunities to enhance technical skills on programing, web development, data analysis, and cyber security capability. Through participating on such events, students could gain hands-on experience, deepen their understanding on complex concepts.

Additionally, by challenging students to think critically and develop innovative solutions to real-world problems, ICT competitions encourage creativity and collaboration.

Many of such contests require teamwork, helping students develop character crucial skills such as communication, delegation and conflict resolution skills that are valuable in both academic and professional environments, he reiterated.

ICT competitions expose students to the latest technological trends and tools aside from boosting their confidence. Working with cutting-edge technologies provides them with a competitive edge as they enter the job market. The networking opportunities at these events are also invaluable, allowing students to connect with industry professionals, educators, and

potential employers, leading to mentorships, internships, and job offers.

However, according to him, for ICT competitions to have the greatest impact, schools and families should support and encourage students to participate. Schools can raise awareness by organizing campaigns to inform students about upcoming events and their benefits. Workshops and seminars can help students understand the competition process and prepare effectively. What is more, integrating ICT education into school curricula, with projects aligned to competition themes, allows students to explore relevant subjects while preparing for these events. Establishing ICT clubs or teams within schools can foster a collaborative environment, where students can share ideas and develop skills together.

Likewise, parents have to offer the necessary support and resources to elevate their children interest and build up their self-confidence thereby arouse their curiosity on the matter.

They have to create platforms that can enhance students' exposure to essential IT knowledge and skills such as online tutorials, coding platforms, and forums where students can learn and practice skills relevant to competitions.

While stating the mechanisms that schools can devise to raise the interest of students about IT, he said schools can staging awareness campaigns that could allure students. They can organize workshops and seminars to inform students about upcoming ICT competitions, and let them learn its return and how to participate.

The other approach could be integrating the curriculum with ICT education and incorporating competition themes into classroom projects, allowing students to explore relevant topics while preparing for competitions.

Schools should enhance establishing clubs to give opportunities for students to participate early develop skill and knowledge. “I

believe through creating ICT clubs or teams where students can collaborate, share ideas, and prepare for competitions together, fostering a sense of community,” he opined.

Partnering with local businesses and tech organizations to sponsor competitions or provide resources, enhancing community engagement.

In general by combining awareness, support, and encouragement, schools can significantly increase student participation in ICT competitions. Creating a vibrant and inclusive culture around these events not only enhances students' technical skills but also prepares them for future challenges in a digital world.

Needless to say ICT competitions are vital for cultivating a generation of skilled, innovative, and collaborative individuals. They do not only enhance technical knowledge but also prepare students for future challenges in an increasingly becoming digital world. By promoting participation in such events, educational institutions can help students acquire the skills necessary for success in a rapidly changing digital landscape. With the right support, ICT competitions not only enhance technical knowledge, but also inspire students to become future leaders, innovators, and problem solvers, ultimately benefiting society and the global economy.

The Huawei ICT Competition is an annual initiative designed to foster and showcase the skills of students in the field of information and communication technology (ICT). Aimed at cultivating talent and innovation among the youth, the competition provides participants with a platform to demonstrate their knowledge and practical abilities in various ICT disciplines, including networking, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence. By engaging with cutting-edge technology and real-world scenarios, students not only enhance their technical prowess but also gain invaluable insights into the demands of the global tech industry, it was learnt.

Planet Earth

Empowering farmers, improving their socio-economic status



BY FIKADU BELAY

Climate change poses a significant threat to food security in Ethiopia, a nation already vulnerable due to its reliance on rain-fed agriculture. Increasing temperatures, unpredictable rainfall, and prolonged droughts have exacerbated existing challenges, leading to severe implications for agricultural production and food availability.

Ethiopia faces significant barriers in achieving food security and promoting sustainable farming practices. The country is prone to droughts and erratic rainfall, which can lead to crop failures and food shortages.

The impacts of climate change have resulted in reduced crop yields, an increase in pest and disease outbreaks, and heightened competition for water resources. Droughts, in particular, have become more frequent and severe, weakening the resilience of farming communities and contributing to food insecurity.

The relationship between climate change and drought not only affects agricultural output but also influences nutrition and livelihoods. As food becomes scarcer, prices rise, and access decreases, especially for vulnerable populations. This situation threatens the progress made in improving food security and reducing poverty in recent years.

Despite being referred to as the “Water Tower of Africa” due to its abundant natural resources, such as rivers and lakes, Ethiopia struggles to effectively utilize these resources for agricultural development.

With agriculture being the mainstay of Ethiopia’s economy, employing a significant portion of the population, it plays a crucial role in the nation’s economic growth. Statistics show that agriculture engages over 70% of the workforce and contributes more than 40% to the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). However, the sector faces challenges such as erratic rainfall, soil degradation, and limited access to modern irrigation technologies.

Identifying the significance of irrigation, the Ethiopian government has prioritized the development of irrigation infrastructure as part of its broader agricultural strategy. This involves the construction of both small-scale and large-scale irrigation systems to enhance water management and improve crop yields. By harnessing the potential of rivers, lakes,

and groundwater, irrigation can help mitigate the impacts of climate variability, increase agricultural productivity, and support rural livelihoods.

Furthermore, irrigation is seen as a pathway to achieving national goals related to poverty reduction, economic growth, and food security. As Ethiopia continues to invest in its irrigation sector, it aims not only to improve agricultural output but also to promote sustainable practices that protect its natural resources and support the resilience of its farming communities.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including investment in climate-resilient agricultural practices, improved resources, and social safety nets to support affected communities. Additionally, the government started a summary irrigation program in the past years that aims to achieve sustainable and resilient agricultural practices for the country.

In a significant stride towards enhancing agricultural productivity, Ethiopia’s Ministry of Agriculture has aimed at an ambitious plan for the 2017E.C summer season. According to Kebede Lakew, the Executive Director of Public Relations and Communication at the Ministry, the country is set to produce an impressive 172 million quintals of irrigated summer wheat across 4.2 million hectares of land.

The initiative is aimed at not only bolstering wheat production but also increasing the overall agricultural output through the simultaneous cultivation of vegetables and fruits.

Kebede emphasized that the government is committed to increasing both production and productivity through improved agricultural practices and resource allocation. “We are working diligently to ensure that soil fertilizers and other essential resources are readily available to our farmers,” he stated.

To support the initiative, the ministry is providing farmers with access to vital irrigation technologies, such as pumps and engines, which are crucial for effective summer farming. “We recognize the benefits that farmers are reaping from summer irrigation for wheat cultivation, and we are investing in the necessary equipment to enhance this production,” Kebede added.

The summer wheat cultivation is being implemented nationwide, with a particular

emphasis on the Oromia region. As of October 19, 2017, significant progress has been made: approximately 670,000 hectares of land have been prepared using traditional methods, while an additional 180,000 hectares have been cultivated using modern Kobainer techniques. In total, 850,000 hectares have been readied for seeding, with 5,113 hectares already sown, he noted.

He highlighted that the government is not only focused on quantity but also on quality. To facilitate the development of high-yield summer wheat, the ministry is prioritizing the distribution of superior seeds and implementing advanced agricultural technologies.

Kebede pointed out that preparatory measures are being taken to mitigate potential challenges, including crop diseases. To this end, the ministry has equipped itself with five spray planes and trucks, ready to address any pest or disease outbreaks that may threaten the crops.

“We have five spray planes and trucks on standby to address any emerging threats to our crops,” he explained, underscoring the proactive approach being taken to safeguard this crucial agricultural endeavor. Additionally, the ministry is committed to conducting necessary protection and control measures to safeguard the crops, thereby fostering a more resilient agricultural sector, he noted.

By fostering a culture of continuous improvement and adaptation, the government hopes to empower local farmers and bolster the nation’s agricultural sector. As Ethiopia moves forward with these plans, the success of the summer wheat initiative will hinge on collaboration between government bodies, agricultural experts, and the farming community.

With concerted efforts and the right support, the vision of a thriving agricultural landscape can become a reality, paving the way for a more prosperous future. Moreover, the country aims to not only meet the demands of its growing population but also to enhance its export capacity.

One of the government’s promising solutions lies in the integration of solar energy into irrigation systems. Solar energy presents a clean, renewable resource that can significantly enhance irrigation efforts, particularly in rural areas where conventional

energy sources are scarce or unreliable.

The use of solar-powered irrigation systems offers several benefits, as it reduces dependency on fossil fuels, lowers operational costs, and provides a reliable energy source for pumping water, even in remote locations. The transition not only supports agricultural productivity but also contributes to food security and economic stability in the country.

The starter of solar energy for irrigation can revolutionize farming techniques so that solar-powered pumps can efficiently draw water from underground aquifers or nearby water bodies, allowing farmers to irrigate their crops consistently, regardless of seasonal rainfall.

This technology can lead to increased crop yields, diversification of agricultural products, and extended growing seasons, ultimately enhancing the resilience of farmers against climate variability.

Furthermore, the government has set ambitious targets to increase the share of renewable energy in its energy mix, aiming for universal access to electricity by 2025. By investing in solar irrigation systems, Ethiopia can create interactions between its energy and agricultural sectors, fostering a sustainable development model that empowers local communities.

The transition to solar energy in irrigation also holds socio-economic benefits. Access to reliable irrigation can improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, particularly women, who play a crucial role in agricultural production. Empowering these farmers with modern irrigation technologies can enhance their income and improve their socio-economic status. Additionally, increased agricultural productivity can stimulate local economies, create jobs, and reduce poverty levels.

The integration of solar energy into irrigation practices represents a transformative opportunity for Ethiopia’s agricultural sector. As Ethiopia embarks on this critical transition, it is essential to invest in infrastructure, training, and policy frameworks that support the adoption of solar-powered irrigation systems, ensuring that the benefits are felt by all segments of society. The future of Ethiopian agriculture, strengthened by solar energy, holds the promise of a more sustainable and prosperous nation.