

A Week in the Horn 23.10.2020

News in Brief

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Africa and the African Union

Ten African Heads of State including Ethiopian Prime Minister, Abiy Ahmed have issued a strong call to other world leaders to increase their funding to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) or risk jeopardizing Sustainable Development Goal targets for eradicating poverty and hunger, particularly in Africa. IFAD said in a press release issued on Monday that Africa is addressing conflict, changing weather patterns, pests, and the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19. Hunger levels on the continent are twice the world average. "We share IFAD's vision of vibrant rural communities where people live free from poverty and hunger," wrote the leaders of Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Kenya, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo in letters to their counterparts in Europe, North America, the Middle East, Asia, and Oceania.

African Union and Estonia, in cooperation with Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg and Poland, with the implementing partners Garage48 and Smart Africa are organizing an online cross-continental hackathon "EU-Africa: The Post Crisis Journey" on 10-13 December 2020. The online hackathon is seeking innovative solutions to socio-economic problems in Africa, exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis. The event builds on AU-Estonia cooperation agreement in December 2017 and the recommendations of AU-EU task force report in 2018. It is to be noted that spurring digitalization in Africa and seeking innovative development solutions is at the heart and spirit of the AU Digital Transformation Strategy approved in 2020 and in line with Agenda

2063 which gives a prominent place to youth empowerment and participation.

Ethiopia

President Sahle-Work Zewde said attention should be given towards addressing good governance problems, which are the main causes for instability in urban areas. She was speaking at the ‘Cities Peace Forum’ underway in the town of Arabaminch, SNNP regional state today (October 23). The President said lack of justice, accountability and unemployment are the main problems of good governance in urban areas. The forum which was organized by the Ministry of Urban Development and Construction, have attracted ministers and stakeholders from regional states.

Members of the Ethiopian Diaspora have so far raised \$283,378 for the ‘Dine for Ethiopia’ projects. ‘Dine for Ethiopia’ is a fundraising program aimed at financing three national projects- Wonchi, Gorgora and Koysha. The program aims to raise 3 billion birr for the projects that will be executed in Oromia, Amhara and SNNP regional states, respectively. “The support that the diaspora communities are providing to the ‘Dine for Ethiopia’ is amazing. They have so far raised about \$283, 378,” said the Prime Minister on twitter today (October 23).

State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Tsion Teklu on Thursday (October 22) received Danish Special Envoy on Migration, Anders Tang Friborg. During their discussion, she appreciated the Government of Denmark for its understanding and support to the Ethiopian’s commitment to citizen-centered diplomacy. Ethiopia is doing its level best to repatriate and rehabilitate those who opt to return home for various reasons, she added. She also said the Government is working with various stakeholders to halt human trafficking. Anders Tang Friborg said cooperation is indispensable to eradicate the root causes of human trafficking. He reaffirmed that Denmark would provide the necessary assistance to build the capacity and job creation opportunity of returnees.

The Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy (MoWIE) has announced plans to complete the construction of Koysha hydropower project in three years. With 2,160 megawatts generation capacity, Koysha is the second largest hydropower project in Ethiopia, next to the Grand

Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). It is under construction on Omo River and has now reached 39%. Dr. Seleshi Bekele, Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy, said on Thursday (October 22) more works are underway to complete the project in three years to achieve Ethiopia's plan to reach universal access to electricity after five years.

Minister of Education Dr Getahun Mekuria said Ethiopia is committed to both financing to education and technology-intensive education. He made the remark at the extraordinary session of the Global Education Meeting (GEM) convened by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and held online on Friday (October 23).

Ethiopia reported 575 new COVID19 cases and 12 deaths on Thursday (October 22). The total number of confirmed cases in the country now stands at 91, 693, with 1,396 deaths so far. A total of 754 patients have recovered from the virus to bring the total recoveries to 45, 260. The country has so far conducted 1,423,505 laboratory tests.

High Officials from Ethiopia and Germany met virtually on Thursday (October 22) to kick off the second round Joint Ministerial Commission of the two countries. According to German Embassy in Addis Ababa, the working group "Foreign Policy and Security" discussed, amongst others, the bilateral relations between Ethiopian and Germany, regional issues both in Europe and the Horn of Africa, and the commitment of the two countries to the alliance for multilateralism.

Back in May 2020, Ethiopia was able to repatriate 658 migrants from Lebanon in a dignified manner. What makes this case different was that the migrants were already registered to return home before the COVID-19 pandemic strengthened its roots. The government of Ethiopia has paid the entire travel cost to the most vulnerable ones. Ethiopian Airlines has offered a considerable discount on its travel tickets for some of these migrants. Some were lucky enough to get assistance from other sources. We are now in the 9th round of repatriating our citizens. The first plane carrying the returnees in the 9th round has touched the lane on Wednesday (October 21, 2020). The Government of Ethiopia has observed changes in the management system of Ethiopian migrants since commencement of the first round of repatriation. **(See article)**

State Minister of Foreign Affairs Tsion Teklu on Wednesday (October 21) received the Ambassador of United Arab Emirates (UAE) to Ethiopia, Mohammed Salem. The two discussed bilateral issues of mutual interest with a particular emphasis on investment opportunities and challenges for UAE investors in Ethiopia. State Minister Tsion said the two countries should scale up their relationship with investments that encourage social responsibility, technology transfer, job creation, and capacity building. Ambassador Mohammed Salem expressed his hope that the Ethiopian investment and business environment would be even more attractive with due attention given to weed out bottlenecks to investment.

A one-year COVID-19 National Cohort Study that involves 45 scientists from local universities, international research institutes, and foreign universities has been launched at the Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPI). Over 90 million birr is allocated for the cohort study that is aimed to determine the natural history of the disease, clinical features, management and epidemiological characteristics of the virus. EPI Director-General Dr. Ebba Abate told journalists today that the study will help the country's policy decision regarding the management, spread, and control of the Coronavirus.

Ethiopia is working to complete its accession to World Trade Organization (WTO) by next year, Senior Policy Advisor and Chief Trade Negotiator at the Office of the Prime Minister said on Wednesday (October 21). In an exclusive interview with ENA, Senior Policy Advisor and Chief Trade Negotiator Mamo Mihretu revealed that the negotiation toward accession to WTO which started 16 years is making progress. In a multilateral negotiation held last January with WTO member countries, Ethiopia had examined its trade and investment regime against WTO agreements and requirements.

The Republic of Korea on Tuesday (October 20) has donated USD 5 million worth of COVID-19 protective equipment to Ethiopia. Deputy Minister for Multilateral and Global Affairs of the Republic of Korea, H.E. Ham Sang-wook, handed over the donation to Ethiopia's Minister of Health, H.E. Dr. Lia Taddese. Speaking at the occasion, Dr. Lia Taddese thanked the Republic of South Korea for such a generous donation. She said the donation is critical in supporting Ethiopia's efforts in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. H.E. Mr. Ham Sang-wook said his country is delighted to present the donation to Ethiopia. He said

his country is grateful to the Ethiopian troops who fought alongside the Republic of Korea during the Korean War.

The U.S.-Ethiopia Investment Dialogue took place on Tuesday (October 20) with a focus on promoting opportunities for business and investment to grow between the two countries. The dialogue was organized in partnership with the Corporate Council on Africa (CCA) and featured high-level speakers including Dr. Eyob Tekalign, State Minister of Finance of Ethiopia, Fitsum Arega, Ethiopian Ambassador to the U.S., and Florie Liser, President and CEO, CCA.

The House of Peoples' Representatives (HPR) held its 6th year, first extraordinary session on Monday (October 19). The meeting approved a motion in support of the 2020/21 government's plan presented by President Sahlework Zewdie during the joint session of the two Houses early in October. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed attended the special meeting and addressed the parliament on several issues. He highlighted his Government's plan to complete unfinished public projects, lower the inflation rate on consumer goods, reduce the unemployment rate, and support displaced people affected by violence. The Prime Minister also explained plans to cover city dwellers under a safety net program, expand people's access to electricity, and broaden the prospect of the Hospitality Industry in the post-COVID period. (**See article**)

The Ethiopian Federal Police Commission has arrested 14 foreign nationals suspected of international drug trafficking crime. According to the Deputy Director of Drug Monitoring and Operation at the Commission, Commander Mengisteab Beyene, of the suspected drug traffickers, 13 are Nigerian and one is Brazilian national. The suspects, who had departed from Sao Paulo, Brazil were arrested on Monday (October 19) at the Addis Ababa Bole International Airport with more than 14 kilograms of cocaine produced in Latin America, Commander Mengisteab said.

Fortune Newspaper on Saturday (October 17) reported that the government of Germany and Ethiopia have partnered to launch a project to finance 30 small and medium-sized manufacturers from five selected regional states to work on bamboo production. Worth 78 million Br, the project aims to support government Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) relief efforts by galvanising the bamboo industry. The German Development Agency (GIZ) and the Federal Small & Medium

Manufacturing Industries Promotion Authority have launched a project in Addis Abeba, Oromia, Southern Nations, Nationalities & Peoples, Amhara and Tigray regional states. These enterprises will produce 20,000 bamboo beds over a six-month project period.

The Ethiopian Construction Design & Supervision Works Corporation has secured a deal to supervise the construction of two groundwater dam projects in two regional states at a total cost of 18 million Br. The two projects are located in the Borena and Shinelle zones of Oromia and Somali regional states, respectively. The Irrigation Development Commission (IDC) awarded the deal to the Corporation after it out-competed six state companies invited by the Commission to take part in the process. The Amhara, Oromia, Tigray, Somali, Afar and South Design & Supervision Works Enterprises were the other contenders.

Preparations are underway to open border crossings between Ethiopia and Sudan at the Kurmuk checkpoint. This came after The Blue Nile State received the green light from the Sudanese Federal Supreme Committee for Health Emergencies to open border crossings by strictly adhering to health and security requirements to prevent the spread of COVID19. Similarly, after assessing the impact of the pandemic and undertaking the necessary precautionary measures, the Ethiopian Side is also expected to pass a decision to open its border crossings at Kurmuk. **(See article)**

The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission Josep Borrell along with the EU Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez Lenarčič visited Ethiopia from 8 to 9 October 2020. The delegation held extensive discussions with Ethiopian government officials and officials of the African Union. The delegation delivered 7.5 tons of coronavirus testing kits to the African Center for Disease Control to help the African Continent deal with the pandemic. **(See article)**

Eritrea

Eritrea's senior delegation composed of Foreign Minister Osman Saleh and Presidential Adviser Yemane Ghebreab met on Tuesday (October 20) in Khartoum, Sudan's President of the Sovereign Council, General Abdulfatah Al-Burhan, and delivered message from President Isaias Afwerki. The Eritrean delegation also met Prime Minister Abdullah

Hamdok as well as Vice President Mohammed Hamadan Dugglo. The delegation congratulated the people and Government of Sudan on the country's removal from the US list of "state sponsors of terrorism". President Al Burhan thanked Eritrea for its strong and unwavering solidarity with Sudan; stated that bilateral security cooperation has commenced; and, stressed the need to develop it further. He also stated that Sudan and Eritrea share identical positions on timely Horn of Africa cooperation.

Djibouti

The Ombudsmen of Ethiopia and Djibouti have signed an agreement to enhance their bilateral cooperation. Chief Ombudsman of the Ethiopian Institution of the Ombudsman, Dr. Endale Haile and his Djiboutian counterpart, Dr. Kasim Esak signed the agreement in Addis Ababa today (October 23). The deal includes cooperation in capacity building, good governance, democracy and peace building efforts, according to ENA. Chief Ombudsman, Dr. Endale said besides enhancing the Ombudsmen of the two countries to work together in the area of good governance and democracy, the agreement will also contribute to further expand the bilateral relations of the countries. Dr. Kassim stated the deal will help the two nations to exchange experts and experiences as well as provide trainings aimed at strengthening the capacity of the respective Ombudsmen.

Ethiopia and Djibouti have signed an agreement to revamp the 80 kilometers Dikhil Daguru road, a part of Galafi highway. Ethiopian Construction Works Corporation Chief Executive Officer, Engineer Yonas Ayalew and Djibouti Ports Corridor Roads Director General, Abdi Ebrahim Farah have signed the agreement on behalf of their respective countries. Ethiopian Minister of Transport, Damawit Moges and Djibouti Ports and Free Zones Authority Director, Abubeker Oumer Haji have witnessed the signing ceremony last week on Thursday (October 15). The Dikhil–Daguru has been damaged to the extent that has been hindering the transportation system across the cross the Ethio-Djibouti corridor.

Kenya

The reported entry of Ethiopia into the Somalia miraa business has left traders in Kenya anxious about losing the lucrative market to their

northern neighbours for good. According to Somali media reports, the Ethiopian national carrier on Saturday (October 17) delivered the first consignment of miraa, also known as khat, to the Aden Adde International Airport. The development has sent shock-waves among Kenyan traders, who have monopolised the Mogadishu market for ages.

Ethiopian ride-hailing transport company El-Taxi Trading better known as Taxiye is almost penetrating into African market aiming at generating foreign currency and promoting tourism. Taxiye Manager, Tsedey Asfaw told media on Sunday (October 18) that Taxiye is providing transport service in Kenya with about 8000 registered motorcycles .It has also finalized preparations to launch service in South Sudan next month. The company is endeavoring to stretch its wings to 18 African countries where it got operational license, Tsedey expressed.

Somalia

As Somalia prepares to hold elections, the United Nations today (October 23) highlighted the need to ensure the country's political space remains open, allowing for a diversity of voices and views to be expressed as part of the democratic process. To achieve this, freedom of expression, opinion, and assembly must be protected. "A vibrant political space is one that permits and encourages the participation of all segments of society – individual citizens, the media, civil society, public institutions, and political parties, among others. A democratic society must allow different viewpoints on political issues to be expressed openly, free from restriction or harassment," said the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, James Swan.

The Head of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Ambassador Francisco Madeira, has pledged the mission's support to ensure that Somalia's 2020/2021 Parliamentary and Presidential elections are secure and successful. Speaking during an online meeting on Thursday (October 22) with officials of the Somali Public Agenda (SPA), a research and public policy non-governmental organisation based in Mogadishu, Ambassador Madeira said AMISOM had trained Somali Security Forces on electoral security threat management and was ready to support the electoral process.

President Yoweri Museveni on Wednesday held a meeting with the First Lady of the Federal Republic of Somalia, Saynab Abdi Moallim, at State House Entebbe. During the meeting, the two discussed issues of mutual interest between their two countries. Saynab Abdi Moallim is in Uganda on a two-day working visit during which planned to attend the official commissioning of Atiak Sugar Factory in Amuru district.

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), in collaboration with the International Centre for Peace, Human Rights and Development (IPHRD-Africa), has held on Saturday (October 17) a sensitisation meeting to enhance the participation of Somali women leaders in peace processes, human rights and nation-building. The discussions, organized by AMISOM's Protection, Human Rights and Gender (PHRG) Cluster, deliberated on advancing the commitment to support the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions on women, youth, peace and security.

South Sudan

The European Union (EU) delegation have expressed deep concerns regarding recurrent reports of high numbers of incidents in South Sudan, where national and international humanitarian aid workers are hindered, threatened, injured or in some cases killed. The joint statement issued on Tuesday (October 20) came from heads of mission from France, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Canada, United States, the United Kingdom and Switzerland. "We strongly condemn the October 5 attack on a clearly identified WFP humanitarian aid convoy carrying much-needed food assistance for South Sudanese people affected by severe food insecurity and flooding," partly reads the statement.

The governor of South Sudan's Warrap State, Bona Panek Biar on Friday (October 16) briefed President Salva Kiir of the calm and stability months after the disarmament was conducted. Speaking to the media after the meeting Kiir in his office in Juba, Biar said the security situation of Warrap was generally calm and stable with only minor criminal cases being handled by the state authorities

Despite the internal divisions within the South Sudan Opposition Movements Alliance (SSOMA) which happened just before the start of the recently concluded Rome peace process between the Revitalized Transitional Government of Nation Unity (RTGoNU) and SSOMA under the auspices of the Community of Sant'Egidio, the Community is urging inclusion of all the parties in the talks. "We are not intentioned to exclude and we are in no capacity to exclude anyone from the table. We need full inclusivity to achieve good results in this peace process, so we won't exclude anyone from the table of negotiations," The Head of International Relations at Community of Sant'Egidio Mauro Garofalo (PhD) said last Thursday (October 15) on Sawa Sawa Network's program The Weekly Review.

Sudan

The United Nations Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga has lauded the strengthening relations between Sudan and neighboring South Sudan. While briefing the Security Council on Thursday (October 22) after visiting Sudan, Onanga-Anyanga said the relationship between Sudan and South Sudan continues to strengthen, adding that both countries agreed to review all their 2012 cooperation agreements with immediate effect. "I am happy to report that the relationship between Sudan and South Sudan continues to strengthen. It is in this context that, at the beginning of September, Sudan and South Sudan agreed to review all their 2012 Cooperation Agreements with immediate effect," he said.

The U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced on Wednesday that Washington has kicked off the process by which Sudan would get off the list of states that sponsor terrorism but declined to give a timeline. "I don't know the precise timing, but we are – we have begun the process to lift the designation of state sponsorship of terror. It's the right thing to do. There's been a lot of work done on this over the course of the first three years of the administration. We believe there is a firm legal basis for doing that, and we think that there will be enormous bipartisan consensus that that's the right to do," said in response to questioning by reporters at his weekly press conference.

The Sudanese authorities should hand over former President Omer al-Bashir to the International Criminal Court (ICC) to expedite justice in Darfur as the country still struggling to reform the judiciary system,

said Amnesty International on Wednesday (October 21). Fatou Bensouda was in Khartoum this week for talks with the government officials on the options for the trial of the former President Omer al-Bashir and two senior officials indicted on charges of crimes against humanity, genocide and war crimes.

Prime Minister Abiy addresses House of Peoples' Representatives 6th year, first Extraordinary Session

The House of Peoples' Representatives (HPR) held its 6th year, first extraordinary session on Monday (October 19). The meeting approved a motion in support of the 2020/21 government's plan presented by President Sahlework Zewdie during the joint session of the two Houses early in October. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed attended the special meeting and addressed the parliament on several issues.

He highlighted his Government's plan to complete unfinished public projects, lower the inflation rate on consumer goods, reduce the unemployment rate, and support displaced people affected by violence. The Prime Minister also explained plans to cover city dwellers under a safety net program, expand people's access to electricity, and the prospect of the Hospitality Industry in the post-COVID period.

The prime minister explained the measurements that the Government of Ethiopia has been taking to save the economy from the severe effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. He said his Government followed a strategy of protecting the country from the virus and has continued to do so. "While the world's economy is predicted to decline, Ethiopia's economy has grown at a rate of 6.1%." However, some of the economic sectors, such as education, tourism, and transport have shown less performance due to the COVID-19 pandemic, compared to some other sectors, such as health, mining, and banking that registered huge improvements in various aspects.

Although Covid19 did not affect Ethiopia as it did in other countries, the damage will be worse if we do not return to a state of normalcy while taking precautions, he said. "We must not forget the severity of the virus. Let's keep our distance, wear masks, and keep our hands

clean.” He said that Education will continue after the necessary Covid-19 responsive preparations are completed.

Highlighting his Government’s plan to complete unfinished public projects, he said the government was forced to focus on projects since institutional capacity to finalize projects independently was not demonstrated. He explained the huge costs of completing Public enterprises such as sugar factories [under Ethiopian Sugar Corporation], Ethio-Engineering, and Industrial Parks which already have inundated the government in debt. He said, “Using a macroeconomic approach, the government has developed a way to restructure and get rid of debt.” He also mentioned what is expected of the government and the public in completing the flagship project-GERD. He said the dam’s construction is becoming more demanding in finance, technique, and engineering. Taking the opportunity and challenges of building the dam into account, he said, “We must not take our focus off GERD.”

The prime minister also elaborated on the government’s plan to provide electricity to the public and at least light up several homes within 5 years. He said, “So far, 69 additional woredas have gained access to electricity,” adding that “Solar services have been launched in 12 small towns.” He underlined the need to expand the power supply using off-grid energy options aside from the conventional power generation system. He cited how solar and geothermal alternatives can provide us with untapped energy sources.

The Prime Minister also addressed the parliament on the government’s commendable activities regarding the tourism sector of the country. He said, to make Ethiopia a tourist destination, we started working on our offices and continued to our compounds, capital city, and now our country. “The rationale for starting small and expanding is to acquire the necessary experience and be able to complete what was started,” he added. “We will avert the challenges as they appear,” he said, “but will not forget to complete our aspirations for Ethiopia.” According to the Prime Minister, at Entoto Park alone, more than 400 mothers have been rescued from their daily labor of carrying firewood, and thousands have found employment. He said his government will continue this at Boli Lemi Industrial Park, Koysha, Wonchi, Gorgora, Tana Beles, and many more.

The Prime Minister has also covered measurements that the government took to alleviate the effects of the desert locust invasion and floodings in some parts of the country. Regarding the locust invasion, he said a team led by the Ministry of Agriculture worked to prevent damage in the first round, but a second locust swarm caused damage. The Prime Minister said, “Efforts to bring in helicopters and drones have continued. Assembling patrol helicopters after they arrive in cargo has delayed intervention. In addition to chemical spraying, the community must also intensify its efforts to eradicate locusts. Work is underway to prevent the spread of the attack and threat of famine. The disaster can be controlled to prevent more than 5% damage to productivity.” To solve the problem sustainably, the Prime Minister said that Ethiopian Airlines is working to strengthen its capacity to use small aircrafts. Strengthening the green legacy is also an additional solution to prevent floods and locusts.

Although floods were estimated to affect millions of people, only 600,000 have been affected and 220,000 displaced, he said. “No one died as a result of the efforts of our defense forces,” he added. According to the Prime Minister, the long-term solution to prevent floods is to expand our natural resources. For example, efforts to return the Awash River to its course were successful.

Based on the questions forwarded from members of the parliament, the Prime Minister also expounded on the current status of the Ethiopian defense force in pacifying turmoil and efforts to remove limitations on law enforcement agencies. He said the Defense Forces are well-trained and well-equipped. “They are organized in a way that protects the sovereignty of the country under any circumstances. The leadership was restructured and trained on situational analysis and alignment of power to provide appropriate guidance.” Efforts have been made to build national capacity to prevent accidents, and if not to avert them easily, he added.

Regarding the law enforcement agencies, he said efforts have been made to remove their limitations and to protect the human rights of prisoners and people with court cases. “Capacity building work has been done to modernize the facilities,” he said, adding, “Efforts are being made to strengthen the institutions, but they have not been completely successful.” According to the Prime Minister, the court cases regarding past incidents that negatively impacted peace in different parts of the country are close to finalization. He said that

extensive work is required to capacitate the judiciary system to function independently. Although the work done thus far is promising, court verdicts must be implemented without hesitation, he said.

His explanation also included if his government is shunning away from the Federal system of the country preferring a unitary system of government where power is concentrated in the hands of the Federal government.

He said, “It is unreasonable to think that a government becomes democratic only if it is federal, and is not democratic if it is nationalist. Governments can take many forms. In Ethiopian history, we have seen monarchy. The Derg regime was unitary. The EPRDF government was federal. But all three were not democratic. We have chosen a federal structure based on our cultural and linguistic diversity in Ethiopia. This ensures that authority reaches to the lower strata and that autonomy is exercised. After the reform, the federal government never once interfered in the affairs of the states when it comes to authority.”

“There are some who think that Prosperity Party’s nationalist approach is a threat to federalism. However, the federal government is governed by the Constitution, as well as legislation passed by the House of Representatives and the House of Federation. Our Party is governed by rules and regulations which are subject to the aforementioned rules. What we intend to build is a nation with practical federalism and democracy.”

Ethiopia, Sudan to resume cross-border trade

Preparations are underway to open border crossings between Ethiopia and Sudan at the Kurmuk checkpoint. This came after The Blue Nile State received the green light from the Sudanese Federal Supreme Committee for Health Emergencies to open border crossings by strictly adhering to health and security requirements to prevent the spread of COVID19. Similarly, after assessing the impact of the pandemic and undertaking the necessary precautionary measures, the Ethiopian Side is also expected to pass a decision to open its border crossings at Kurmuk.

The recent signing of the Peace Agreement in Juba between the Transitional Government of Sudan and the armed groups reportedly gave the impetus for the Sudanese side to begin preparations to open the Kurmuk border crossing. The Juba peace agreement is a momentous step for the people of Sudan in their effort to bring about peace and stability in the country after the fall of former President Omar Al Bashir in 2019. It is to be recalled that the Blue Nile state is home to some of the armed forces who took up arms against the government calling for better representation and autonomy.

Prevalence of peace in Sudan particularly in Blue Nile state will undoubtedly improve the security situation in the border areas enhancing border trade and people to people relations between Ethiopia and Sudan. Furthermore, it allows the government to focus its attention on economic development.

Given the historical, cultural, social and economic ties between peoples of the two sisterly countries, the re-opening of the border crossings will be beneficial to the people living near the border areas. Besides enhancing economic exchanges and public interactions along the borders, the opening of such official crossings and establishment of checkpoints along the common borders will enable both sides to control cross-border crimes such as arms smuggling, human trafficking, illegal trade, and other types of criminal activities and ensure peace and stability along the border.

However, there still exists a need for Ethiopia and Sudan to further strengthen their cooperation in the common border areas to enhance development, peace and stability for the benefit of their people. In this regard engaging in bilateral activities that lay the foundation for enhanced economic integration such as developing and implementing joint infrastructural projects is very crucial in facilitating trade and economic integration between Ethiopia and Sudan.

This same week, the effort of the transitional government of Sudan to get the country removed from the list of state sponsors of terrorism seems bearing fruits. The United States government has promised to delist the country from the blacklist once it paid the USD 335 million compensation to the victims and families of the 1998 terrorist bombings of the United States Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam that claimed the lives of more than 200 civilians. Sudan has said it has

already transferred the money and is waiting for the official confirmation from the government of the United States.

Delisting of Sudan from state sponsors of terrorism and removing the financial sanctions is a great step for Sudan to re-engage with the international financial institutions and access to foreign development finance to revive its economy. The Ethiopian government considers that such positive developments regarding Sudan, both internally and at the international level, will enhance peace, stability and economic progress in our sub-region.

Lessons learned to better manage Ethiopian migrants in Lebanon

Back in May 2020, Ethiopia was able to repatriate 658 migrants from Lebanon in a dignified manner. What makes this case different was that the migrants were already registered to return home before the COVID-19 pandemic strengthened its roots. The government of Ethiopia has paid the entire travel cost to the most vulnerable ones. Ethiopian Airlines has offered a considerable discount on its travel tickets for some of these migrants. Some were lucky enough to get assistance from other sources. We are now in the 9th round of repatriating our citizens. The first plane carrying the returnees in the 9th round has touched the lane on October 21, 2020.

We are confident to say that the Ethiopian consulate in Beirut has greatly improved managing the cases of Ethiopian migrants. The revision of migrant management for Ethiopia has paid off after a dedicated application of a principle-based working system, intersectoral coordination, and collaboration at communal and international levels.

Situation in Lebanon

Many Ethiopians have been traveling to the Republic of Lebanon in the last several years to find domestic jobs through the unaccountable “Kaffalla” system. The COVID-19 Pandemic, in addition to the already worsening political and economic crisis, forced the Lebanese Government to shut down its borders. The recent Beirut seaport

explosion has exacerbated the down-spiraling conditions of the country with the consequent public protest. The situation of migrants in Lebanon worsened with the inability of employers to pay, and this exponentially increased the number of migrants requesting assistance. The Ethiopian consulate was not able to provide the requested services, and this necessitated revising the system and assigning a new consul general.

What changed?

We were able to apply a better data management system that created an opportunity for better preparation, security check, and reintegration. The newly adopted data management system helped the consulate to obtain detailed information on returnees for proactive planning by the Ethiopian government. Parallely, partners like the African Union, United Nations, ILO, and European Union were given current information and were requested to assist the Ethiopian community, which is already taking care of the most vulnerable, with the welfare of migrants in need in Beirut. The consulate in Beirut liaised with the Lebanese government in employing the law enforcement for employer's accountability when dumping their employees and working with the Lebanese general security to expedite exit visas for returnees. Volunteers from the community continually assisted the most vulnerable in providing subsistence and administrative issues like registration. The transparent procedure in place has worked well, and communication with all stakeholders has enabled the system to be a success.

Challenges

The already uninviting situation in Lebanon, coupled with the kafala system, is the most challenging aspect for migrants there. Initial reports showed us that the overwhelming situation and the instability of migrants posed a challenge to the works of our consulate in the beginning. But the consulate was able to address the challenge by prioritizing the welfare of migrants and with psychosocial support and continuous engagement.

Acknowledgments

The consulate was also struggling to cope up with the results of provocative media reports regarding Ethiopian migrants. Unethical media used to try hard to persuade migrants to leave shelters and sleep in front of the consulate or to be violent to others. False news and old pictures posted as new ones have also contributed to creating misconceptions in the minds of the public. Confused with such reports, some humanitarian organizations had contacted the consulate and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a list of migrants that they wanted to assist. But all those on the list were at home.

The Ethiopian government has assigned a capable consul general, Mr. Temesgen Oumar, who dedicatedly worked to bring about the change. The entire staff follows suit in bringing about this change. We also appreciate the Ethiopian community in Beirut, who are the first responders to assisting the migrants in every aspect. The Lebanese government also gave a positive response to various requests of the Ethiopian government regarding migrants. The ILO, IOM, and many humanitarian and religious institutions have collaborated in making sure migrants are fed, sheltered, and got access to medical assistance. NGO's like "Egnalegna" are still helping. Individuals like "Zekarias and Cherinet" are doing their level best to pay for airplane tickets for those in need.

African Union has contributed a lot in making the issue regional instead of a one Nation issue. This is the kind of collaboration that made the situation more manageable. Together We Accomplish More: great TEAM work! Ethiopia advocates for a safe and dignified migration!

EU Senior Officials' visit to Ethiopia

The High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission Josep Borrell along with the EU Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez Lenarčič visited Ethiopia from 8 to 9 October 2020. The delegation held extensive discussions with Ethiopian government officials and officials of the African Union. The delegation delivered 7.5

tons of coronavirus testing kits to the African Center for Disease Control to help the African Continent deal with the pandemic.

During this visit, HRVP Borell and Commissioner Lenarčič held high-level discussions with the President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, and the Minister of Peace of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. The discussions considered various issues of local, regional, and continental issues of common concern. The discussions recognized the fact that the region as a whole remains in transition, which makes continuous consultations critical to address challenges emerging in the process.

The delegation also visited EU-supported humanitarian projects; an IOM migrant transit center in Addis Ababa and a camp for the internally displaced persons in the Somali Region where they also had the opportunity to exchange views with the leadership of the Somali national regional state.

At the high-level meetings with Ethiopian Government officials, the delegation was briefed regarding current political developments in Ethiopia and the region, the COVID-19 Pandemic and its impact as well as on migration mechanisms put in place. The two sides also held honest and frank discussions on the preparation of the upcoming AU-EU Summit in 2021 as well as matters related to the Ethiopia – EU bilateral strategic partnership.

The delegation commended the political, economic, and social reforms the government has been undertaking and the series of policy and legislative measures to address the key demands of the peoples of Ethiopia. Regarding the challenges in this process of reform, the delegation not only appreciated the commitment of the Government to continue to implement the reforms and dialogue with relevant stakeholders but also underlined its recognition that Ethiopia's political challenges are complicated and require time and concerted efforts to overcome.

On the upcoming EU-AU Summit avenues, the delegation noted that the next EU-AU Summit should be a landmark event. In this context, both leaders of the Ethiopian government and the EU delegations agreed on the need to establish more partnerships and engagement with the African continent. On the bilateral level, there was an

agreement to enhance the strategic partnership, keep the channel of communication open, and establish a continuous engagement to further boost the cooperation. Ethiopia is one of the two countries that the European Union signed a strategic agreement within the African Continent