

A Week in the Horn 22.01.2021

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**Africa and the African Union**

The 41<sup>st</sup> Ordinary Session of the Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC) kicked off on Wednesday (20 January 2021), in the context of the prevailing COVID-19 Pandemic, ahead of the 34<sup>th</sup> Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU) scheduled to take place on 6 and 7 February 2021 under the theme of "**Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want**". Addressing the ambassadors in his opening remarks, the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat underscored the need for the PRC to put optimal proposals that should support the smooth transition from the old structure of the Commission to the new one.

The response to the COVID-19 crisis builds momentum for Africa's digital transformation to overcome the pandemic and create more productive jobs, according to the 2021 edition of *Africa's Development Dynamics* (AfDD) launched on Tuesday (January 19). The COVID-19 pandemic is the hardest shock to African economies in 25 years. By encouraging the spreading of digital technologies, data and interconnection to all sectors, starting with healthcare, African countries can accelerate economic transformation and the creation of productive jobs, in line with the [Aspirations](#) of the African Union Agenda 2063.

Following the announcement by the African Union Chairperson, President Cyril Ramaphosa, on 14 January 2021 that the African Union has secured a provisional 270 million COVID-19 vaccine doses for Africa through its

COVID-19 African Vaccine Acquisition Task Team (AVATT), the Africa Medical Supplies Platform (AMSP), on behalf of the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), last week on Thursday commenced the COVID-19 vaccines pre-order programme for all African Union Member States. The African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) will facilitate payments by providing advance procurement commitment guarantees of up to US\$2 billion to the manufacturers on behalf of the Member States.

## **Ethiopia**

President Sahle-Work Zewde bade farewell on Wednesday (January 20) to the outgoing Ambassador of the United States to Ethiopia Michael Raynor. The President gave the Ambassador a congratulatory letter for the newly inaugurated American President Joseph R. Biden. The President also congratulated Kamala Harris, the first female Vice President of the US. “I have no doubt she will inspire many young girls and women in and beyond the US,” President Sahle-Work tweeted.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, H.E. Demeke Mekonnen, had a telephone conversation on Wednesday (January 20) with US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Mr. Tibor Nagy. In their conversation, Mr. Demeke spoke at length about the successful rule of law operation in Tigray, the ongoing humanitarian efforts, including the rehabilitation of the infrastructure destroyed by the TPLF junta in the region. Mr. Demeke also described in detail the government’s efforts to stabilize Tigray, including the situation and treatment of Eritrean refugees, the atrocities committed in Maikadra and other areas, and the efforts to apprehend the perpetrators of those despicable acts.

The spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, H.E. Ambassador Dina Mufti, gave the Ministry’s biweekly press briefing on Wednesday (January 20) to the media. In his presentation, the Ambassador expounded on current developments on the Ethiopia-Sudan border issue, the GERD negotiation and the recent irregularities on Sudan’s stance, and claims of some reports on the involvement of third parties (Eritrea) in the law enforcement operation in Tigray. (*See article*)

A delegation led by the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Oumer Hussein was in Djibouti for a three days official visit from January 15-18, 2021. During its stay, the Ethiopian delegation witnessed the inauguration for a new livestock

terminal, paid a visit to the dry bulk operations at Dorale Multipurpose Port talks and the Tadjoura port, and held talks with a number of Djibouti high-level officials. **(See article)**

The National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC) said adequate preparations have been made to assist 2.5 million citizens, including 700,000 more needy people affected by the law enforcement operation in Tigray regional state. Speaking at a press conference held on Thursday (January 21) on the humanitarian response in Tigray, NDRMC Commissioner Mitiku Kassa said the government has been delivering humanitarian assistance, including food and non-food items and medical supplies, to 1.8 million beneficiaries.

Chief Executive of Tigray Provisional Administration, Dr. Mulu Nega said on Thursday (January 21) that allegations against those humanitarian responses in Tigray are orchestrated by elements that are seeking political gain from the situation. Dr. Mulu said that the provisional administration made the humanitarian response activity its priority concern as soon as it took office, he said. He underlined that the TPLF Clique forces caused impediments to the humanitarian activities in the region. Demolition and taking away of heavy trucks by the renegade TPLF also contributed to obstacles in the humanitarian aid delivery across the region, the Chief Executive said.

The Ministry of Health today (January 22) said the distribution of medical supplies worth over 71 million birr is underway in Tigray regional state. The medical supplies are being dispersed to hospitals and health centers in collaboration with humanitarian organizations and development partners, it said. In addition to the distribution of medicines, the Ministry is providing technical assistance, including ambulance and financial support, to health facilities. Minister of Health, Dr. Lia Tadesse, and State Minister of Health, Dr. Dereje Duguma, were part of the delegation led by Muferihat Kamil, Minister of Peace, who recently visited Mekelle to review the emergency response process in the region.

The National Disaster Risk Management Commission announced on Monday (January 18) that it has transported some 500 quintals of nutritious food items to Shire and its environs in Tigray region. The nutritious food items were distributed to children, mothers and elders that are affected by the recent law enforcement operation in the area. According to the commission, medical supplies worth more than 2 million birr were also transported to the area.

The Ministry of Education held on Thursday (January 21) consultation with officials of the interim administration of Tigray to reopen schools in the regional state. State Minister of Education, Huria Ali, on the occasion, assured the officials of her ministry's commitment to providing needed support to the resumption of schools in the region soon. During a field visit held by experts from the ministry, they witnessed that educational infrastructures were damaged and looted by the TPLF forces.

Ethiopian Airlines and the Djibouti Ports and Free Zones Authority (DPFZA) have agreed on Wednesday (January 20) to launch a freight transport service. The agreement aimed to facilitate a smooth and efficient transition of goods in Africa. The agreement anticipates expedited Cargo and freight transportation of more than 400,000 tons of items from China to African countries via Djibouti. If successful, the agreement will help the Ethiopian Airline double its existing cargo service.

The Ministry of Transport has launched the construction of Melodoni junction-Manda-Bure road project that links Ethiopia with Eritrea's Assab port. Minister of Transport, Dagmawit Moges, Chief Administrator of Afar regional state, Awel Arba, and other government officials launched the project on Thursday (January 21). Once completed, the 71.65km road will contribute a lot in facilitating Ethiopia's import-export trade. The road will be built by a Chinese firm Shandong Liquino Group, at a cost of more than 2 billion birr earmarked by the Government of Ethiopia.

The European Union has donated vaccine filling and labeling machine worth over €800,000 to the National Veterinary Institute of Ethiopia. State Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Fikru Regassa, Ambassador of the European Union to Ethiopia, Johan Borgstam and FAO Representative to Ethiopia, Fatouma Seid attended the handover ceremony. The donation by EU would assist Ethiopia's efforts to eradicate goat and sheep disease by 2027, it was noted. Ethiopia currently produces 22 types of vaccines.

Billene Seyoum, Press Secretary for the Office of the Prime Minister of Ethiopia argues in her latest piece on 'the Reporter' Newspaper that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's 2019 Nobel Prize was a deserved win that no amount of hatred or deliberate misrepresentation of character can take away. She says, "Indeed, the Nobel Peace Prize is a prestigious honour bestowed upon guardians of peace. However, to assume that this honour is a covenant for shaming and berating governing leaders with active national responsibilities

into inaction, when faced with a grave threat of state disintegration and chaos, is simplistic at best!” (See article)

The engagement of the Ethiopian Diaspora community in investment activities at home and in supporting flagship projects has gained momentum, Ethiopian Diaspora Agency disclosed. The agency also announced that the Diaspora have contributed 76 million Birr to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and 16 million Birr to “Dine for Ethiopia”. According to the Agency, during the past six months of this fiscal year, over 800 Diaspora investors have presented project proposals to invest in Ethiopia and over 900 Diaspora members also engaged in various trade activities at home. In an exclusive interview with The Ethiopian Herald, Agency’s Director General Selamawit Dawit stated that the Diaspora’s involvement and sense of ownership for their motherland has recently shown great improvement.

The National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) announced that it has revoked the legal status of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) as a political party. The officials said the decision was made after the board’s evaluation process that confirmed that TPLF has engaged in armed rebellion and hence can’t any longer meet the criteria to own legal status. The board said it has confirmed the party’s involvement in the violence, citing statements made by the party and publicly available facts to determine whether the TPLF was involved in the violence. Furthermore, the electoral board alleged that it has tried to contact former representatives of TPLF’s Addis Ababa office, who had been working as a liaison between the party and the board, to give him a chance to respond but the alleged representative said he could not represent the party.

Former high-level Officials of the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF), Sebhat Nega and his comrades, including Abay Woldu, former President of Tigray, and Abraham Tekeste, Ex-Minister of Finance, appeared before the Arada Branch of the Federal First Instance Court. In a court session held on Friday (January 15), federal police asked judges for 14 days to investigate the case brought against 24 people, who are suspected of involvement in the attack on the Northern Command of the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) and other crimes.

The Ministry of Agriculture stated on Tuesday (January 19) that Ethiopia has made clear and trusted policy revision regarding Lowland and Pastoralist communities that could profoundly facilitate inclusive development and

enhance the pastoralists' livelihood sustainably. Forwarding his idea in 'Addis Weg' Round Table discussion, which was held on 14th January 2021, at the Prime Minister's Office in the presence of various stakeholders, Crop Development State Minister with the ministry, Mandefro Nigussie (Ph.D.) said that the revised policy has opened multiple means of financial accessibility for actors of a number of sectors, which have the right to form Agriculture Banks that provide investors with credit.

## **Djibouti**

A Djibouti-led mission to resolve accusations of territorial violations between Kenya and Somalia has concluded a fact-finding mission in both countries. Sent by Djibouti's President Ismael Guelleh, the mission comprised a team of diplomats and military chiefs nominated by President Guelleh and visited Kenya and Somalia past week to verify claims by Mogadishu that Nairobi had interfered with Somalia's territory. The delegation led by Djibouti's ambassadors to Somalia and Kenya, Aden Hassan Aden and Yacin Elmi Bouh respectively, toured Mogadishu, Nairobi and the Mandera-Gedo border area, on a five-day fact-finding mission after which they will table a report to President Guelleh.

## **Kenya**

Fifteen out of 47 counties in Kenya have been hit by a second and deadlier wave of locusts, the Kenyan government announced on Thursday (January 20). The counties hit by the deadly swarms are in Arid and Semi-Arid Land (ASAL) where most people are nomadic pastoralists who rely on livestock for living. Agriculture Minister Peter Munya told a news conference on Thursday that Kenya, like other East African nations, is well-prepared to contain and battle the swarms in the second invasion, but the threat is far from over.

Kenya and Ethiopia have vowed not to be drawn into waging war against by the longstanding disputes related to ethnic antagonism between the Gabbra and Borana communities. Speaking in Saru in North Horr Sub-County along the Ethiopia-Kenya border during a peace meeting on Saturday (January 16), administrators and security agencies from both countries said they will not allow the constant feuds between the groups to lead to a bilateral standoff. Dilo District Warada (Commissioner) Guyo Huqa and his Tar Tar counterpart Jattani Godana, flanked by peace ambassadors from Ethiopia, took part in the talks brokered by the Community Initiative Facilitation and

Assistance (CIFA-Kenya) – an initiative funded by the African Union (AU) and the German government (GIZ).

Kenya and Algeria have called for the extension of the Amisom mandate in Somalia. In a joint communique between Kenya's Foreign Affairs CS Raychelle Omamo and her Algeria counterpart Sabri Boukadoum, the two countries said Amisom has played a key role in pacifying Somalia and ridding the country of terror groups including the al-Shabaab. The Ministers noted that Amisom continues to experience challenges especially in respect to predictable funding including lack of force multipliers and enablers. The ministers also took note of the threat of Al-Shabab which remains potent and called on the AU and the UN to renew the mandate of Amisom, taking into account that sufficient capacity has not been built within the Somalia National Security services to take over the functions currently undertaken by Amisom troops.

## **Somalia**

The Food Agriculture Organization in collaboration with the European Union on Wednesday (January 20) launched a three-year project in Somalia to enhance food security by increasing job opportunities in the fisheries and livestock sectors. The \$17.8 million project funded by the EU will be implemented by FAO, which will provide agricultural inputs and support technical training of pastoralists, fisherfolk, and honey producers.

The head of the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) on Tuesday (January 19) concluded a trip to five East African nations and the USS Makin Island, operating off the coast of Somalia. During the tour, Gen. Stephen Townsend visited the Quartz joint task force overseeing the repositioning of US forces in the region and met “with commanders, forces, and partners in the region.” Under the Quartz joint task force, the US is seeking to withdraw its forces from Somalia, which is suffering attacks by the al-Qaeda affiliated al-Shabaab terrorist group.

## **South Sudan**

The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) is working with authorities to establish a temporary operating base in the greater Tonj area of Warrap State to reduce tensions and build confidence, a UN official said Thursday (January 21). The move comes amid reports of sporadic intercommunal conflict caused by cattle raiding in the Greater Tonj area of

Warrap State. The incident reportedly led to deaths, injuries and displacement of the population.

In related news, The United Nations Secretary-General said deeply concerned by the surge of tribal attacks in West Darfur and urged the Sudanese government to do the needful to stop the violence. Arab gunmen waged a revenge attack on a displacement camp outside El-Geneina, the capital of West Darfur State after the murder of a member of their tribe by a resident of Krinding camp. “The Secretary-General calls on the Sudanese authorities to expend all efforts to de-escalate the situation and bring an end to the fighting, restore law and order and ensure the protection of civilians, in accordance with the Government’s National Plan for Civilian Protection,” reads a statement by Stephane Dujarric, UN Spokesman for the Secretary-General.

The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) had provided materials for poultry farmers and beekeepers in the South Sudanese capital, Juba. TIKA, in a statement, said it provided two solar powered incubators with a capacity of 500 eggs, 1,500 egg-laying chicken, chicken feed, waterers, and various vaccines to poultry farmers in cooperation with the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries of South Sudan and Support Peace Initiative Development Organization. Speaking at the handover ceremony, South Sudan’s minister for Livestock and Fisheries, Onyoti Adigo said the project was of great value for farmers and stressed that any assistance provided in the field of production was highly important in economic terms.

South Sudan’s president Salva Kiir has congratulated his Ugandan counterpart Yoweri Museveni upon his recent re-election in the general elections held last week. Museveni was declared the winner of the Ugandan presidential election held on January 14 with 58.64 per cent of total votes, defeating 10 other presidential candidates who contested. Kiir, in a statement issued on Monday (January 18), said Museveni’s re-election demonstrated the “trust” people had in the country’s ruling party.

U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres on Friday (January 15) appointed a South African diplomat Nicholas Haysom as his Special Representative, Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). Haysom will succeed David Shearer of New Zealand to who led the UNMISS for four years after his appointment in December 2016.

## **Sudan**

The British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab arrived in Khartoum on Wednesday (January 20) for a two-day visit to hold talks on a number of domestic and regional subjects. His visit was described as 'historic' as it is the first of its kind in more than a decade and the most senior by a British official since the ouster of former president Omer Hassan al-Bashir after a popular uprising in April 2019. Raab told the Sudanese Prime Minister Abdullah Hamdok that the UK is ready to support Sudan's debt relief once the economic reforms are implemented. The acting minister of Finance and Economic Planning Heba Mohamed Ali said in a press statement that the British pledge comes within the framework of the UK's contributions that were previously made at the Sudan Partners Conference in Berlin last year.

Berlin will host a meeting for the Friends of Sudan group on January 28, said a German official who arrived in Khartoum to prepare for the meeting. Philipp Ackermann, the German Foreign Office's Director for the relations with the Middle East and North Africa met on Tuesday (January 19) with the Sudanese Prime Minister to discuss the upcoming FOS meeting. Following the meeting, Ackermann said that the meeting discussed the Sudanese economic situation and announced that his country will host a meeting for the Friends of Sudan on Thursday 28 January.

Three aid workers were killed during the recent revenge attacks on the residents of displacement camp outside the capital of West Darfur state, the United Nations humanitarian coordinator said. In a statement released on Wednesday 9 January 20) the acting Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan, Babacar Cissé said that "three staff members of aid organizations, one with his family" were killed during the attack of 16 January. Cissé "stressed the necessity of safety and security of the people receiving and delivering aid and called for the perpetrators to be held accountable," says the statement.

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***Ambassador Dina Mufti's briefing on Ethiopia-Sudan border issue, Sudan's stance on the GERD negotiation & claims of third party involvement during operation in Tigray***

1. The [Ethiopia](#)–[Sudan](#) border issue

- Media are reporting that some Sudanese military officials are claiming to have got consent from the Ethiopian side to let the Sudanese army occupy the Ethiopian border areas as part of the scheme to support the law enforcement

operation in Tigray. Ethiopia appreciates the Sudanese government for its cooperation with the government of Ethiopia during the former's efforts in enforcing law and order in the country. However, it was surprising to see the Sudanese military misconstruing the friendly talks for cooperation along the borderlines of Ethiopia as a green light to encroach into Ethiopian lands. It should be clear that our government is responsible and sensitive to the sovereignty of the country and could not agree, by any means, to let a third party occupy Ethiopian lands.

- We have heard that some countries have expressed readiness to mediate between Sudan and Ethiopia on the border issues. Ethiopia appreciates such initiatives but it has never closed the opportunity to resolve the matter through bilateral dialogue with Sudan. We have never had refused to talk to Sudan and solve the issue in a civilized manner. In this regard, as we have repeatedly said, had it not been for our firm stand to carry out negotiations with Sudan on the border issues, it would have been relevant to invite third parties to mediate the two countries.
- Ethiopia still believes that there is no need for the flaring up of boundary issues with Sudan since the issue can get a peaceful resolution through dialogue. However, it is undeniable that we felt betrayed and backstabbed by the army of a friendly country.
- The Sudanese Army took advantage of the internal situation in Ethiopia to enter inside Ethiopian territory and loot property, burn civilian camps, kill, attack and displace Ethiopians. This does not commensurate with the longstanding fraternal relationship that the two countries have.
- Ethiopia strongly believes that the recent action of Sudan's military will not serve the interest of the Sudanese people but the interests of third parties that calculated to profit out of the mutual destabilization of the two countries.
- We insist that the Sudanese army should go back to where it was before the invasion of our lands (i.e., November 06) as per the 1972 Exchange of Notes between the Foreign Ministers of the two countries that inked the agreement to keep the status quo in the area.
  1. The negotiations over the GERD and irregularities of Sudan's stances
  1. Almost all of the major issues that concern Sudan regarding the dam have been addressed by Ethiopia. For instance,

- Ethiopia has initiated and cooperated with Sudan and Egypt to establish the International panel of experts that can present findings that are reliable, unbiased and scientific regarding the effects of the construction of the dam
- The dam has been proved to lessen the effects of the recurring flooding in Sudan
- The dam will also provide cheap and environmentally friendly source of energy
- Due to regulated water flows, Sudan is expected to expand its agriculture
- The dam will reduce sedimentation in Sudanese farmlands
- Upon the request of the Sudanese regarding the dam's safety, Ethiopia has exchanged data with Sudan
  - Thus, Ethiopia believes that some irregularities in the recent Sudanese actions on the GERD negotiations do not emanate from the inherent needs of the people of Sudan
  - As to Ethiopia, we are committed to continue the building of the dam and the negotiation too

### III. Claims on the involvement of Eritrean Soldiers in the military operation

- We have seen reports about Eritrean troops that have crossed into Ethiopia to help the government of Ethiopia during its law enforcement operation in Tigray and the measures taken against the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). We are also witnessing similar reports about Somalian soldiers participating in the same campaign. Both of these claims are false and unfounded. The ENDF has a track record of supporting the peacekeeping and peace building efforts of the UN, let alone carrying out law enforcement operations domestically. Thus, there has never been a need from the Ethiopian side to request a third party involvement in the matter. The issue has been entertained by some circles that wanted to portray the operation as a regional-level conflict.
- However, regarding the involvement of Eritrean soldiers, in particular, it is expected (and should not be surprising) to see the deployment of Eritrean soldiers by the Eritrean government around its border areas with Ethiopia, given the belligerent attitude of the TPLF clique that had posed an imminent

danger to the sovereignty of Eritrea by launching missiles to civilian sites in Asmara.

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## **Facts on the status of recent developments regarding Ethiopia-Sudan Border**

Ethiopia and the Sudan enjoy deep-rooted historical relation, which dates back to the predecessors of present-day Ethiopia and the Sudan – the Abyssinian kingdoms like Aksumite and Zagwe on the one hand, and the Nubian and Meroe on the other. Besides the long boundary, Ethiopia and Sudan share many common features including common people, languages, religion, culture and history. Citizens of both countries residing along the common border are positively interacting through exchanging cross-border trade and commerce. Moreover, they have common aspirations for the development and prosperity of the two countries and their fates are very much intertwined.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that they did not have differences in their long history. One of the differences was territorial disputes existed for more than a century. Particularly, the advent of British colonial rule in the Sudan with their expansionist policies posed a greater menace to the Ethio-Sudan border. However, our ancestors showed their wisdom in settling the disputes peacefully giving priority to nurturing the friendly relations and cooperation between the two countries and their peoples that endured to date. For instance, in the 1972 Exchange of Notes, the two countries agreed to settle the territorial dispute arising from the unilateral demarcation of Gwynn and to maintain the status quo until they arrive at an amicable solution. To this end, they set up structures and mechanisms that accomplished a number of tasks to reach the final disposition of the problems. Recently, they convened high-level meetings to reactivate the various mechanisms to finalize their tasks in order to complete the re-demarcation process.

However, unfortunately, when the Ethiopian National Defence Forces moved to the Tigray region for law enforcement measures, the Sudanese Army took advantage and entered deep inside Ethiopian territory. The aggression committed by the Sudanese army against Ethiopia has broken not only the basic principles of international law and the border demarcation treaties but also the understanding reached and trust bestowed upon it.

Ethiopia believes that the recent action of Sudan's army does not serve the interest of the Sudanese people but the interests of third parties that calculated to profit out of the collateral damages of the hostilities between the two neighboring countries. The people and government of Ethiopia and the people of the Sudan are also aware of the belligerent moves against Ethiopia. It is a fact that Ethiopia never succumbed to external pressures in its history.

Currently, the Sudanese army is terrorizing the border communities by regularly firing heavy guns. On the other hand, officials in Khartoum are regularly disseminating uncalled for propaganda to hoodwink the international community by pronouncing wild claims such as "Benishangul Gumuz Regional State of Ethiopia was once part of the Sudan." Such unfounded claims are untrustworthy and would not help to resolve the problem at hand, instead, it exacerbates the situation. Resorting to unsubstantiated historical claims would not be helpful in resolving the issues related to the boundary. Such misguided propaganda warfare is a detriment to the positive relations that prevail between the two countries and could not resolve the current impasse.

Ethiopia is familiar with such kind of recurrent attack by the Sudan's army. In this connection, it is worth recalling that similar incursions have taken place when Emperor Haile Selassie was toppled in 1974, when the military government was overthrown from 1989-1991 and in 1995. These clearly show that the Sudanese army has established a pattern of attacking Ethiopia whenever it feels that Ethiopia is preoccupied with its internal matters. However, Ethiopia has been exerting its efforts in promoting the fraternal relations between the two countries to break the cycle of conflict and peaceful neighborly coexistence.

The Government of Ethiopia opted to exercise maximum restraint and patience towards the clear violation of its sovereign integrity and provocation by the Sudanese Army. Ethiopia does not seek to raise arms against the sisterly people of Sudan. Ethiopia is well aware that war is not a solution to address the boundary issues, particularly at this moment when Sudan entered into political transition and faced severe economic difficulties. Ethiopia wants to give the Government of Sudan and its military leaders a chance to reconsider all peaceful means to resolve the territorial dispute between the two sisterly countries. Ethiopia made its clarion call to reactivate the various mechanisms and committees established based on the existing bilateral agreements to find an amicable solution for the re-demarcation of the boundary between the two countries as stipulated in the 1972 Exchange of

Notes. Ethiopia urges the Sudanese government to come to the negotiating table instead of saber-rattling and withdraw its army back to its previous position and should respect the effective administration in the disputed area.

Ethiopia has always been trying to lend a right hand to the Sudan at times of its difficulties. In the recent government transition, Ethiopia stood with the people of the Sudan and assisted the transitional government to establish the Sovereign Council. Since both countries have much stake beyond the territorial dispute, Ethiopia wishes to continue and enhance its constructive relations with the people and government of the Sudan.

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### ***A delegation led by Minister of Agriculture, Oumer Hussien visits Djibouti***

A delegation led by the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Oumer Hussein was in Djibouti for a three days official visit from January 15-18, 2021. During its stay, the Ethiopian delegation witnessed the inauguration for a new livestock terminal, paid a visit to the dry bulk operations at Dorale Multipurpose Port talks and the Tadjoura port, and held talks with a number of Djibouti high-level officials.

The delegation took part at the inauguration ceremony for the new livestock terminal with a capacity of 2.5 Million heads/year and a potential to generate more than \$120 Million foreign currency earning for Ethiopia. Minister of Agriculture Mr. Oumer Hussein in his remarks noted the huge benefit the new Dorale Multi-Purpose Port livestock terminal will have on propping up Ethiopia's livestock. Minister Oumer said the resting area will lessen the challenges the country is facing in ensuring safe & timely delivery as well as direct export without the need to pass another certification in Djibouti. Djiboutian Minister of Transport Moussa Mohamed Ahmed, Ethiopian Ambassador to Djibouti Berhanu Tsegaye, Chairman of the Djibouti International Port and Free Zones Aboubaker Omar Hadi, Director General of DMP & PDSA Djama Ibrahim Darar, and scores of high-level officials from both sides were in attendance. Built on a total area of 27,525 m<sup>2</sup>, this new terminal will ultimately create more than 1,000 direct jobs and more than 4,000 indirect jobs in Djibouti.

The delegation then went to visit the dry bulk operations at Dorale Multipurpose Port where they could see the ongoing handling operations of the fertilizer destined for Ethiopia. This year, Ethiopia has planned to import

more than 1.8 million tons of fertilizer, and it is with this in mind that the parties have agreed to establish a better coordination framework to ensure rapid and seamless delivery of this agricultural input.

As part of the three days official visit to Djibouti, the delegation held talks with Djibouti's Minister of Transport and Equipment, Moussa Mohamed Ahmed, on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture, as well as directors of different departments of the Ministry on Sunday (January 17, 2021). The two sides appreciated the ever-growing ties on the sector and called for the need to map out new areas of cooperation in arrays such as agro-pastoral cooperation and greenery. Ethio-Djibouti cross border water projects, imports of fruits and vegetables as well as seedlings of trees were among the subjects raised. Djibouti is one of the major importers of fruits and vegetables from Ethiopia.

The delegation made a visit to Tadjoura port as well. Ethiopia's Petroleum Enterprise and the Administration of Port of Tadjoura made a major agreement on the importation of coal to Ethiopia. During the signing ceremony, it was noted that the agreement demonstrates an additional opportunity the port of Tadjoura is availing to Ethiopian's increasing port demand.

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## *Restraining Sensationalism*

16 January 2021

Note: the article was first published on The Reporter

By [Billene Seyoum](#)

In the early morning hours of November 4th 2020, I woke up to messages that the Northern Command of the Ethiopian National Defense Force had been attacked by militia loyal to and organized by the TPLF clique. My heart sank with realization that after twenty-eight years of oppression yet impunity, two and half years of provocation, and months of belligerence drumming up the war narrative, TPLF had openly demonstrated they were against the stability of the Ethiopian state and welfare of the Ethiopian people. After all, no patriot with love for country, would treasonously attack the guardians of its own national sovereignty – the Ethiopian National Defense Forces.

In the initial days following the Prime Minister's announcement of rule of law operations commencing in the Tigray region, a flurry of international media headlines and stories startled me. In what seemed like an orchestrated narrative, reporters, news anchors, broadcasters, self-declared "political analysts" the world over began to emblazon their news headlines and content with 'Nobel Winner.' Beyond an effort to inform readers and listeners on who the protagonist to the current issue in Ethiopia was, the diligence with which the reference to the Prime Minister's 2019 Nobel Prize was being used was sinister to say the least.

In what I believe to be a common trend of western media coverage of African countries, essentializing and condensing complex issues and historical context into a single narrative became immediately apparent of coverage on Ethiopia. It is not so much the heavy-handed attempts to tarnish the reputation of the Prime Minister that was concerning. Rather the disregard for context and background in coverage of what transpired on November 4th 2020 was worrying.

By disregarding and glossing over the genesis of TPLF's transgressions that left the Federal Government with no other option except to respond, in my opinion, some western media became culpable in legitimizing the crimes and gross human rights violations of a renegade clique. It is no surprise that sensationalism sells stories more than hard facts do. Yet whitewashing almost three decades of corruption, deep networks of criminality stretching beyond national borders, overt and covert schemes to destabilize Ethiopia and the Horn region over the past two and half years by the architects of ethnic strife, is a betrayal to millions of Ethiopians that have been freed from the shackles of TPLF's destructive hegemony.

The dual 'victim/hero' narrative concocted by the TPLF clique and perpetuated by their global proxies unwittingly or otherwise, for example, overshadowed mass atrocities committed in Mai Kadra by youth affiliated with TPLF. While both Amnesty International and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission cited in their reports that crimes against humanity were committed against more than 1000 innocent civilians hacked to death in one night by TPLF's 'Samri' youth vigilante, many international media and pundits buried their heads in the sand. As the 'Nobel Winner' touting continued by international media and so-called "analysts," even international human rights organizations in their unrestrained rush for breaking news became a source of disinformation online, misrepresenting Mai Kadra reports

through their official account, only to delete and apologize hours after their disinformation had spread.

The “pre-emptive” attack, as declared boastfully and publicly by the TPLF, that prompted a government offensive against a belligerent group, is without a doubt a source of pain for all Ethiopians – citizens and government. Armed confrontations take a toll on people’s lives. On those directly affected and all others indirectly affected. The misery and pain of many innocent people caught in circumstances that are not of their choosing is unbearable. And this is a painful feeling that permeates those in government even more.

With the purposeful destruction of telecommunication and electric transmission infrastructure by TPLF, many families were disconnected until recently. Yet while negative and hollow stories of an ‘African nation yet again mired in conflict and despair’ spread with the speed of lightening, the international media also failed to address the cause of communication line disruptions and rather parroted the narrative of TPLF’s well financed and organized digital media trolls. It is no secret that during the TPLF’s reign and particularly in the past two and half years, they organized a network of youth twitter and Facebook “activists” that were paid to spew false narratives which have been not only the source of disinformation but also catalysts for communal violence along ethnic and religious lines.

Many other important issues also failed to make it on international media with the same zeal as the war narrative: the Prime Minister’s visit to Mekelle following the completion of the military operations; the successful formation of the Tigray Provisional Administration in many cities and towns across the region; the Federal Government’s successful provision of humanitarian assistance including medicine in its joint effort with international partners; the infrastructure repair works undertaken to restore electricity and telecommunications; the graduation of thousands of students from Mekelle University; resumption of flights to the Tigray region, and more recently, the apprehension and or demise of the clique’s key ring leaders.

Indeed, media must shed light on important issues and matters shaping the lives and suffering of citizens. Yet this must be done so in a manner that does not cast doubt on credibility of the media house and its allegiance. While African countries are put under the microscope of media, speech freedoms and democratic rights indexes designed and crafted by institutions that are neither African nor are inclusive of African voices, there is a necessity to ascertain that international media houses operating in loose yet close

networks are not reflecting the political interests of the origin countries when producing stories on African countries. I should not be misconstrued here as expecting news reporting only to advance government positions. In fact, I believe an effective media that scrutinizes the work of any government is an essential component of a functioning democracy. Rather, I argue that news needs to be anchored in a nuanced and in-depth understanding of the context and people of a country, region, continent. Otherwise, it would fall flat as a colonial narrative!

In closing, I would like to address one crucial point. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's 2019 Nobel Prize was a deserved win that no amount of hatred or deliberate misrepresentation of character can take away. In 1998, when war broke out between Ethiopia and Eritrea, millions of lives were affected during a span of two decades which was shadowed by mutual suspicion and enmity among people within and outside of the country. Many lives have been torn apart as a result and many missed opportunities for shared prosperity of the two countries. To have managed to end such a status quo is something that no entity or individual can take away from the person that enabled this process – award or no award!

Indeed, the Nobel Peace Prize is a prestigious honour bestowed upon guardians of peace. However, to assume that this honour is a covenant for shaming and berating governing leaders with active national responsibilities into inaction, when faced with a grave threat of state disintegration and chaos, is simplistic at best!

In the end, whether the West champions the notion or not, Ethiopians will forever remember Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed as the leader that remarkably ended TPLF's three-decade hegemony, marked by state capture, high level corruption and embezzlement, treason, ethnic violence, grave crimes against humanity, institutional degeneration and moral decay. And for this, those that suffered these ills will award him for the accolade that matters most – keeping Ethiopia together!