



Ethiopian News

April 2019

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Ethiopians bid farewell to the late former President Dr Negasso Gidada



Former Ethiopian President, H.E. Dr Negasso Gidada, was laid to rest at the St Peter and St Paul Catholic Cemetery in Addis Ababa on Sunday, 5th March.

Thousands attended the state funeral including senior government officials, such as Prime Minister Abiy and President Sahle-Work, family members and relatives of Dr Negasso.

In a public memorial held at the Millennium Hall, President Sahle-Work said the “late former President was honest and contributed a lot for the best of his country.”

Dr Negasso died on Saturday, 27th April at the age of 75, while receiving medical treatment in Germany.

He was President of Ethiopia from 1995 until 2001. He was also a founding member of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). He is survived by three children.

Monday, 6th May was declared a national day of mourning for the former President, which saw flags flown at half-mast across the country at Ethiopian embassies and consulates as well as Ethiopian-owned vessels.

A book of condolence was opened at the Embassy which saw members of the diplomatic corps, Diaspora and friends of Ethiopia, honour the late President’s memory. Jalele Negasso, daughter of the late President, also signed the book and thanked the Government of Ethiopia for honouring her father with a state funeral.

“His love for his country could be a model for other Ethiopians.”

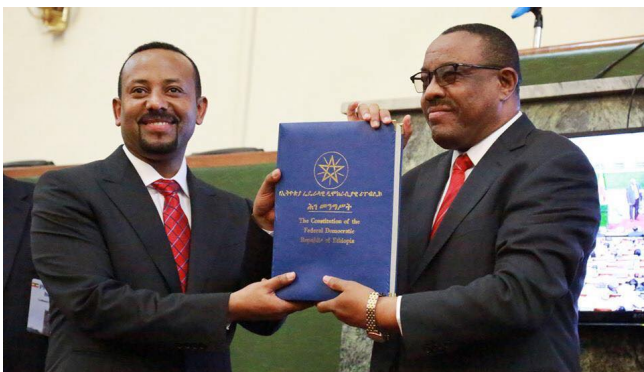


Editorial



Wonders and challenges of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's first year in office

It has been a very good year for Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed who was elected to lead Ethiopia's ruling coalition, the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) following a long and widespread protest movement.



File Photo: Prime Minister Abiy with outgoing Prime Minister Hailemariam on 2nd April 2018

The then ruling party decided to accept a no-nonsense reappraisal wherein it admitted that it had made mistakes during its long tenure of office, offered a public apology and made an unflinching pledge to rectify mistakes and to usher in reform in order to broaden the political playing field, to ensure the flourishing of an unbridled press and to restore investment confidence.

Buoyed up by a prevailing feel-good factor and the support he received from the EPRDF, Prime Minister Abiy quenched the public's thirst for reassurance concerning the stability of the Ethiopian state. In his inaugural speech, he told Parliament, in a unequivocal manner, "not to have any doubt about the sanctity of Ethiopian Unity", and advised "against resting on past laurels but to instead redouble efforts to escape the divisive

politics of the past by embracing his vision of “*Medemer*” – PM Abiy’s vision of unity and diversity.

The Prime Minister embarked on a series of reforms aimed at righting past wrongs and addressing the fault-lines of Ethiopian politics. After forming what he called a “reformist cabinet” – fifty percent of whom are women – he introduced a bill removing the Oromo Liberation Front and Ginbot 7 from Parliament’s List of Terror Organisations – two organisations which, until the emergence of Abiy Ahmed, were bent on the violent overthrow of the EPRDF-led government.



File Photo: Newly appointed ministers – half of whom are female - take their oath of office in October 2018

Then followed an avalanche of reforms: release of all political prisoners, measures to ensure the independence of the judiciary, reform of the National Electoral Board (NEBE) headed by a former judge known for her critical stand against government interference in the judiciary, and the setting up of a Ministry of Peace, commissioned to ensure the maintenance of peace and the restoration of law and order.

But it is with a sceptical Ethiopian diaspora – which until then was a hot-bed of die-hard opposition to EPRDF - that Prime Minister Abiy managed to make formerly unthinkable inroads by assuring his Government’s commitment to maintaining the growth momentum and durable peace.

His rallies in Washington DC, Los Angeles and Frankfurt, not only succeeded in bringing together thousands of Ethiopians from various socio-political backgrounds, who had never imagined they would live to see themselves attending an EPRDF rally anywhere in the world but they fully embraced Abiy’s clarion call for “*A Dollar A Day For Ethiopia*” campaign.



Ethiopians from across Europe gather for Prime Minister Abiy's town hall meeting in Frankfurt

Mindful of the fact that “the no peace, no war” status between Ethiopia and Eritrea was unsustainable, and a liability to both nations, Abiy made peace overtures that Asmara could ill afford to ignore, such as “Ethiopia will accept the Algiers Agreement”. The Prime Minister then flew to Asmara – previously unthinkable – where he was given a hero’s welcome with the Eritrean public showering him with praise and waving the Eritrean and Ethiopian flags.



Prime Minister Abiy and President Isaias sign the historic peace deal in July 2018

Proximity talks leading to closer partnership are ongoing. The ripple effect of the rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea, in turn served as a catalyst for strategic partnership among the brotherly peoples of Djibouti, South Sudan, and Kenya.

As change without challenges is incomplete, so too were Abiy’s reforms without hiccups and challenges. The transformation ushered in by Abiy’s government across the length and breadth of Ethiopia continues to encounter challenges. However, the reforms and transformations are here to stay because ultimately, they reflect the will of the people.

Embassy hosts reception ahead of World Press Freedom Day in Addis Ababa

The Embassy hosted a reception on 16th April, in commemoration of World Press Freedom Day, in collaboration with the Ethiopian Institute for Leadership, Communication, and Organisation (EILCO) and the International Observatory for Human Rights (IOHR).



Welcoming guests, Ambassador Fesseha Shawel expressed his pride in Ethiopia hosting such a major conference, which would offer an opportunity to celebrate the recent changes in the country. “Ethiopia wants to build the institutions that will enable us to enrich our democracy.”

“Without a free press, democracy and change is unthinkable.”

“We invite you to visit Ethiopia and see the reality on the ground...Praise us where we have done well and give us critical feedback where improvement is needed,” he said.

2018 was a year of transformational change, especially concerning press freedom. Thousands of political prisoners and journalists were released, and **for the first time in over a decade, there are no journalists or bloggers in prison.** Diaspora media outlets that were previously banned, are now free to operate in the country and revisions to key legislation related to press freedom and freedom of expression are currently being finalised.

Speaking on the occasion, IOHR Director, Valerie Peay said:

“Here we stand in 2019 with not a single journalist or blogger incarcerated, with a country that is going through the most incredible change and is offering a beacon to the rest of the world in what is possible.”

“We are very proud to be going to World Press Freedom Day in Ethiopia. For us, it is about taking the world and the world’s focus to Ethiopia and showing what has happened in Ethiopia,” she said.

Alastair King-Smith, Co-ordinator for the Global Campaign on Media Freedom at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office said the UK Government was delighted to be partnering with Ethiopia, the African Union and UNESCO over World Press Freedom Day, because “it is only with a political will to change and showing the world what can be done differently, that we can actually transform things.”

Mr King-Smith also highlighted the upcoming international conference on media freedom that will be held in London on 10th and 11th July, which the UK and Canada will co-host.

Journalists, civil society and governments will participate in discussions about press freedom and the importance of defending the media against censorship, imprisonment, personal attacks and abuse.

Bekele Woyecha, co-founder of EILCO, encouraged participants to visit, invest and write about

Ethiopia. EILCO aims to bring together professionals from different backgrounds and experiences, looking for opportunities to take back to Ethiopia. In Ethiopia, “we will host a panel discussion at the World Press Freedom Day conference and have also organised a lecture at Addis Ababa University School of Journalism.”

Award-winning Egyptian journalist, Mohammed Fahmy, echoed the call for a UN special envoy dedicated to the safety of journalists and applauded the Ethiopian government for releasing hundreds of journalists. “Today is a day of celebration, without a free press there is no democracy,” he concluded.

Full coverage of the event can be found on our YouTube page at: <http://bit.ly/WPFD-EE-VID>



For an exclusive interview with Ambassador Fesseha by IOHR TV, please visit: <http://bit.ly/IOHRTV>

Ethiopia Church forest photos secure third place at Sony Photography Awards

Award-winning Scottish photographer, Kieran Dodds, was awarded third place for his series of photos “Hierotopia”, which showcases Ethiopia’s church forests and raises awareness about deforestation, while exploring the relationship between people and their environments.

In the last 100 years, 90% of Ethiopia’s forests have been lost through the expansion of land use for agriculture.

However, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Churches in Northern Ethiopia are preserving the forests surrounding their churches by teaming up with scientists and the local community. Ancient canopies are protected as a tenet of faith, and thousands of forest fragments exist across Northern Ethiopia - green islands of biodiversity - which represent a miniature Garden of Eden and offer hope for conservation and future restoration.



Entos Eyesus church forest on an island in Lake Tana near Bahir Dar

Ambassador Fesseha held an audience with Kieran on 10th May where they discussed the importance of conservation and how, through the media and other sources, more Ethiopians can be made aware of these vital spaces of biodiversity.



Kieran Dodds (r) presents a copy of his book of Ethiopia photos to Ambassador Fesseha

We interviewed Kieran about his experience in Ethiopia, and what he hopes people will achieve through his photography. Watch the interview via the Embassy YouTube page at: <http://bit.ly/KieranDodds>

New Ministers Appointed

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has appointed new ministers in a minor reshuffle of his cabinet.

Gedu Andargachew, formerly President of the Amhara Regional State, becomes the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, replacing Dr Workneh Gebeyehu, who had served since 2016 and was recently appointed as Director-General of the United Nations Office in Nairobi.



Ethiopia's new Foreign Minister, H.E. Mr Gedu Andargachew

Lemma Megersa, who was President of the Oromia Regional State, is the new Minister of Defence, replacing Engineer Ayisha Mohammed, who has returned to the Ministry of Urban Development and Construction as Minister.



Lemma Megersa and Ayisha Mohammed being sworn in

Deputy Government Whip Chala Lemi presented the nominations to Parliament on behalf of the PM and said the appointments will strengthen the Federal Government and further advance the reforms at national level, adding “as [Gedu Andargachew and Lemma Megersa] own the lion’s share of responsibility for the success of the reform process to date, it was necessary to appoint them to the Federal Government to ensure the continuity of these reforms in strengthening national unity and maintaining the rule of law”.

The nominations were approved by the House of People’s Representatives.

Ethiopia hosts historic World Press Freedom Day

The 26th World Press Freedom Day (WPF) took place in Addis Ababa from 1st to 3rd May and was heralded as a reflection of the current social and political transformations in Ethiopia.

African Union Commission (AUC) Deputy Chairperson, Ambassador Thomas Kwesi Quartey inaugurated the event together with Dr Vera Songwe, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay, and the President of Ethiopia, H.E. Sahle Work-Zewde.

Speaking at the historic event, both Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and President Sahle Work-Zewde made a commitment to promote and defend press freedom in the country and conveyed their pride in hosting the global celebration.



“The symbolism of this grand gesture is even more important – given that only one year ago Ethiopia was labelled as Africa’s foremost jailer of journalists and one of the most repressive environments in the world for the functioning of independent news”, said PM Abiy.

The UNESCO Director-General highlighted the media’s contribution to democracy - “by exercising their profession it is our freedom that journalists and the media defend all over the world”.

The AUC Deputy Chairperson reiterated the Commission’s commitment to promoting press Freedom in AU member states “we are optimistic that this WPFDF will be an opportunity to draw attention to the great potential of the media, so they can be prepared in supporting the process of peace, freedom and reconciliation in society”.

This was echoed by the UNECA Executive Secretary who said, “Freedom of speech is the ultimate trademark of a just society, but unfortunately, limited press freedom continues to undermine the ability of the media to carry out this role.”

This year’s event had a significantly high attendance with almost 2,000 participants registered to attend over 30 sessions, which echoed different aspects of the overall theme: *‘Media for Democracy: Journalism and Elections in Times of Disinformation’*.

Anticipating the 2020 Ethiopian elections, acclaimed Ethiopian journalist Tsedale Lemma in her keynote speech said:

“This year’s theme of World Press Freedom Day couldn’t have come at a better moment for Ethiopia. Going by the repeated promises of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to make the 2020 general elections free and fair, we may be looking at the historic dawn of the true beginning of electoral democracy in which Ethiopians could finally decide on who their representatives should be.”

WPFDF delegates also celebrated the importance of freedom of artistic expression, including through the participation of 26 press cartoonists, convened by the association, Cartooning for Peace. Several exhibitions, a live drawing mural of press cartoons and a number of discussion panels reflected the close links between press freedom and freedom of artistic expression.

The Addis Ababa Declaration was adopted by the participants on 3rd May. The document highlights the role of journalism in facilitating peaceful, credible, inclusive, transparent, free and fair elections. The Declaration calls on Member States, including their electoral management bodies to

strengthen legal and policy frameworks that guarantee respect for freedom of expression and privacy, and foster a diverse, independent media sector.

The event closed with an announcement that the 27th edition of the WPFDF celebrations will be held in the Netherlands.

...New era for Ethiopia's journalists: RSF

Reporters Without Borders ranked Ethiopia 110th out of 180 countries in RSF's 2019 World Press Freedom Index – a huge 40 places leap from 150th rank last year, reflecting the reforms by PM Abiy.

Over the last year, Ethiopia has made spectacular progress. For the first time in more than 10 years, Ethiopia no longer has any journalists or bloggers in prison and hundreds of previously banned media outlets are now permitted to operate freely.

RSF urged PM Abiy to go further by giving journalists more legislative protection and by turning Ethiopia into a regional press freedom model.

... PM Abiy named laureate of the 2019 UNESCO Peace Prize

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed was named as laureate of the 2019 edition of the Félix Houphouët-Boigny Peace Prize for his actions in the region and, in particular, for having been the instigator of a peace agreement between the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and Eritrea.



PM Abiy speaks during the Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize ceremony

The jury also recognizes PM Abiy's worthiness for the reforms undertaken to consolidate democracy and social cohesion. Finally, the jury considers this distinction as an encouragement to pursue his commitment to the promotion of a culture of peace in the region and across the African continent.

In 1989, in tribute to President Félix Houphouët-Boigny's action for peace in the world, 120 countries sponsored a resolution unanimously adopted by UNESCO's Member States to establish the UNESCO Peace Prize in his name. The Prize is intended to honour living individuals and active public or private institutions or bodies that have made a significant contribution to promoting, seeking, safeguarding or maintaining peace in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and the UNESCO Constitution.

UK Foreign Secretary visits Ethiopia in whistle-stop Africa tour

UK Foreign Secretary, the Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP, visited Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Kenya in a bid to make the case for new UK partnerships across Africa.

The Foreign Secretary visited Ethiopia on 2nd May, where he spoke at the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day celebrations in Addis Ababa, setting out his vision to improve media freedom around the world.



"I'm delighted to be in Ethiopia, where under Prime Minister Abiy's leadership the new government has transformed political discourse by allowing the

creation of hundreds of websites, blogs and newspapers,” he said.

“Since the Prime Minister assumed office last year, Ethiopia has climbed the World Press Freedom Index faster than any other country, rising 40 places and showing just how much can be achieved when the political will exists.”

The Foreign Secretary called on leaders to recognise that a “media freedom is not a ‘Western’ value, still less a colonial-style imposition, but instead a force for progress from which everyone benefits.”

...UK announces £15.5 million assistance for Ethiopia’s election

In his speech, the Foreign Secretary also announced that £15.5 million in UK aid will be given to help Ethiopia run transparent, free and fair elections.

The money will build the capacity of the elections board and help make electoral operations more transparent and enhance communications and engagement by the National Election Board of Ethiopia. It will also prevent electoral violence through enhanced monitoring and early warning, improving the effectiveness of electoral dispute mechanisms.

If successful and peaceful, the elections in May 2020 will be a major step towards building a fully democratic culture in Ethiopia and will lay a platform for the continuation and deepening of Prime Minister Abiy’s political and economic reforms.

The Foreign Secretary also announced a new Chevening Africa Media Fellowship programme that will allow 60 exceptional African journalists over the next 5 years to gain experience in the newsrooms of Britain’s leading media organisations. This year, applicants from ten African countries will be eligible, including Ethiopia.

To read Mr Hunt’s speech in full, go to: <http://bit.ly/JHuntETSpeech>.

...PM Abiy meets UK Foreign Secretary

Prime Minister Abiy received Mr Hunt at his office on 2nd May where they discussed strengthening the relationship between Ethiopia and the UK as well as support for reforms.



Prime Minister Abiy expressed Ethiopia’s gratitude to the UK government for its long-term support.

Mr Hunt invited Prime Minister Abiy to be a keynote speaker at the Defend Media Freedom conference in London in July this year.

Earlier the Foreign Secretary also met the newly-appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Gedu Andargachew, to discuss ways to deepen ties between the two countries.

Minister Gedu applauded the growing ties and historical relations between the UK and Ethiopia, thanking the UK government’s commitment to supporting Ethiopia during a time of transformation on the political and economic fronts.



Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt commended Ethiopia’s significant contributions to the maintenance of peace and security in the region, while also expressing his country’s commitment to work more closely with Ethiopia in this domain.

... Ethiopian Airlines crash victims remembered in tree-planting ceremony at the British Embassy

While in Ethiopia, Jeremy Hunt planted a tree at the British Embassy in Addis Ababa in memory of the victims of the tragic Ethiopian Airlines crash in March when 149 passengers and 8 crew members perished.

Mr Hunt said: “We were devastated that nine British nationals lost their lives in the ET302 crash, but actually, when you talk to the staff here, nearly everyone had a friend or family member that was involved in that.

“So, we were really wanting to commemorate the people of over 30 countries who lost their lives when that tragedy happened.



“We also wanted to thank staff here, because there is an awful lot of very challenging work that has to be done in terms of contact with relatives, and we also had two DVI (disaster victim identification) experts from Kent, who have spent the last few weeks doing the incredibly difficult job of sifting through body remains for DNA samples, so I wanted to thank them personally for that work.”

...UK commits to advancing cooperation with Ethiopia

Earlier in April, State Minister of Foreign Affairs Mrs Hirut Zemene conferred with Mr Julian Reilly, UK Special Envoy for the Red Sea and Horn of Africa.

Both sides accentuated the importance of elevating the already-existing strong relations to new heights.



Mrs Hirut appreciated the Ethio-UK collaboration for the peace and stability of the Red Sea and Horn of Africa region, taking note of the historical commitment from both sides for the peace, security and prosperity of the region.

Mrs Hirut emphasized Ethiopia’s commitment to bolstering the implementation of South Sudan’s revitalized peace deal under the IGAD framework as well as its support to Somalia.

Mrs Hirut also underpinned the importance of strengthening the institutions in Somalia for durable peace.

Mr Julian Reilly commended Ethiopia’s continued commitment to regional peace and security including in South Sudan and Somalia.

The Special Envoy expressed the UK’s commitment to advancing cooperation with Ethiopia both bilaterally and under the IGAD framework in a bid to ensure development and peace and security in the Red Sea and Horn of Africa region.

PM Abiy makes 2019 TIME 100 list

The 2019 TIME 100 list, compiled by *Time Magazine*, included PM Abiy Ahmed, who was listed in the category of leaders for his speedy reforms since taking office.

The tribute message for Abiy was written by Ethiopian Olympic athlete Feyisa Lilesa, who returned to Ethiopia after exile in the U.S.



Feyisa wrote:

...Last March, while I was training in Kenya, I heard that Dr Abiy Ahmed would be the next Prime Minister. In Ethiopian history, we have never seen a leader like him. He's an educated person who talks about unity.

He has released thousands of people from jail. He brought peace between Ethiopia and Eritrea after 20 years of war. And he made it possible for me to come home.

Yes, people are still protesting. But now, when they protest, they aren't going to jail. To me, that is democracy. That is hope.

Ethiopia honoured for hosting Refugees

Ethiopia has been given an award by the Secretariat of the African Union Commission, for hosting high numbers of refugees in Africa.

The award was given to the Deputy Ambassador of the Ethiopian Embassy to Egypt, H.E. Merwan Bedri, on 27th April during the 64th ordinary session of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, which took place in Sharma El Sheikh, Egypt.

Ethiopia has a long history of hosting refugees and maintains an open-door asylum policy, giving humanitarian access and protection to those seeking refuge.

Earlier this year, a historic new refugee law, which allows refugees to obtain work permits, access primary education, obtain drivers' licences, legally register life events such as births and marriages and open up access to national financial services, such as banking, was approved by the Ethiopian parliament.



South Sudanese refugee Ariat's son, Angakuny, was amongst the first refugee children to receive a birth certificate in Ethiopia. ©UNHCR/Diana Diaz

Ethiopia currently hosts more than 900,000 refugees - the most of any African country after Uganda. The refugees primarily come from neighbouring South Sudan, Somalia, Sudan and Eritrea, as well as smaller numbers of refugees from Yemen and Syria.

Political parties to form joint council

Ethiopian political parties are currently discussing a draft guidance manual on the establishment of a joint council.

The manual, which has five parts, will help the parties work closely on national agendas, said the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE).

The parties are discussing the requirements that political parties should meet in order to be included as members of the council.

Birtukan Mideksa, Chairperson of NEBE, said the manual permits all parties that signed the code of conduct on 14th March to become members.



File photo: PM Abiy signs the code of conduct as the chair of the National Election Board, Birtukan Mideksa, looks on

She further urged all parties to become members of the council in order to discharge their responsibilities.

Ethiopia bans alcohol adverts



In a move to promote healthy living, a law that banned advertising of any alcoholic products on television and radio will take effect on 29th May, after Parliament passed the law in February.

The ban comes after the government forbade smoking near public institutions and introduced car-free days in major Ethiopian cities one Sunday a month.

"In addition to banning alcoholic drink commercials and lottery prizes connected with alcoholic drinks, billboards promoting alcoholic drinks are also prohibited under the new proclamation," Health Minister Amir Aman said.

In February, the government banned smoking near government institutions, medical facilities and entertainment venues, and banned the sale of alcohol to people under 21.

Addis Light Railway transports more than 29 million people in 9 months



The Ministry of Transport (MoT) announced that the 34-km Addis Ababa Light Rail Transit (AALRT) network has transported more than 29 million people in just nine months, earning around \$3 million.

Commissioned in September 2015, AALRT is the first light railway in Africa, built at a cost of \$475 million.

The rail project was constructed by China Railway Engineering Corporation Limited (CREC) and is currently operated by Chinese firm Shenzhen Metro Group Company.

It is estimated that AALRT currently transports about 60,000 people daily, significantly reducing traffic congestion in Addis Ababa, which is home to around 4 million residents.

The project created 13,000 jobs.

TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Ethiopia attracts record inflow in PM Abiy's first year in office

According to a report by Bloomberg, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed attracted a record \$13 billion of inflows in his first year in office, as he moves to reform Ethiopia's economy by allowing in more foreign capital.



"In the past seven months alone, through investments, loans, grants, remittances and services, we brought in \$13 billion," PM Abiy said in a televised address.

Ethiopia is currently one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa.

Plans to open up state-owned industries, from telecommunications to sugar and power generation, to foreign investors, were announced last year.

Ethiopia is world's third best wealth-generating country – Report

Ethiopia has emerged as the third best wealth-generating country in the world, according to a new report by South African firm New World Wealth.

The *Global Wealth Migration Review 2019* "Africa Wealth Report" notes that the ten-year wealth growth for the world's top performers China, Mauritius and Ethiopia is 130, 124 and 102 percent respectively.

This places Ethiopia just behind Mauritius in Africa and China which take the second and first slots respectively - meaning that the country has also contributed significantly to private sector wealth held worldwide which now stands at \$204 trillion.

Ethiopia's private wealth is robust, and its growth potential is among the top 10 countries led by South Africa followed by Egypt, the report said.

Ethiopia is also expected to contribute significantly to total private sector wealth held in Africa, which is expected to rise by 34% over the next 10 years, reaching \$3.1 trillion by the end of 2027.

Reports indicated that Ethiopia's economy experienced strong, broad-based growth averaging 10.3% a year from 2006/07 to 2016/17, compared to a regional average of 5.4%.

Ethiopia deposits Africa Free Trade Area ratification at AU - historic Agreement gets green light after securing minimum threshold

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Faki Mahamat, received the instruments of ratification of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) from Ethiopia on 10th April.



Ethiopia was the 19th country to deposit instruments of ratification.

The Chairperson noted that the ratification by the host country of the African Union Commission was indicative of the commitment of the Ethiopian government and the leadership of Prime Minister

Abiy Ahmed in advancing the African integration agenda.

The Chairperson further noted that since assuming office, PM Abiy Ahmed has taken concrete steps such as the issuance of visas on arrival for citizens from AU member states, as a demonstration of the country's commitment towards the Free Movement of People Protocol as an integral component of the AfCFTA. He further noted the key contribution and leadership that Ethiopia has shown in promoting the Single African Air Transport Market.

For his part, Mamo Mihretu Senior Advisor and Chief Trade Negotiator in the Prime Minister's Office, said that his country's ratification was a historical occasion, marking the first ever free trade agreement Ethiopia has ever signed. He further assured the Chairperson that Ethiopia intends to continue playing an active role in the roll-out of the AfCFTA.

...minimum threshold of 22 ratifications secured



File photo: AUC Chairperson, Moussa Faki Mahamat holds the instruments after they were signed by the heads of state and representatives from various African countries in Kigali in 2018

Deposits of ratification from Sierra Leone and the Saharawi Republic were submitted to the AU on 29th April meaning the minimum threshold of ratifications required under Article 23 of the AfCFTA Agreement for it to enter into force have been achieved.

The AfCFTA Agreement will enter into force on 30th May 2019.

The African Union and African Ministers of Trade now need to finalize work on supporting instruments to facilitate the launch of the

operational phase of the AfCFTA during an Extra-Ordinary Heads of State and Government summit on 7th July 2019.

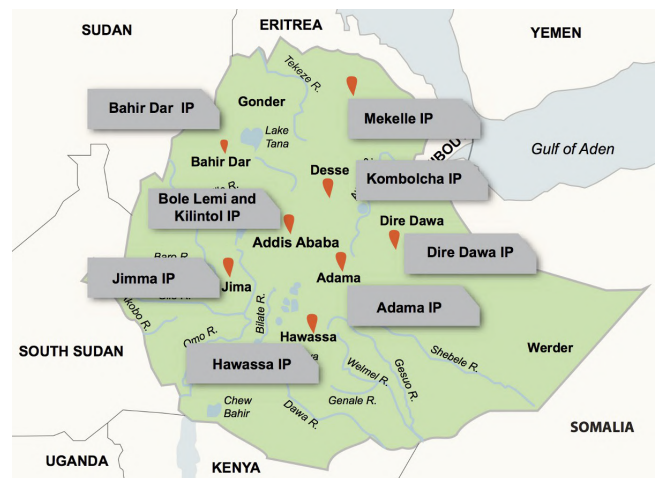
The deal, which was first agreed by African leaders in Rwanda's capital Kigali in March 2018, will constitute the largest free trade bloc in the world once it goes operational.

\$103 million earned in exports from Industrial Parks

The Ethiopian Investment Commission (EIC) announced that Ethiopia earned \$103 million from export generated by industrial parks in the past nine months - an increment of 40% when compared to the same period the previous year.

Abebe Abebayehu, Ethiopian Investment Commissioner, noted that footwear and other leather products, and textiles and apparel have been exported to Europe, USA, Asia and other export destinations.

Mr Abebe, stating that industrial parks across the country have created employment for over 70,000 workers, said Ethiopia has been able to attract \$2.5 billion foreign direct investment in a nine-month period.



Map of existing or future industrial parks

Currently, Bole Lemi, Mekele, and Adama Industrial Parks have partially started operation while Hawassa Industrial Park is fully operational. Over the coming years, Ethiopia hopes to have a total of 30 industrial parks, as part of a strategy to increase foreign exchange earnings and increase foreign direct investment.

Ethiopia to host first Cup of Excellence



Renowned green coffee competition and auction program Cup of Excellence (CoE) is for the first time coming to coffee's birthplace: Ethiopia.

The event will take place in 2020 and will highlight Ethiopian coffee and stimulate new market opportunities for smallholder producers in the country.

“The competition finally came home, where the best natural coffee is produced,” says producer Zenabu Alem. “I look forward to entering my coffee in the competition.”

Dr Adugna Debela, Director General of the Ethiopian Tea and Coffee Authority, said that the event will open doors for smallholders on the world stage, giving them a platform to showcase Ethiopian coffee.

“Coffee is not just a cash crop for us. It's part of our tradition and who we are as Ethiopians, the competition is not just a promotional tool for the world market, but also an exciting event for Ethiopia.”



A traditional Ethiopian Coffee Ceremony

Coffee was first discovered in Ethiopia 1,200 years ago, boasting more than 6,000 varieties with 95% of coffee grown organically. Ethiopia is one of the largest coffee producers in Africa, with an annual production exceeding 500,000 tons.

“Nearly two decades after our founding, it has long been the dream to bring the COE to the birthplace of coffee. Ethiopia represents the quintessential specialty coffee origin and with our programme operating in Ethiopia, we hope to further discover and reward smallholder farmers who need market access via our competition and auction,” says Darrin Daniel, Executive Director of the Alliance for Coffee Excellence.

Launched in 1999, the COE is a three-week competition to find the highest quality coffee in any given country. Each year, thousands of coffees are submitted for consideration, with winning coffees sold in global online auctions at premium prices, with the vast majority of auction proceeds going to farmers.

Ethiopia to privatise 13 sugar projects

The Ministry of Finance (MoF) and the Ethiopian Sugar Corporation have invited responses to requests for information (RFI) to finalise preparations for the privatisation of sugar projects.

The RFI aims “to complete the necessary pre-privatisation activities to fully or partially privatize the 13 sugar projects that are either fully completed and in production or greenfield projects” the Ministry and the Corporation said in a joint press conference.

The RFI was issued in order to incorporate inputs from the private sector, facilitate information gathering from interested parties and identify new prospective buyers.

Based on the information provided by respondents, the Ministry will determine the form and mode of engaging the private sector in a competitive tender process, in line with government laws and regulations.

All documents and information involving the RFI process are available on the Ministry of Finance's website (www.mofed.gov.et), the Ethiopian Sugar Corporation's website (www.ethiopiansugar.com) and the Public Enterprises Holding and Administration Agency's website.



Land of Origins: The Next Big Thing in Global Tourism

Enchanting tourist attractions, unique diplomatic stature and a thriving airline have placed Ethiopia, Land of Origins, on top of the world when it comes to tourism growth.

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council's (WTTC) annual review, the country saw the highest tourism growth in the world (48.6%), surpassing the global average growth rate of 3.9% and the African average of 5.6%. During the period, the sector supported 2.2 million jobs and contributed \$7.4 billion to Ethiopia's economy, an increase of \$2.2bn on 2017.

The timeless charm of Ethiopia's natural, cultural and historical tourist attractions has been driving an influx of tourists from far and wide. As the land where mankind, coffee and the Blue Nile trace their

roots, Ethiopia has always been a fascinating destination for holidaymakers.

The country's UNESCO-registered heritage including the majestic obelisks of Axum, the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela and the fortified historic town of Harar, have drawn visitors in droves. Added to this are the magnificent scenery and the unique wildlife riches, some of which are found only in Ethiopia.

As the Meetings, Incentives, Conferencing and Exhibitions (MICE) tourism blossoms around the world, Ethiopia is also uniquely positioned to reap the benefits, owing to its unique place in Africa's diplomatic landscape. Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa hosts the AU headquarters and the offices of UN-ECA among others. Addis is the toast of Africa and welcomes diplomats and executives from

across the continent and the rest of the world. With its remarkable safety record and forward-looking infrastructure boom, today the city stands among the top capitals in the world, hosting major regional and global conferences.

As the main hub of the Pan-African carrier, Ethiopian Airlines, Ethiopia also enjoys convenient air connectivity with multiple destinations in Africa and the rest of the world, making travel to the country easier than ever before. The connectivity options the airline offers to travellers has made Ethiopia ever more accessible to the whole world.

The airline's catalyst role has never been more impactful, as Gloria Guevara, President & CEO of the World Travel & Tourism Council commented:

“Ethiopia’s Travel and Tourism boom was one of the great success stories of 2018. It has exceeded our sector’s global and regional comparisons to record the highest level of growth of any country in 2018, driven by the very strong performance of aviation in the country and the development of Addis Ababa as a dynamic and growing regional hub.”

Ethiopian Airlines, Africa’s largest carrier, today spreads its wings to 120 destinations throughout the world, with half the destinations in Africa. Thanks to Addis Ababa’s strategic location at the centre of the East-West lane and the ever-expanding service of Ethiopian Airlines, the city has emerged as the major gateway into Africa, surpassing Dubai.

The excellence of Ethiopian is also manifest in its hospitality and award-winning services. The carrier has been certified by SKYTRAX as a Four-Star Global Airline.

As Addis Ababa, diplomatic capital of Africa, continues to grow, the sky will be the limit for Ethiopia’s tourism growth in the years to come.

Tourism Generated Millions in Revenue for Ethiopia

The Minister of Culture and Tourism, H.E. Dr Hirut Kassaw revealed that tourism has generated more than \$2.5 billion from foreign tourists who visited Ethiopia during the past nine months (July 2018-March 2019).

During that period, more than 500,000 citizens from other nations and 23 million Ethiopians visited the country’s tourist destinations.

Dr Hirut added that these figures have a lot of margin for growth, with better publicity in and outside the country's borders, and the improvement and diversification of all services. The Minister said that the restoration of the Axum Obelisk, the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela and the Palace of Jimma Aba Jifar will soon begin.

She also reported that she has presented the documentation to register Dirre Sheikh Hussein, an Islamic center for pilgrimage, as a UNESCO cultural heritage site.

Ashenda, a girls and young women's festival celebrated in northern Ethiopia among Orthodox Christians, and the Sof Omar Caves are included in the list, the Minister said.

SPORTS

Team Ethiopia win three medals at London Marathon



Kenya’s Eluid Kipchoge won the men’s race for the fourth time. Ethiopia’s Mosinet Geremew was

runner-up finishing with an Ethiopian record of 2:02:55 – the fastest ever second place time and third best of all-time, while compatriot Mule Wasihun also entered the world top 10, coming third in 2:03:16.

It was the first time in history two men have gone under 2:03 in the same race, as Geremew moved to second on the world all-time list.

In the women's race, Ethiopia's Roza Dereje finished in third place in 2:20:51 after Kenya's Brigid Kosgei and Vivian Cheruiyot.



More than 42,000 ran the 39th London Marathon – the biggest ever. The 40th edition of the London Marathon will take place on Sunday 26th April 2020.

Ethiopians shine at Paris Marathon

Ethiopia's Abreha Milaw and Gelete Burka secured a men's and women's double at the 43rd edition of the Paris Marathon.



Abreha Milaw (L) and Gelete Burka celebrate their victory

Abreha clocked 2:07:05 for a comfortable 20-second victory over compatriot Asefa Mengistu while Gelete crossed the line in 2:22:47, five seconds clear

of another Ethiopian, Azmera Gebru, to complete an Ethiopian podium with Azmera Abreha in third place.

Abreha put an end to Kenya's Paul Lonyangata's dominance in Paris – he had been looking for a third successive victory.

Ethiopian runners sweep Rome marathon



Race winner Tebalu Zawude

Tebalu Zawude Heyi won the Rome marathon ahead of compatriots Tesfa Wokneth and Yihunilign Adane as the Ethiopian athletics power-house swept both the men's and women's events.

Tebalu clocked 2:08:37 with Tesfa just behind in 2:09:17 and Yihunilign timing 2:09:53.

Ethiopia also topped the women's race with Alemu Megertu setting a new course record of 2:22:52s ahead of countrywomen Muluhabt Tsega (2:26:41) and Chaltu Negesse (2:30:45).

Worknesh Degefa wins 123rd Boston Marathon women's race

Worknesh Degefa won the 123rd edition of the Boston Marathon women's race in 2 hours 23 minutes and 31 seconds.

Degefa, who became the fourth-fastest female marathoner in Dubai on 25th January, stunned the spectators by going off on her own in the sixth kilometre and prevailed by 42 seconds over 2017 Boston champion Edna Kiplagat from Kenya who finished second. American Jordan Hasay finished third in 2:25:20.

Ethiopia clinches top spot at World Cross Country Championships

PM Abiy Ahmed and President Sahlework Zewde hosted a state dinner in honour of Ethiopian athletes, coaches and officials who participated in the 43rd edition of the IAAF World Cross Country Championships.



Prime Minister Abiy with some of the athletes

Team Ethiopia athletes finished first place among 63 countries on the medals table taking home 5 gold, 3 silver and 3 bronze medals.

High performing athletes were awarded certificates of recognition and financial rewards.

Renowned athlete Feyisa Lelisa, also present at the dinner, was honoured in a special category, as part of the celebratory evening, for his silver medal victory at the Rio 2016 marathon. Feyisa became the first Ethiopian to finish in the top two of a men's Olympics marathon since 2000, taking silver behind Kenya's Eliud Kipchoge.



Feyisa had been living in exile in the United States since 2016 and returned home to Ethiopia in October last year, following reforms implemented by PM Abiy.

DIASPORA CORNER

Diaspora-led Initiative for Peace and Unity Established

Following the hugely successful Diaspora Forum, held under the theme, "Building a Bridge for Peace and Unity, on 16th March, a cross-cutting Diaspora-led initiative, aimed at further engaging the Ethiopian community in the UK in the current political and social transformations taking place in Ethiopia, has been established.

The initiative was established following a series of meetings between the Embassy and members of the Diaspora in the UK which conceptualised its objectives and organisation.

The initiative, which is currently in the process of finalising its terms of reference and volunteer coordinators, will be thematically organised under six sub-committees including: peace and unity; economic and trade diplomacy; public diplomacy; women's affairs; media management; and social affairs.

For further information on the initiative, please contact our Diaspora Department by email at diaspora@ethioembassy.org.uk.

Diaspora Agency holds Europe briefing

A diaspora briefing and discussion was held with all Ethiopian Embassy ambassadors residing in Europe from 24th - 25th April in Frankfurt, Germany.



The event was addressed by a delegation from the newly established Ethiopian Diaspora Agency, led by its director general, Mrs Selamawit Dawit.

The aim of the meeting was to establish a common understanding, among all mission ambassadors and diaspora heads, about the agency's strategic diaspora engagement plan.

Mrs Selamawit explained that the Ethiopian government has a strong commitment to engaging Ethiopian diaspora members in a new and transformative way. The new agency has its own structure and budget and is now ready to assign diplomats in the near future across major European countries and other regions where Ethiopian diaspora members live.

The Agency was officially launched on 1st March, with the aim of creating an enabling environment for the Diaspora to maximize knowledge and skills transfer and promoting trade and investment.

For further information, please visit the website at: www.ethiopiandiasporaagency.org and follow them on Facebook and Twitter (@DiasporaAgency).

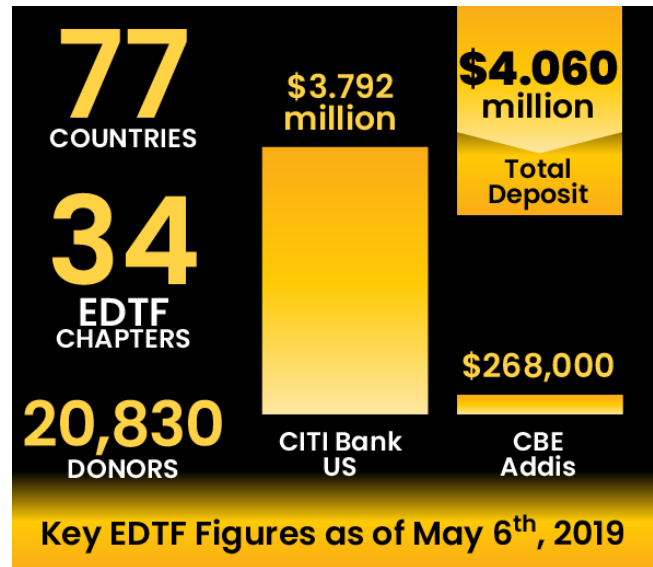
Ethiopian Diaspora Trust Fund Secretariat starts operations

The Ethiopian Diaspora Trust Fund (EDTF), Secretariat, which is headed by an Executive Director and initially includes a Programme Design Specialist and a Communication Specialist, has officially started operations in Addis Ababa.

The Secretariat, will be responsible for the daily administration and management of EDTF, implementation of policies of the Board, development of criteria and standards for project selection and funding, reviewing and vetting projects and EDTF Implementing Organizations, that will be submitted to the Board for approval, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of approved projects, public engagement and media relations on behalf of EDTF and identifying potential funding sources.

The Chairman of the Ethiopian Diaspora Trust Fund, Professor Alemayehu G. Mariam said, "We recently made a final selection of the secretariat

staff after a rigorous recruitment process conducted jointly by EDTF Advisory Council and the UNDP. I sincerely appreciate the UNDP's generous and substantial two-year grant support for the EDTF Secretariat and would like to take this opportunity to affirm to all the Ethiopian Diaspora members that one hundred percent of all donations will be used to finance projects.



EDTF is establishing different EDTF Chapters globally. They are an entirely volunteer-based initiative, and members are invited to join one of the chapters in their locality or open one themselves. London chapters of EDTF have already been established. For further information, please contact our Diaspora Department by email at diaspora@ethioembassy.org.uk.

Diaspora cleared to invest in banking sector

Ethiopia's Council of Ministers approved a draft law that allows foreign nationals of Ethiopian origin to invest in the banking sector.

The law drafted by the National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE) encourages the Ethiopian Diaspora to take advantage of the comprehensive changes underway in the country and will boost the role of banks in the country's economy through mobilising resources from external sources.

The draft law has been submitted to the House of People's Representatives (HPR) for approval.

ETHIOPIA IN THE NEWS

The woman behind Africa's fastest-selling homegrown shoes



Meet Bethlehem Tilahun Alemu, founder of the fastest-selling shoe brand in Africa.

Advertised as 'Vegan Footwear', soleRebels turns scraps of rubber from old tyres and other recycled material into fashionable shoes marked with traditional Ethiopian art.

Starting with a staff of five, Beth now employs 300 people. Most are paid triple Ethiopia's average wage.

Currently, there are two soleRebels stores in Ethiopia, and a further ten worldwide - in California's Silicon Valley, Germany, Japan, Singapore, and Spain.

Named by Forbes as one of Africa's most influential women, Beth now has a new venture, a coffee store chain named Garden of Coffee. She plans to open 100 outlets in China by 2022.

Read more at <http://bit.ly/BethAlemu>.

The world's best wildlife walks



Gelada baboons in Ethiopia

MailOnline A trek through the Simien Mountains could offer sightings of Ethiopian wolves and Walia ibex. But it's the spectacular gelada baboons that are the real draw - you'll get near enough to get a good look at their long fur and huge incisors.

Read more at <http://bit.ly/TrekETH>.

How to spend 48 hours in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



At 2,355m, Addis Ababa is one of the world's highest capitals, so it doesn't get too hot. In 48 hours, you can see its palaces, museums, churches and the largest open-air market in Africa.

The main wide boulevard in Addis is called Churchill Avenue, as the famous man helped rid them of the Italians and all the major sights lead off from here. It takes some getting used to but it's an attractive capital, surrounded by a crown of hills. If it all gets too much, there's good coffee on every corner - not surprising as the beans are endemic to Ethiopia.

Read more at <http://bit.ly/GoAddis>.

A Remarkable Rail Journey into the Horn of Africa's Past, and Future

A new train from Addis Ababa to Djibouti offers a desert journey into parts of Ethiopia that have been off the tourist track.



Lebu Station, on the outskirts of Addis Ababa, marks the western terminus of the new train line.

For tourists, the train journey promises cheap, air-conditioned travel far from the Rift Valley scarps and rock-hewn churches of Ethiopia's Northern Circuit, in a region that nonetheless incorporated some of the most remarkable sights in the Horn of Africa.

Read more at <http://bit.ly/Visit ETH1>.

9 of the best 'back on the map' countries to visit now

5. Ethiopia



Wanderlust
TRAVEL MAGAZINE

With a progressive new government and a massive injection of foreign capital, Ethiopia is moving forward in leaps and bounds. The capital

Addis Ababa is buzzing, but for canny travellers it represents a great opportunity to discover the country's overlooked nature reserves and diverse tribal communities in the Omo Valley.

This journey through untouched Ethiopia with Intrepid will take you to the remote home of Omo Valley tribes and Lake Chamo, where crocodiles bask on the shore and hippos wallow within. You'll visit the Dorze people, famous for their unique beehive houses and colourful woven fabrics, and Hamar villages, made entirely of mud. A boat trip across the lake will reveal an abundance of birdlife and a lifestyle that has not changed for centuries.

Read more at: <http://bit.ly/Visit ETH>.

EVENTS

Azmari Bet – An Evening of Comedy, Drama and Live Ethiopian Music



Krar Collective

A rich cultural experience of Azmari performers as well as traditional band Krar Collective, a theatrical rendition of Emperor Tewodros final speech before committing suicide ahead of the Italians invasion of Ethiopia.

Venue: Rich Mix
35-47 Bethnal Green Road
London E1 6LA

Date: Saturday, 25th May at 6.30pm
Price: £14 - £17

Traditional food and beverages will also be served on the night. For further information, please visit: <http://bit.ly/AzmariBet>.



Vintage Addis Ababa London Book Launch & Pop-up Exhibition

The editors of Vintage Addis Ababa, Wongel Abebe and Philipp Schütz, are organising a London launch of their acclaimed photography book.

Vintage Addis Ababa explores facets of a bygone era hidden from mainstream history. The book presents an intimate cross-section of life in Ethiopia's capital through 242 images from private archives and their accompanying stories.



Venue: Embassy of Ethiopia
17 Princes Gate
London SW7 1PZ
Date: Thursday, 30th May 2019 at 6.30pm

Copies of the book will be available on sale at the event. For further information and to register your place, please visit: <http://bit.ly/VAA-BookLaunch>.

Éthiopiennes at Songlines Encounters – Girma Bèyènè & Akalé Wubé

At this year's Songlines Encounters Festival (30th May – 3rd June) there will be a special focus on Francis Falceto's iconic *Éthiopiennes* CD series, with an unmissable performance by the legendary singer/pianist Girma Bèyènè, joined by the young French Ethio-jazz group Akalé Wubé.



Venue: Hall One
Kings Place
90 York Way
London N1 9AG
Date: Saturday, 1st June 2019 at 7pm
Price: £24.50 - £28.50

The concert is preceded by a screening of the documentary *Éthiopiennes: Revolt of the Soul*, telling the story of Ethiopia's musical golden age.

For further information, please visit: <http://bit.ly/GBekeleXAkale>.

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Published by the Public Diplomacy Department, Embassy of Ethiopia, London SW7 1PZ
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