

# The Ethiopian Messenger



H.E Hirut Zemene presents letters of credence to His Majesty Philippe, King of the Belgians.

H.E Ambassadeur Hirut Zemene presenteert haar geloofsbrieven aan Zijne Majesteit Koning Filip der Belgen.

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**Ethiopia**  
LAND OF ORIGINS



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በማስከተል በታላቁ የኢትዮጵያ ህዳሴ ግድብ ላይ ሁለት ጸሁፎች የተዘጋጁ ሲሆን አንደኛው የታላቁ የኢትዮጵያ ህዳሴ ግድብ የመጀመሪያ ዓመት የውሃ ሙሉት በተሳካ ሁኔታ መጠናቀቁን እና ሁለተኛው ደግሞ በቤልጅየም የሕዳሴ ግድብ የድጋፍ ቡድን ስላከናወናቸው ተግባራት በዝርዝር ቀርቧል።

በመቀጠል የኢትዮጵያ መንግስት የ10 ዓመት (ከ2020/21 – 2029/30) የልማት ዕቅድ በተመለከተ መታወቅ ያለባቸውን ዋና ዋና ጉዳዮች የዳሰሰ ጸሁፍ ይኖረናል።

ከዚያ በማስከተል ሁለት ዋና ዋና የኢትዮጵያ ፕሮጀክቶችን የሚመለከቱ ሁለት ጸሁፎች የቀረቡ ሲሆን አንደኛው በጠቅላይ ሚኒስትር ዶ/ር ዐቢይ አህመድ አነሳሽነት ወደ ተግባር የተገባው ሽገርን የማስዋገድ ፕሮጀክቶችን በተመለከተ እና ሁለተኛው ደግሞ በክረምቱ ወራት በዋነኝነት የተከናወኑትን የአረንጓዴ አሻራ ንቅናቄ የሚዳስሱ ጸሁፎች ቀርበዋል።

በመጨረሻም የኢትዮጵያ ኦዲስ ዓመት (እንቁጣጣሽ) እና ሌሎች በመስከረም ወር ውስጥ የሚከበሩ በዓሎችን የሚዳስስ ሰፋ ያለ ጸሁፍ ይኖረናል።

መልካም ንባብ!

የአርትኦት ኮሚቴ

Dear Readers,

The 17th issue of the Ethiopian Messenger will focus on the Embassy's activities and Ethiopia's major accomplishments in the past three months.

Our first article introduces you to our new Ambassador: as Her Excellency kicks off her work in Brussels by presenting her credentials to His Majesty King Philippe of Belgium.

We then have two articles on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD): one covers the first-year impoundment of the GERD; the second presents the activities done by the GERD Support Group in Belgium since its establishment.

As the Ethiopian Government unveils its 10-year Development Plan, we have an article that covers important elements you need to know about the Development Plan from 2020/21 – 2029/30.

Afterwards, we have two articles addressing two major Ethiopian projects and initiatives. One introduces Sheger projects initiated by Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Dr Abiy Ahmed to revamp Addis Ababa; the second presents the Green Legacy initiative to plant 5 billion seedlings during the Ethiopian rainy season.

Finally, the Ethiopian New Year (Enkutatash) and other cultural festivities which are being celebrated in the month of September will be presented to you.

We hope you enjoy this issue of the Ethiopian Messenger.

The Editorial Team

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# Diplomacy

## H.E. Ambassador Hirut Zemene Presents her Letters of Credence to His Majesty Philippe, King of the Belgians

Since Ethiopia officially opened its Embassy in 1970 in Brussels, H.E. Ambassador Hirut Zemene is the ninth Ambassador representing Ethiopia in the country. The Embassy has always been represented by seasoned diplomats and high level officials.



Amb. and His Majesty, presenting her credentials. (Photo credit: Belgian Royal Palace).

On September 29, 2020, the newly appointed Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ethiopia to the Kingdom of Belgium, Luxembourg and the EU institutions, H.E. Hirut Zemene presented her letters of credence to the Head of State of the Kingdom of Belgium, His Majesty King Philippe.

During the occasion, Ambassador Hirut conveyed the greetings and best wishes from H.E. Sahle-Work Zewde, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to His Majesty the King. His Majesty as well wished to Her Excellency Sahle-Work Zewde good health, and prosperity to the people of Ethiopia. His Majesty has also wished success to the reform programs led by H.E Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. Ambassador Hirut had the opportunity to exchange views on various array of issues, mainly focusing on the way to further develop the strong relations that exist between the two sisterly countries for more than hundred years.

Ethiopia and Belgium have a long history of diplomatic relations dating back to 1906, when the Government of Belgium first opened its Embassy in Addis Ababa, making it only the 5th country to do so. Belgium had played a

significant role in the establishment and training of the close protection forces of Emperor Haile-Selassie known as “Kibur Zebegna”. Since then, the two countries have exchanged visits at the level of heads of state and other high-level officials, as well as signed various agreements that aimed at bolstering the relations between the two countries.

Among others, the 1997 development cooperation agreement which ended in 2006, could be taken as an example. Currently, academic cooperation has become the driver of the two countries’ relations, making more than 3000 Ethiopian students and ten public universities beneficiary of the collaboration. The two countries have also promising trade and investment links notably Belgium being among the largest importers of Ethiopian coffee.

Since Ethiopia officially opened its Embassy in 1970 in Brussels, H.E. Ambassador Hirut Zemene is the ninth Ambassador representing Ethiopia in the country. The Embassy of Ethiopia in Brussels has always been represented by seasoned diplomats and high level officials. This continued tradition is a testament to the importance that Ethiopia attaches to its relations that the mission covers i.e,



Former Ambassadors that served in Brussels. (Photo credit: Embassy of Ethiopia in Belgium).

the Kingdom of Belgium, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, and EU institutions.

H.E. Ambassador Hirut Zemene will add to the seasoned and well experienced diplomats that the country places in Brussels. Ambassador Hirut has served in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia as well as Ethiopian Missions abroad for over 28 years in different capacities starting from junior officer to the level of State Minister for Foreign Affairs.

H.E. Ambassador Hirut received her first degree in 1991 from Addis Ababa University in Political Science and International Relations. She has also received Master of Arts (M.A) in Global Studies at Fletcher School of Diplomacy and Law, Tufts University in 2002.

Over the past three decades, Ambassador Hirut Zemene has represented her country in various capacities in bilateral and multilateral forums in the interest of protecting and advancing Ethiopia's national interest and advancing mutual benefits with various countries. Especially in her previous position as a State Minister for political affairs, Ambassador Hirut has contributed her part building sustainable peace and stability in the Horn of Africa and the wider region.

In this regard, she had presided, among others, over many of the mediation processes of the IGAD ministerial-level engagements in the attempt to revitalize the South Sudan peace agreement and witnessed the successful signing of the agreement; played a major role in strengthening transboundary cooperation among IGAD member states. Ambassador Hirut's contribution to the process of forging a common stance among the IGAD countries and the peace and development issues in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden was high. She has also actively taken part in the revamping of IGAD structure to make it fit-for-purpose. Her role in various capacities that involve issues of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) as

well as relations with Europe, the United States and China will bring a wealth of experience that helps to bolster the existing areas of cooperation that Ethiopia enjoys with Belgium, EU and Luxembourg as well as the further opening of new paths to broaden the cooperations. ■

# Diplomatie

## H.E. Ambassadeur Hirut Zemene presenteert haar geloofsbrieven aan Zijne Majesteit Koning Filip der Belgen

Sinds de officiële opening van de ambassade van Ethiopië in 1970 in Brussel is H.E. Ambassadeur Hirut Zemene de negende ambassadeur die Ethiopië in het land vertegenwoordigt. De ambassade is altijd vertegenwoordigd geweest door doorgewinterde diplomaten en hoge ambtenaren.



H.E. Hirut Zemene overhandigt haar geloofsbrieven aan Zijne Majesteit Koning Filip der Belgen. (Fotokrediet: Koninklijk Belgisch Paleis)

Op 29 september 2020 heeft H.E. Hirut Zemene, de nieuwbenoemde buitengewone en gevolmachtigde ambassadeur van Ethiopië bij het Koninkrijk België, Luxemburg en de EU-instellingen, haar geloofsbrieven overhandigd aan het staatshoofd van het Koninkrijk België, Zijne Majesteit Koning Filip.

Bij die gelegenheid heeft ambassadeur Hirut de groeten en de beste wensen van H.E. Sahle-Work Zewde, president van de Federale Democratische Republiek Ethiopië, overgebracht aan Zijne Majesteit de Koning. Ook Zijne Majesteit wenste Hare Excellentie Sahle-Work Zewde een goede gezondheid en, welvaart toe aan het volk van Ethiopië. Zijne Majesteit heeft ook succes gewenst met de hervormingsprogramma's onder leiding van Z.E. Eerste Minister Abiy Ahmed. Ambassadeur Hirut had de gelegenheid om van gedachten te wisselen over verschillende onderwerpen, waarbij zij zich vooral richtte op de manier waarop de sterke relaties die al meer dan honderd jaar tussen de twee zusterlanden bestaan, verder kunnen worden ontwikkeld.

Ethiopië en België hebben een lange geschiedenis van diplomatieke betrekkingen die teruggaat tot 1906, toen de regering van België voor het eerst haar ambassade in Addis Abeba opende, waardoor het slechts het 5e land was dat dit deed. België had een belangrijke rol gespeeld in de oprichting en opleiding van de hechte beschermingsmacht van keizer Haile-Selassie, bekend als "Kibur Zebegna". Sindsdien hebben de twee landen bezoeken uitgewisseld op het niveau van staatshoofden en andere hoge ambtenaren, en hebben ze verschillende overeenkomsten ondertekend die de betrekkingen tussen de twee landen moeten versterken.

Een voorbeeld hiervan is de ontwikkelingsamenwerkings-overeenkomst uit 1997, die in 2006 afliep. Op dit moment is de academische samenwerking de drijvende kracht achter de betrekkingen tussen de twee landen geworden, waardoor meer dan 3000 Ethiopische studenten en tien openbare universiteiten van de samenwerking profiteren. De twee landen hebben ook veelbelovende handels- en investeringsbanden, met name België, dat tot de grootste invoerders van Ethiopische koffie behoort.



Foto's van vorige ambassadeurs die in Brussel hebben gediend. (Fotokrediet: Ambassade van Ethiopië in België)

Sinds de officiële opening van de ambassade van Ethiopië in 1970 in Brussel is H.E. Ambassadeur Hirut Zemene de negende ambassadeur die Ethiopië in het land vertegenwoordigt. De ambassade van Ethiopië in Brussel is altijd vertegenwoordigd geweest door doorgewinterde diplomaten en hoge ambtenaren. Deze voortdurende traditie getuigt van het belang dat Ethiopië hecht aan de betrekkingen die de missie bestrijkt, d.w.z. het Koninkrijk België, het Groothertogdom Luxemburg en de instellingen van de EU.

H.E. Ambassadeur Hirut Zemene zal de doorgewinterde en ervaren diplomaten die het land in Brussel plaatst, aanvullen. Ambassadeur Hirut heeft meer dan 28 jaar in het Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken van Ethiopië en Ethiopische missies in het buitenland gediend in verschillende hoedanigheden, gaande van junior officier tot het niveau van staatssecretaris van Buitenlandse Zaken.

H.E. Ambassadeur Hirut behaalde haar eerste graad in 1991 aan de Universiteit van Addis Abeba in Politieke Wetenschappen en Internationale Betrekkingen. Ze heeft ook een Master of Arts (M.A) behaald in Global Studies aan de Fletcher School of Diplomacy and Law, Tufts University in 2002.

In de afgelopen drie decennia heeft Ambassadeur Hirut Zemene haar land in verschillende hoedanigheden vertegenwoordigd in bilaterale en multilaterale fora in het belang van de bescherming en bevordering van het nationale belang van Ethiopië en het bevorderen van de wederzijdse voordelen met verschillende landen. Vooral in haar vorige functie als staatssecretaris van politieke zaken heeft Ambassadeur Hirut haar steentje bijgedragen aan de opbouw van duurzame vrede en stabiliteit in de Hoorn van Afrika en de bredere regio.

In dit verband had zij onder meer veel van de bemiddelingsprocessen van de IGAD-ministers voorgezeten in een poging het vredesakkoord voor Zuid-Sudan nieuw leven in te blazen en was zij getuige van de succesvolle ondertekening van het akkoord; zij heeft een belangrijke rol gespeeld bij de versterking van de grensoverschrijdende samenwerking tussen de lidstaten van de IGAD. De bijdrage van Ambassadeur Hirut aan het proces van het smeden van een gemeenschappelijk standpunt tussen de IGAD-landen en de vredes- en ontwikkelingsvraagstukken in de Rode Zee en de Golf van Aden was hoog. Zij heeft ook actief deelgenomen aan de vernieuwing van de IGAD-structuur om deze geschikt te maken voor het doel. Haar rol in verschillende hoedanigheden die betrekking hebben op kwesties van de minst ontwikkelde landen (MOEs) en de niet aan zee grenzende ontwikkelingslanden en de betrekkingen met Europa, de Verenigde Staten en China zal een schat aan ervaring opleveren die de bestaande samenwerkingsgebieden die Ethiopië met België, de EU en Luxemburg onderhoudt, zal helpen versterken en nieuwe wegen zal helpen openen om de samenwerking te verbreden. ■

## Diplomatie

# Son Excellence Hirut Zemene présente ses lettres de créance à Sa Majesté Philippe, Roi des Belges

Depuis que l'Éthiopie a officiellement ouvert son ambassade en 1970 à Bruxelles, Son Excellence Hirut Zemene est le neuvième ambassadeur représentant l'Éthiopie dans le pays. L'ambassade a toujours été représentée par des diplomates de haut niveau et des hauts fonctionnaires.



S.E Hirut Zemene présentant ses lettres de créance à sa Majesté le Roi Philippe. (Crédit photo: Palais Royal Belge).

Le 29 septembre 2020, la nouvelle Ambassadrice Extraordinaire et Plénipotentiaire d'Éthiopie auprès du Royaume de Belgique, du Grand Duché de Luxembourg et des institutions de l'UE, Son Excellence Hirut Zemene a présenté ses lettres de créance au Chef de l'Etat du Royaume de Belgique, Sa Majesté Philippe, Roi des Belges.

À cette occasion, S.E l'Ambassadrice Hirut Zemene a transmis les salutations et les meilleurs vœux de S.E. Sahle-Work Zewde, Présidente de la République fédérale démocratique d'Éthiopie à Sa Majesté le Roi Philippe. Sa Majesté a également souhaité à Son Excellence Sahle-Work Zewde bonne santé et prospérité au peuple éthiopien. En outre, les deux parties ont échangé leurs points de vue sur diverses questions, se concentrant principalement sur la manière de développer davantage les relations solides qui existent entre les deux pays amis depuis plus de cent ans.

L'Éthiopie et la Belgique ont une longue histoire de relations diplomatiques qui remonte à 1906, lorsque le gouvernement

belge a ouvert pour la première fois son ambassade à Addis-Abeba, ce qui en faisait le cinquième pays à le faire.

La Belgique a joué un rôle important dans la mise en place et la formation des forces de protection rapprochée de l'empereur Haile-Selassie connues sous le nom de «Kibur Zebegna». Depuis lors, les deux pays ont échangé des visites au niveau des chefs d'État et au niveau ministériel, et ont signé divers accords visant à renforcer les relations entre les deux pays. L'accord de coopération au développement de 1997, qui a pris fin en 2006, en est un exemple.

À l'heure actuelle, la coopération universitaire est devenue le moteur des relations entre les deux pays, faisant de plus de 3000 étudiants éthiopiens et dix universités publiques les bénéficiaires de cette collaboration.

Depuis que l'Éthiopie a officiellement ouvert son ambassade en 1970 à Bruxelles, S.E l'Ambassadrice Hirut Zemene est le neuvième ambassadeur représentant l'Éthiopie dans le pays. L'ambassade d'Éthiopie à Bruxelles a toujours été représentée par des diplomates de haut niveau et des hauts





Photos des précédents ambassadeurs ayant servi à Bruxelles. (Crédit photo: Ambassade d’Ethiopie en Belgique).

fonctionnaires. Cette tradition témoigne de l’importance que l’Éthiopie attache à ses relations avec le Royaume de Belgique, le Grand-Duché de Luxembourg et les institutions de l’UE.

S.E l’Ambassadrice Hirut Zemene fait également partie des diplomates de carrière qualifiés et expérimentés du pays. Elle a servi au sein du ministère des Affaires étrangères de l’Éthiopie ainsi que dans des missions éthiopiennes à l’étranger pendant plus de 28 ans à différents titres, allant de poste junior au niveau de Ministre d’État aux Affaires étrangères.

S.E. l’Ambassadrice Hirut a obtenu son premier diplôme en 1991 à l’Université d’Addis-Abeba en sciences politiques et relations internationales. En 2002, elle a également obtenu un Master of Arts (M.A) en études globales de la Fletcher School of Diplomacy and Law, Tufts University.

Au cours des trois dernières décennies, S.E l’Ambassadrice Hirut Zemene a représenté son pays à diverses occasions, dans des forums bilatéraux et multilatéraux. Elle a énormément contribué à la protection et à la promotion de l’intérêt national de l’Éthiopie, en particulier dans l’exercice de ses fonctions de Ministre d’État aux affaires politiques. Elle a contribué à l’instauration d’une paix et d’une stabilité durable dans la Corne de l’Afrique et dans la région au sens large.

À cet égard, elle a présidé de nombreux processus de médiation au niveau ministériel de l’Autorité intergouvernementale pour le développement (IGAD) dans le but de revitaliser l’accord de paix du Soudan du Sud et a été témoin de la signature réussie de l’accord. Elle a également joué un rôle majeur dans le renforcement de la coopération transfrontalière entre les États membres de l’IGAD. La contribution de S.E l’Ambassadrice Hirut Zemene au processus visant à forger une position commune entre les pays de l’IGAD et les questions de paix et de développement dans la mer Rouge et le golfe d’Aden a été considérable. Elle a également participé activement à la

refonte de la structure de l’IGAD pour l’adapter à son objectif. Son rôle dans les sujets relatifs aux pays en développement et aux pays enclavés et en développement ainsi que les relations avec l’Europe, les États-Unis et la Chine apportera une riche expérience à Bruxelles. Cela contribuera également à renforcer les domaines de coopération existants dont bénéficie l’Éthiopie avec la Belgique, l’UE et le Luxembourg ainsi que l’ouverture de nouvelles voies pour élargir cette collaboration. ■

## GERD

# Ethiopia Successfully Completes the First-Year Impoundment of the GERD

The first year impoundment of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) entails the filling of 4.9 Billion Cubic Metres, which is around one tenth of the average annual flow of the Nile at the GERD site.



The first-year filling of the GERD. (Photo credit: FBC).

It has almost been a decade since Ethiopia commenced the construction of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) in Northwestern Ethiopia, at a place called Guba in Benshangul Gumuz Regional State. With a cost of more than 5 billion USD, the GERD is set to be the biggest hydro-power in Africa and the world's ninth-largest. Once completed, the Dam will generate 15,700 GWh annually, bringing electricity and an opportunity for a dignified life to more than 65 million people, who currently live in darkness.

The project is financed solely by the Ethiopian government and contributions by Ethiopians from all walks of lives and the diaspora of Ethiopian origin. As such, the project has been not just a flagship development project but also a symbol of national consensus and national pride, an icon of Ethiopian renaissance, as so aptly put in the dam's name.

Ethiopia, having strong belief on mutual cooperation and equitable use of the transboundary resources from the beginning of the construction of the GERD, has taken an

unprecedented initiative to involve the downstream countries through establishing trilateral committee with downstream countries and sharing all the necessary information with a view to creating transparency and mutual trust.

Nine years down the line, Ethiopia has successfully completed the first impoundment of the GERD in mid July 2020. "It has become evident over the past two weeks of the rainy season that the GERD first year filling is achieved and the dam under construction is already overtopping," the Office of the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, said in a press statement.

The first year impoundment entails the filling of 4.9 Billion Cubic Metres, which is around one tenth of the average annual flow of the Nile at the GERD site. The aim, considering the variability of the hydrology in the basin and the need of the downstream countries, is to complete water filling of GERD within 4 to 7 years.

The GERD is designed in a way that the construction and filling go hand in hand. This has been clearly put in the 2015 Declaration of Principles (DOP) signed between Egypt, Ethiopia, and Sudan. Nature has also been on Ethiopia's side during this rainy summer season, as this year registers the highest amount of rainfall ever witnessed over more than the last fifty years period. Both the Blue Nile and the White Nile have had an above normal flow, Lake Victoria is at a record high level, and the High Aswan Dam is also at its full supply level of 182 meters above sea level, which is a record high for the past four decades.

Ethiopians across the world have celebrated this historic milestone of the first-year filling of the GERD, as it heralds in a new era where Ethiopia and Ethiopians use their natural resources without causing significant harm to downstream countries. Thousands of Ethiopians flooded the streets of Addis Ababa dressed in national dress, waving Ethiopia's flag and holding up banners. Various events were also held across Ethiopia and abroad under the theme, "Our Voice for Our Dam".



Ethiopians celebrate the first filling of the GERD in Addis Ababa. (Photo credit: Abinet Teshome).

Ethiopia is grateful for the support of the international community and for the efforts made by different partners, including the European Union on the GERD trilateral negotiations. Most importantly, the initiatives taken by the African Union is an exemplary one to solve African problems with African solutions.

Ethiopia still hopes that with commitment and political will from all sides, and of course with adherence to internationally accepted principles namely, equitable and reasonable utilization of resources, and not causing significant harm, it would not be difficult to find a win-win solution for the outstanding issues. ■



Ethiopians celebrate the first filling of the GERD in Addis Ababa. (Photo credit: Addis Herald).



Ethiopians celebrate the first filling of the GERD in Addis Ababa. (Photo credit: Associated Press).

## GERD

# GERD Support Group in Belgium Promotes the National Interest of Ethiopia

The GERD Support Group in Belgium aims at informing members of the international community about the objective of the Renaissance Dam, its benefit to Ethiopia and the region, and the trilateral negotiation processes between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan to reach at a win-win solution which satisfies all parties.



Logo of GERD Support Group in Belgium. (Source: The Support Group website).

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and the ongoing tripartite negotiation has been a very topical issue for all Ethiopians and the diaspora community. The GERD Support Group based in Belgium was also inspired by this development. The Group consists of various Ethiopians and nationals of Ethiopian origin came together of own initiative established on June 20 2020 with the aim to promoting Ethiopia's interest particularly the importance of the GERD for Ethiopia as well as the region as a whole. This group has contributed immensely to the understandings and support to the GERD project and the tripartite negotiation with lower riparian countries, Sudan and Egypt. The group

has set up in such a short period of time, quite informative social media forums i.e., Facebook, Twitter, and website.

Through these media outlets, the group has already disseminated important facts and advantages of the GERD to Ethiopia and beyond. It has also taken an exemplary initiative to redress misinformation in representing Ethiopia's effort to build the dam.

The support group aims at informing members of the international community about the objective of the Renaissance Dam, its benefit to Ethiopia and the region, and the trilateral negotiation processes between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan to reach at a win-win solution which satisfies all parties. The group also aspires to promote equitable



The first-year filling of the GERD. (Photo credit: Adwa Pictures).

and reasonable utilisation of the waters of the Nile through cooperation to alleviate poverty of the people living in the Nile basin countries, and to support Ethiopia's efforts to ensure its overall socio-economic development rightfully utilizing its water resources.

The Embassy in collaboration with Ethiopians residing in Brussels and the GERD support group recently celebrated the completion of the first-year filling of the GERD. During the celebration at the Embassy, the new Ethiopian Ambassador in Brussels, H.E. Hirut Zemene appreciated the role being played by Ethiopians and nationals of Ethiopian origins in Belgium and by the GERD Support Group for their all rounded support for the construction of the Grand Renaissance Dam.



Embassy staff and Ethiopian Diaspora celebrate the First Filling of the GERD (Photo credit: Embassy of Ethiopia in Belgium).

On the occasion, Mr Abera Yemane-ab, coordinator of GERD Support Group in Belgium remarked that Ethiopians should stand together by rightly informing the international community about why the GERD is a matter of great importance not only to Ethiopians but also to lower riparian countries. Ethiopia began building the Great Renaissance Dam on the Blue Nile River in a place called Guba, 60 kilometres from Sudan in 2011, which will hold 74 billion cubic meters of water with



Ambassador Hirut Zemene delivering a remark at the event (Photo credit: Embassy of Ethiopia in Belgium).

a main purpose of generating hydroelectric power. Based on accepted international principles, Ethiopia has endeavoured to construct this dam to uplift its population from abject poverty and benefit 65 million of its population who have no access to electricity and 45 million with lack of potable water. Women still trek miles to fetch firewood. This makes the construction of the dam an existential matter. Ethiopia as the origin of 86 percent of the Nile waters has been denied of this basic right. Ethiopia, while redressing this injustice, follows a win-win approach of accepted international principles of not causing significant harm and equitable utilization of the water. ■



Mr. Abera Yemane-ab, Chairperson of the GERD Support Group in Belgium, delivering a speech at the event. (Photo credit: Embassy of Ethiopia, Brussels).

# Ethiopia Unveils 10-Year Development Plan

The new ten-year development plan, which is in line with the Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda of the country, is a successor to the country's five-year Growth and Transformation Plan-II (GTP II).

The Government of Ethiopia has unveiled a Ten-Year Development Plan 'Ethiopia: An African Beacon of Prosperity' which will run from 2020/21 to 2029/30. The new ten-year development plan, which is in line with the country's Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda, is a successor to the country's five-year Growth and Transformation Plan II (GTP II). Ethiopia used to have development plans for a maximum duration of five years. The ten-year plan has taken into account the strengths and weaknesses of previous plans, the nation's vision for 2030, national policies and strategies, and the commitment to global sustainable development goals.

The National Planning and Development Commission is publicizing a draft 10-year future development plan intending to collate input to refine the draft plan through public discussion further. Discussions involving various stakeholders – government agencies, relevant civil society organizations (CSOs) and the private sector are taking place at this juncture.

The plan focuses on agriculture, manufacturing, mining, tourism, urban development, innovation and technology as crucial development sectors. The energy sector is also given due emphasis as it sets ambitious targets for cross-cutting energy needs across all sectors of the economy.

The development plan will also focus on "women and youth" and aim to ensure the leadership of the private sector in the economy. It aims to stimulate the increased participation of the private sector in the economy by creating a conducive investment climate, providing incentives and building public-private partnerships. The role of the government in the next decade would be to improve infrastructure, develop and enforce regulatory policies, and invest in parts of the economy that do not attract the private sector.

The new plan envisages the continuation of the rapid economic growth that has already been registered over the last decade and a half. Accordingly, in the new plan, the economy envisages an average annual economic growth of 10.2%, while the per capita income is expected to increase by 8.2% each year to reach USD 2,220 by 2030. Regarding poverty reduction and unemployment, the plan also envisages a reduction in the proportion of people living below the poverty line from the current 19% to 7% in 2030 and a reduction in the unemployment rate by at least 1% each year. The plan also foresees for universal access to clean drinking water and electricity by 2030.

Furthermore, the improvement of infrastructures such as road, railway, irrigation system, ICT, education, and health services are vital features of the new development plan. About 4.4 million houses are also planned to be built in the same period to meet the needs of housing. The plan also intends to accelerate the structural transformation of the economy by substantially increasing industry's contribution to GDP from the current 27.8% to 35.9% by 2030.

The new development plan identifies four critical gaps that need to be addressed for the successful implementation of the development targets set. The first is the macroeconomic imbalances, which include high inflation, unemployment, high levels of indebtedness and foreign-exchange deficits. The second concerns the country's economic vulnerability to externally induced shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, extreme weather events, and desert locust infestation. The third challenge is also linked to the lack of infrastructure, and the fourth one that the new plan intends to address is linked to low quality services in the health and education sectors. The plan has also identified some specific coping measures that will help to address the above identified challenges.

The Government of Ethiopia (GoE), in order to enable effective execution of the ten-year plan, has indicated its commitment to harness projects and investments that would have a significant impact on the economy through prioritized financing mechanism based on their value addition to the GDP; to focus on the quality of projects so that expenditure is effective. It also envisaged to bring attitudinal change that has long entrenched in a "battle in fighting poverty" to the idea of "aspiring for prosperity".

In order to ensure the successful implementation of the new development plan, the GoE outlined a monitoring and evaluation system that facilitates implementation follow-up, enhance transparency and accountability at all levels. The system is designed to allow government ministries and agencies, on the one hand, to log their quarterly and annual reports digitally and, on the other hand, to address the lack of coordination and the lack of management of the reports, which were major set-backs in previous development plans and strategies. It also creates a platform to generate integrated reports that are accessible to the public. ■

# BRUSSELS-ADDIS ABABA NOW DAILY.



## Tourism

# Beautifying Addis Ababa as an Urban Tourism Site

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed officially launched the construction of the project on October 1, 2019. The name Addis Ababa means “New flower”, and the project is to befit this name. The project, therefore, aims at making the capital city a tourist destination and enhancing the well-being of city dwellers.



H.E Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, introducing the city projects to the public. (Photo credit: PMO, Ethiopia).

Beautifying Sheger project is a project initiated by H.E Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of Ethiopia to uplift the image of Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia, a seat of the African union as well as various international organizations, and its environs to make it fit for tourism and recreations.

This 29 billion Birr scheme, also known as ‘the Sheger project has two parts; the first is the cleanup and beautification of Addis’ rivers sides, the other is transforming Entoto mountain. The project runs along the rivers of Addis Ababa, developing green spaces starting from Entoto to Akaki alongside the 56km river streams until they reach Akaki wastewater treatment plant.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed officially launched the construction of the project on October 1, 2019. The name Addis Ababa means “New flower”, and the project is to befit this name. The project, therefore, aims at making the capital city a tourist destination and enhancing the well-being of city dwellers by mitigating river flooding and through the creation of public spaces and parks, bicycle paths and walkways along the riverside. At the official

launch of the project, Prime Minister Abiy remarked that “The project is part of the comprehensive works that the government is undertaking to foster tourism and beautify the capital.”

For the completion of the projects, the Prime Minister held a fundraising dinner on 19 May 2019 dubbed “Dine for Sheger” at the National Palace. At the dinner, 300 business owners, company CEOs, international organizations, heads and members of the diplomatic community attended. The project required an estimated \$1 billion, and the dinner raised \$25 million.

Sheger park project renovates the city of 5 million people with clean waterways, flower belts, Amphitheatres, Water Dance Light Fountains, open spaces and stops, bikeways, walkways along the riverside and transforming Addis Ababa into a greener, cleaner, resilient, and happier city.

The second part of the project is Entoto Park which comprises various indoor and outdoor facilities including a library, sports centres, entertainment, restaurants and coffee shops, an artificial lake and fountains walkways, bike, scooter, and cart routes.





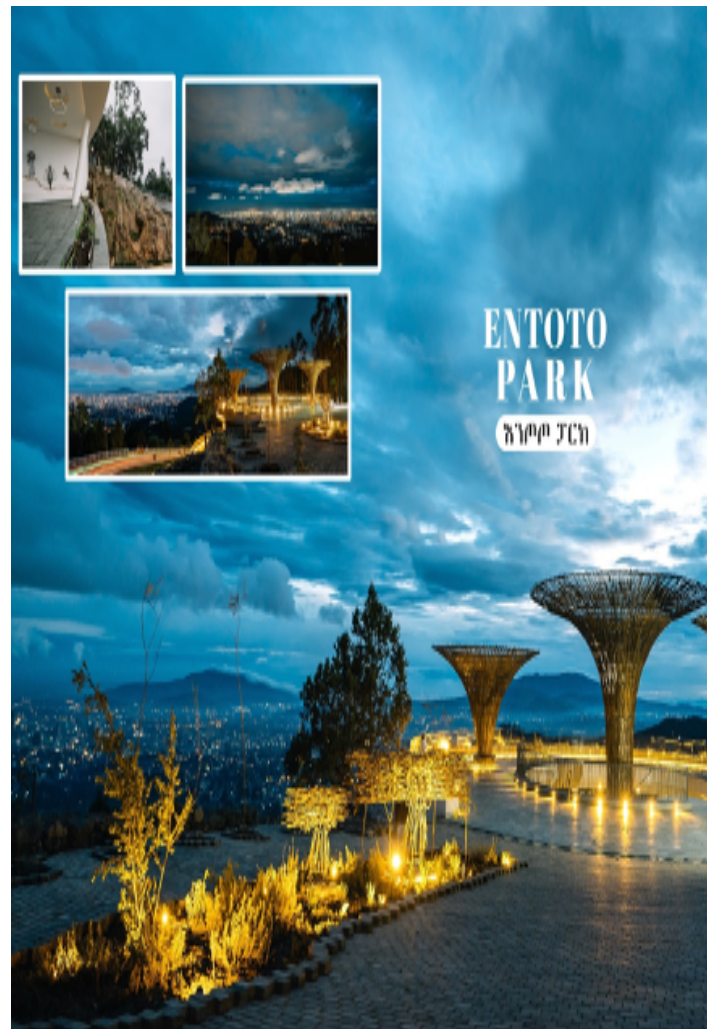
Friendship Square, Addis Ababa. (Photo credit: PMO, Ethiopia).

Most of these facilities were constructed using local materials, so they blend in beautifully with the natural environment of the park.

Some exciting activities in Entoto Natural Park include: - a Paintball arena, outdoor archery, a horse-riding ranch for both adults and children, and a large outdoor amphitheatre that will be used for concerts, theatres, and live music. Other sights that can be seen on foot in the natural environment of Entoto Natural Park include: -views of Addis Abeba, Entoto Mariam Church, and the historical museum, Menelik's Palace, two Kedus Raguel and Kedus Elias Churches from different eras, the Washa Mikael Church ruins, and runners training on the forest trails. The new park is also a convenient place to birdwatchers with some 200 bird species registered in the mixed habitats of forest woodland, rock sloop cliffs and marshes.

In a short one-year period since the start of the construction, both Sheger and Entoto park are near completion; have created many jobs and are changing the look and feel of the city. Beautifying Sheger projects, apart from evolving the look and feel of the city of Addis Ababa, will have a significant impact in contributing to the development of service economic sectors.

The successful completion of the two projects have encouraged and served as a benchmark for other projects to be replicated in other parts of the country that are the main sites for tourism. Recently, building on experience and success of Sheger projects in Addis Ababa, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has officially launched a "Dine for Nation" fundraising program to mobilise funds for three other projects in Amhara, Oromia and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples regions. The new project sites called Gorgora, Wonchi and Koyish, are the places in the country with beautiful natural sites and attractions. A committee established to spearhead resource mobilisation started its work on August 16, 2020. ■



Entoto park, Addis Ababa. (Photo Credit: PMO, Ethiopia).

## Green Growth

# Ethiopia's Second Year Green Legacy Campaign

The Green Legacy campaign was launched in 2019 by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, and aimed at 20 billion tree planting scheme over four years. The second campaign was launched on 05 June 2020 and aimed to plant 5 billion seedlings during the Ethiopian rainy season.



Prime Minister Abiy with his son planting trees. (Photo Credit: PMO, Ethiopia).

Green Legacy initiative is a national go green campaign, endeavouring to raise the public's awareness about Ethiopia's alarming environmental degradation, and educate the society on the importance of adopting green behaviour. According to the Ethiopian Forest and Climate Change Commission, in 2015, the forest cover of the country was estimated at 15.5%. By planting billions of trees each year, Ethiopia hopes to significantly increase its forest coverage. The Green Legacy campaign initially launched in 2019 by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, set out a 20 billion tree planting campaign over four years (2019-2024) while building a green and climate-resilient economy. During the first Green Legacy tree-planting campaign in 2019, a record of 353,633,660 tree seedlings were planted in 12 hours and a total of 4 billion seedlings were planted throughout the rainy season on an area of 1.5 million hectares across the country.

Green Legacy's second campaign was launched on 05 June 2020 and aimed to plant 5 billion seedlings during the Ethiopian rainy season. The final official plantation of this year campaign was held on 12 August 2020 in Amhara region, Bahir Dar City at Bezawit Mountain. Taking part at the closing session, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed announced that the plan to plant five billion seedlings this summer had been achieved and 84 percent have survived from last year's planted trees. He also announced that an additional 200 million seedlings have been prepared to replace among the 5 billion seedlings that have been transplanted for various reasons and it would be planted in the remaining rainy season.

The major environmental issues such as soil erosion, deforestation and biodiversity loss are stressing the world. In Ethiopia, climate change has brought dire challenges, including food insecurity, drought, and flood. In the last 50 years, Ethiopia had lost around 98 percent of its forest



Children participating in tree planting campaign. (Photo Credit: BBC).

coverage, dropping to about 4 percent at the beginning of the 21st century. With concerted efforts made over the last decades in conserving the environment and afforestation, the forest coverage of the country at the moment has reached above 15.5 percent.

Reforestation initiatives have been taken seriously in recent years in Ethiopia. The country had actively participated in the Billion Tree Campaign an extraordinary competition for a greener world promoted by the United Nations. Ethiopia puts combating climate change at the center piece of its development objectives.

During last year's tree plantation campaign throughout the country, more than 20 million Ethiopians have been engaged. Besides, staffs of United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, African Union, European Commission Delegations office to Ethiopia and the African Union and diplomatic missions in Ethiopia and different officials visiting Ethiopia from different countries have also participated in the campaign. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic stress, Ethiopia has managed to accomplish this year's 5 Billion tree planting campaign a month earlier than the plan.

Furthermore, encouraged with this year's achievement, the Prime Minister has announced that 6 billion seedlings will be prepared for next year, and an extra 1 billion seedlings will also be prepared for neighbouring countries with the interest of expanding the campaign in the region.

Recently, in support of Ethiopia's Green Legacy Program, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in collaboration with the Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy has launched a joint project that will be implemented in Guder, Mughher and Jema sub-basins of the Nile Basin.

This 3.6 million dollars worthy project was kicked off with the motto "Natural Solutions for Ethiopia's Water Infrastructure Protection and Community Capacity Building" and has a life span of three years. The project aims at increasing carbon sequestration by managing planted indigenous and exotic tree species through the Green Legacy initiative and rehabilitating degraded lands through the construction of Soil and water conservation structures.

The UN Environment Program has also given visibility to the results achieved so far in Ethiopia hoping that many countries will be inspired to carry out similar reforestation initiatives in Africa and contributing to the objectives of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030).

Green Growth has now become central to ascertain a clear and sustainable growth in Ethiopia, a welcome development to the present and future generation. ■

## Culture

# SEPTEMBER (መስከረም): The Month of Ethiopian New Year and Associated Cultural Festivities

On September 11th, Ethiopians around the globe welcomed a new year. According to the Ethiopian calendar, we are now in 2013, seven years and eight months behind the Gregorian calendar.



### Ethiopian New Year

Ethiopian new year, also known as Enkutatash (እንቁጣጣሽ), is celebrated on 11 September 2020 which is September/Meskerem 1, 2013, according to the Ethiopian Calendar. As a Land of Origins, in addition to being a cradle of human beings and the origin of coffee, Ethiopia is one of the few ancient civilizations in the world with their own alphabets and calendar. Unlike the Gregorian calendar, the Ethiopian calendar is composed of 13 Months of which the 12 months have 30 days each, and the 13th month named Pagume has regularly five days but changes to six days every leap year. As a result of this, Ethiopia has been known as the country of “Thirteen Months of Sunshine”, which also was an official and famous tourism slogan of the country before it was substituted

with “Land of Origins” a few years ago. The new year starts in September (Meskerem in a local language), not in January. It is believed among Ethiopians that the month of September shows different signs that explain the beginning of the New Year such as the time when the blooming flowers are seen everywhere, the foggy and heavy rainy season of June, July & August ends and the pleasant sunny times begin which also denotes a happy and fresh start with a new spirit and energy.

The Ethiopian calendar, currently, is seven years and eight months behind the Gregorian calendar. Although the Gregorian calendar is the most widely used calendar in the world, as the calendar era of Anno Domini (AD) counting was presumably started after the birth of Jesus Christ, Ethiopians argue that the right way of counting is the calendar used in Ethiopia.

The first day of the Ethiopian calendar, Meskerem 1 (September 11), is known as Enkutatash, in a local language, which means the 'gift of jewels', as stated in legends. The legend shows two different but related narratives. The first one is King Solomon of Jerusalem gave the Queen of Sheba a ring made of diamond during her historic visit to Jerusalem some 3,000 years ago, around 980 BC. Her return to Ethiopia after receiving the gift coincided with the New Year celebration in September, and hence the name Enkutatash came to be. Another narrative states that when the Queen of Sheba returns from her visit to King Solomon in Jerusalem, on her arrival back in Ethiopia, her chiefs welcomed her by filling her treasury with jewels of diamond and other precious minerals.

One of the reasons why Ethiopia celebrates its New Year during this month is a belief that the number of daylight hours and nighttime hours happens to be exactly equal around the globe once every September as autumnal equinox happens around September 23. During this time of the year, the Sun and the Moon that are used to count time on the Ethiopian solar calendar each have 12 hours before setting on. The second reason is derived from religious belief, which says that the creation of the Heavens and the Earth took place in September.

This holiday creates a special feeling for young girls and boys as they eagerly wait for the day to gather together and sing a fascinating traditional song called Ababayehosh which especially is performed by groups of girls who approach their neighborhood and families to extend best wishes for the New Year and in return, they receive blessings from the elders. In the morning of the new year, it is fascinating when the girls approach people serenading with song and some interesting drumming. They carry bright-yellow flowers known as Adey-abebe, which are endemic to Ethiopia. As the celebration involves the entire family, while the girls are out singing, the boys make beautiful paintings that herald the coming of a bright new day, which they then go from house to house handing out their works of art in the morning of the holiday to relatives, neighbors, and friends. After receiving heart-warming praises of good fortune for the coming year, from the kids, people usually respond with homemade cultural bread prepared for the holiday or other forms of expression of gratitude.



(Photo credit: Ye Ethiopia Lijoch TV )

Besides this, people are decorated with traditional costumes, cultural foods and drinks including the famous coffee ceremony are served at everyone's house, and relatives, neighbors and friends are invited to each other's houses. People also exchange gifts and best wishes with their beloved ones.

The Ethiopian New Year does not come alone. Connected with, there are other cultural and partially religious festivities celebrated some days before and after the New Year. These include Ashenda/Shadey, Meskel celebration, and Irreechaa festival.

## Ashenda/Shadey

Ashenda/Shadey is a unique annual cultural festival celebrated in the northern part of Ethiopia especially in Tigray and Amhara regional states few days ahead of the new year. It is the moment that young girls and women enjoy particularly. The most known name of the festival is "Ashenda" which is the name for a tall grass that the girls usually tie around their celebration gowns as a type of decoration. The girls also make their hair in the interlaced styles, which is called shuruba in the local language. During the Ashenda/Shadey celebration, girls are accorded with full freedom to enjoy the holiday season without any interference from their families. It is mainly a young girls festival which needless to say will not entertain the presence or interference of men.



(Photo credit: Africa News).

The length of the festival, that usually takes place between August to September, varies from three days to one month depending on where in the region it is celebrated. Usually, it is shorter in urban areas, and longer in rural areas.

The stunning nature of the festival, with melodic songs and dances, the girls makes it one of the remarkably interesting cultural events for tourists. The government of Ethiopia is working to promote this festival to become one of the intangible heritages of the world. Addressing the festival celebrated at Mekelle city last year, President Sahle-Work Zewde said: “Just like Meskel, Fichee-Chambalaalla and Gada system, I believe that Ashenda will be registered as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity by UNESCO.”

## Meskel celebration

Meskel is a UNESCO enlisted intangible heritage of humanity commemorated in memory of the finding of the true cross. According to Ethiopian Orthodox Christian tradition, the national holiday marks the finding of the cross that Jesus was crucified on. Celebrated on September 27 (Mesekerem 17, according to Ethiopian calendar), this festival has religious and cultural features. Hundreds of thousands celebrate the eve of the festival, known as Demera, by gathering in Meskel Square in the heart of the capital city, Addis Ababa as well as all over the country.

On the Demera day, a bonfire takes place accompanied by chanting of priests and magnificent songs and performances of Sunday school youth. According to Orthodox church, the bonfire signifies the efforts made by St Helena aka Queen Elleni, the mother of Emperor Constantine, to find the cross while in Jerusalem in the 4th Century. The story goes, it was in Jerusalem that Queen Elleni was advised to light a fire that would indicate her where to look. The smoke from that fire pointed to the place where the cross was buried. After the true cross was found, the Queen is then said to have given pieces of the cross to all the churches, and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church has its own piece.



Celebrating Meskel. (Photo Credit: my choice Ethiopia tours).

The celebration of Meskel slightly varies from place to place within the country, and it has different cultural touches. For example, in the southern part of Ethiopia, it is of primarily cultural importance that close family members from far away visit each other during this holiday. Thousands of tourists from different parts of the world attend this colorful ceremony of meskel. Its inscription by UNESCO has helped to promote the festival globally and its potential for attracting many tourists remains untouched.

## Irreecha Festival

Irreecha is one of the intangible cultural heritages of the Oromo people. Irreechaa means a celebration where people get together and perform their prayers and thanksgiving to God. Once a year the Oromo people celebrate the Irreechaa around Lake Hora near Bishoftu town, some 65 km southeast of Addis Ababa. The Oromo Thanksgiving Festival – Irreechaa takes place on the first Sunday after Meskel (September 27) and the ceremony centers on sacred trees, particularly around an ancient fig tree. Worshippers ask for favors, fertility, health and good fortune. This celebration is attended by more than a million people every year.



Celebrating Irreecha. (Photo Credit: EBC)

Led by Abba Gadda, the prominent figure in the community, the participants carry bunches of green grasses and flowers in their hands, then praise, bless and pray to God (Waqaa). The participating women put on cultural dresses and carry Siiqee (Cultural women stick); men dressed in cultural suits and carrying Aroresaa (Cultural men’s stick), heartfully sing the songs that glorify the power of God. Young people usually use the opportunity the festivity created, to select their life partner and exchange gifts.

Generally, the Irreechaa celebration is related to the worship and thanksgiving practice of the Oromo people to their God. They celebrate Irreechaa to thank God for the blessings bestowed upon them throughout the previous year. The festival also welcomes the new season with hope for rewarding harvests, following the rainy season. It brings together friends, family, relatives, and tourists to a celebration of joy and happiness. The festival, which is part of the UNESCO registered Gada system, also started getting celebrated in Addis Ababa, the capital, since last year.

“We Wish You a Happy Ethiopian New Year’s Season!”

መልካም አዲስ ዓመት! ■



Yekatit 12 Monument (Photo credit : Ethiopian Press Agency)

