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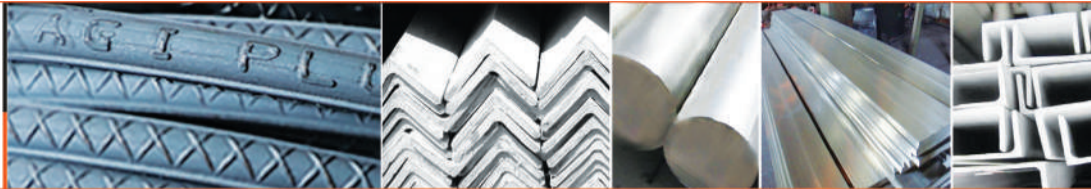
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## Bishoftu Airport Tender: Italian firms on standby as Ethiopian authorities prepare to launch

By Eyasu Zekarias

Italian industrial and financial giants are poised to enter the race for the Bishoftu International Airport project, but the final trigger lies with Ethiopian authorities, who have yet to issue the official tender.

Representatives from Italy's trade and finance

sectors told Capital that the technical and financial groundwork for Italian participation has been largely completed. The only remaining step, they say, is the formal launch of the tender by the Ethiopian Airlines Group (EAG). The Bishoftu project, valued at around 12.5 billion US dollars, is expected to transform Ethiopia into a major global aviation

hub, with components including airport infrastructure, main terminal construction, and integrated logistics zones.

Italian lending institutions SACE and Cassa Depositi e Prestiti (CDP) have reportedly put in place the necessary financial framework to

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# Aviation as an economic catalyst: Why Ethiopia must seize the moment

Addis Ababa was last week at the center of a continental transformation. As the host of the International Air Transport Association's (IATA) Focus Africa conference, the city has become a hub for industry leaders, government officials, and policymakers debating the future of air travel in Africa. For Ethiopia, this conference is not merely a diplomatic opportunity; it is a critical juncture to solidify its aviation sector as the engine of its long-term economic prosperity.

For years, Ethiopia has rightly treated aviation as a strategic asset. The success of its national carrier is a testament to the power of deliberate, state-led prioritization. However, the Focus Africa conference has made one thing clear: past success is not a guarantee of future growth. With Ethiopia's passenger demand expected to triple over the next two decades, the country stands at a crossroads. The decisions made today regarding infrastructure, human capital, and sustainability will determine whether Ethiopia remains a global aviation leader or falls behind as the sector evolves.

The IATA conference has highlighted three pillars that are essential for Ethiopia to maximize the economic impact of its aviation sector.

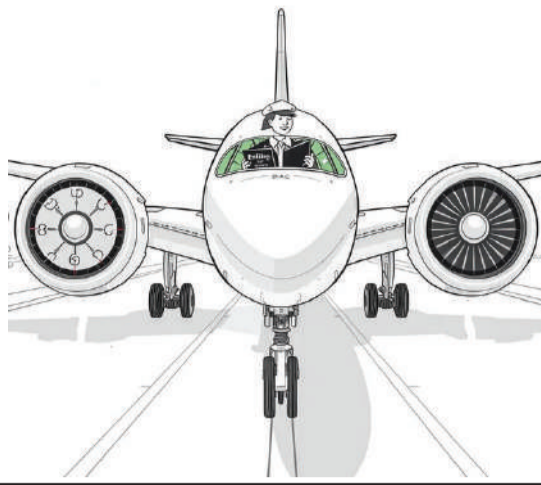
First, the focus must be on cost-efficient infrastructure. As construction progresses on the new Bishoftu airport, the government must move beyond the physical build and prioritize the efficiency of operations. This requires a shift in thinking: airports should not just be grand architectural statements, but highly functional conduits for trade and tourism. Close coordination with airlines and users, rooted in international standards, will be the difference between a facility that operates at capacity and one that creates bottlenecks. Early engagement in Operational Readiness and Airport Transfer (ORAT) protocols is vital to ensure a smooth transition and to capture the surging demand for both passenger and cargo services.

Second, human capital is the sector's most valuable resource. With over 60 percent of Ethiopia's population under the age of 25, the country has a demographic dividend that is perfectly suited for the technical demands of aviation. By continuing to invest in institutions like the Ethiopian Aviation University, the nation can build a deep pipeline of pilots, engineers, and ground operations specialists. This is not just about training employees; it is about creating a workforce capable of leading the industry. A skilled and qualified generation will be the bedrock upon which the next 20 years of aviation growth is built.

Finally, the sustainability imperative cannot be ignored. The aviation industry is under immense global pressure to reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, and Ethiopia has a unique opportunity to turn this challenge into a competitive advantage. With substantial CORSIA-eligible emission units available, the country is well-positioned to unlock sustainable climate finance through global carbon markets. By issuing the necessary authorizations, Ethiopia can strengthen its footprint in green finance and ensure that its aviation expansion is aligned with the global transition to sustainable fuels and lower-carbon operations.

The economic reality is compelling: aviation already contributes USD 2 billion to Ethiopia's GDP and supports more than half a million jobs across the country. Yet, the IATA data suggests that this is only the beginning. If the government continues to treat aviation as critical economic infrastructure—prioritizing efficiency, training, and sustainability—the sector can become an even more powerful driver of industrialization, tourism, and regional integration.

As the Focus Africa conference concludes, the path forward is evident. The global aviation landscape is shifting, and the challenges of high operating costs and regulatory fragmentation are being felt across the continent. Ethiopia has proven it can build an aviation giant; now, it must prove it can foster an aviation ecosystem. By fully embracing these priorities, Ethiopia will ensure that its skies remain open, its hubs remain efficient, and its economy continues to grow.



■ By Nick Careen

COMMENT

*How regulators can make fair, consistent decisions when war and fuel shortages disrupt normal flight operations*

## Slot Relief During the Iran Crisis: Why Flexibility Matters Now

An airport slot is critical. And at many airports there are not enough slots to fulfill the demand for travel at all times of the day. That's why airlines, airports, and regulators worked together to create the Worldwide Airport Slot Guidelines (WASG).

WASG provides the rules by which slots are allocated. And, because nobody wants such a precious resource as airport capacity to go under-utilized, the WASG also provides the rules by which a slot can be reallocated. This is the famous 80-20 rule. Basically, a slot must be used 80% of the time for an airline to keep it. The 20% non-utilization provides flexibility for cancellations for things like weather events or mechanical issues.

Of course, when all is normal, airlines use their slots to the fullest—that's how they do business. And the system, while not perfect, works well. There are times, however, when circumstances change so dramatically that extra flexibility is needed. Recall the COVID-19 pandemic when governments shut down their borders and prevented people from flying. It would have been unfair to penalize airlines for not using their slots when they were literally unable to fly.

The WASG has provisions for this called the Justified Non-Use of Slots (JNUS) exemption. Essentially the utilization calculation is frozen until the extraordinary situation normalizes, and airlines could reasonably be expected to operate their schedules.

The war in the Middle East is another situation where JNUS needs to be applied. Over the last month we have seen headlines about closed airspace, reduced operations at some airports, major re-routing to avoid conflict zones, and fuel shortages. For many airlines it has been impossible to operate their carefully planned schedules. At the time of writing, this has been going on for a month and a half. And that goes beyond the flexibility afforded by the normal 80-20 rule.

And even if the war ends today—which we all hope for—remedies for airline schedules will not be immediate. Some airlines have made pre-emptive cancellations to give passengers time to plan around the disruptions. And re-starting operations will take time for aircraft and crews to re-position, schedules to be rebuilt, and fuel supplies replenished, and networks need time to recover. Getting back to normal will take months, not days.

That's why airlines are asking for governments to apply JNUS for a rolling six-week period until it is clear that

normal operations are possible. This will give airlines something they urgently need right now: the certainty that their network—and all the years of investments to support it—is not in peril because of circumstances beyond their control.

And that's not all. Implementing JNUS has broader implications:

- Avoids unnecessary flying, saving scarce fuel, and reducing disruption.
- Keeps airport capacity available, allowing airlines that can operate to step in.
- Protects historic slot rights, so today's crisis doesn't create long term damage to airline networks and the customers who depend on those connections.

All this adds up a situation that will enable airlines to restore connectivity as fast as possible when the situation stabilizes. That will be in everybody's interest.

Not only is JNUS written into the rules, we also have practical experience to guide slot coordinators (experts who administrate WASG at airports) in applying JNUS to the best effect.

- Granting JNUS at either end of a disrupted route where operations cannot reasonably take place.
- Recognizing the knock on effects across airline networks, not just the immediate cause of a cancellation.
- Treating official notices and government advisories as sufficient justification and allowing extra recovery time where conditions remain unstable.
- Avoiding rigid interpretations that would penalize airlines for necessary rerouting or network adjustments.
- Using coordination committees or similar bodies to help resolve disputes and maintain consistency.

We all hope that JNUS will not be needed for long. The faster this war ends, the better. IATA will continue to keep governments—who have the power to invoke JNUS—fully informed of the extraordinary challenges that airlines are facing. Until the situation stabilizes and airlines can return to normal flying, JNUS is a critical lifeline to protect the air connectivity that is important today, and that will be even more important as we rebuild from conflict.

*Nick Careen is IATA's Senior Vice President, Operations, Safety and Security*

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# AICC approves 7.5 billion birr expansion despite initial loss

By Eyasu Zekareias

The Addis International Convention Center (AICC) Share Company has approved a second phase expansion project worth 7.537 billion birr, doubling down on its ambitions despite registering a 150.4 million birr net loss in its first year of operation.

The decision comes less than a year after the institution inaugurated its first phase in February 2025, following a 5.9 billion birr investment in modern exhibition halls and convention infrastructure. While the initial phase has been completed, AICC says it is still in a “pre profit” stage, grappling with the high setup costs and low utilization typical of large capital intensive projects in the global Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) sector.

The new expansion plan is designed to strengthen Addis Ababa’s positioning as Africa’s diplomatic and commercial hub, enabling the city to compete more effectively with regional convention centers in Nairobi, Cape Town, and other major African capitals. The project, expected to be completed within 36 months, will add a main plenary hall for 3,100 people, two additional auditoriums, expanded trade fair halls, a childcare center, and a modern parking facility for over 800 vehicles.

To finance the 7.537 billion birr outlay, AICC plans to raise 3.7 billion birr (49 percent) from existing and new shareholders, with the remaining 3.837 billion birr (51 percent) to be secured through commercial bank loans. The expansion is projected to increase the company’s paid up capital to 20.5 billion birr, placing it among the highest capitalized service sector firms in East Africa.

AICC says the 150.4 million birr loss recorded in the 2024/25 fiscal year is normal for such mega projects


in their early years. The shortfall is driven largely by 80.17 million birr in depreciation charges, a fivefold increase in administrative and labor costs, and a 46 percent vacancy rate across its rental space. Nonetheless, the center’s revenue jumped from 14.6 million birr in its first months of operation to 88.97 million birr by the end of 2024/25, a sign that the institution is gradually gaining traction in the commercial market.

The company’s balance sheet has also expanded rapidly. Total assets grew from 2.13 billion birr in 2023 to 10.39 billion birr in 2025, largely reflecting the construction of the first phase. If the second phase proceeds as planned, financial feasibility studies predict that investment costs could be recovered within four years, provided the center reaches its target of 100 percent occupancy by the 2028/29 fiscal year. At that level, the projected internal rate of return (IRR) is estimated at 39.95 percent.

The Addis Ababa City Administration remains the primary shareholder, holding 90 percent of the company, while 1,093 private investors own the remaining 10 percent. The City Administration injected 6.1 billion birr in capital during 2024/25 alone, underscoring the public sector backing that underpins AICC’s sustainability. However, the institution must still settle 4.9 billion birr in outstanding debts to contractors to secure full title deeds for assets valued at over 5.6 billion birr, a key step for using those assets as collateral for future loans.

Currently, AICC is the largest convention center in Ethiopia. Once the second phase is completed, market analyses suggest its share of the domestic convention and exhibition market could reach 87.5 percent. The center is also positioning itself to attract meetings of the African Union, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and other major international forums that

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have so far been hosted in other African cities.

In parallel, the Ethiopian Capital Market Authority has approved the registration prospectus of the Addis International Convention Center Share Company under Capital Market Proclamation No. 1248/2021 and related directives. The

process covers more than 12.2 million ordinary shares currently held by existing shareholders, with each share carrying a par value of 1,000 birr. The company emphasized that this phase does not include a new share offering; any future sales to qualified investors will be conducted through a separate, targeted process.

# Three countries seek to buy Ethiopian-Made aluminum

By Eyasu Zekarias

As shipping routes through the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea remain volatile, regional demand for locally produced aluminum is rising, creating a new export opportunity for Ethiopia’s growing manufacturing sector.

Tekhaf Aluminum, a relatively new industrial player based near Mekelle, says it is about to enter a strategic export phase after receiving strong purchase interest from South Sudan, Uganda, and Mozambique. The company, which began large scale production only nine months ago, is now positioning itself as a regional supplier of construction grade aluminum in a market that has become accustomed to long waits and high costs for imports from Asia.

The disruptions to traditional maritime corridors have altered how East African builders and contractors source materials. With shipments from China exposed to unpredictable delays and surging freight costs, neighboring countries are increasingly turning to nearby producers. Getahun Tilahun, Sales and Marketing Manager at Tekhaf, told Capital that the closure or repeated disruption of key trade routes such as the Strait of Hormuz has not only triggered global supply shocks but also driven aluminum prices higher and created shortages in African markets.

“Middle Eastern countries produce about 9 percent of the world’s aluminum,” Getahun explained. “When transit routes are blocked, both the export of finished metal products and the supply of raw materials like alumina are disrupted. That is creating a favorable environment for Ethiopia to emerge as a regional supply hub.”

Near term demand has started to materialize. The company has received formal requests from South Sudan, Uganda, and Mozambique for standard aluminum sections, with buyers indicating they are ready to take delivery in high tonnage volumes. Before Tekhaf could engage regional partners seriously, it needed to pass international quality checks, most notably the ISO certification process. The company now reports that it has secured four major international standards: ISO 9001:2015 for quality management, ISO 14001:2015 for environmental management, ISO 45001:2018 for occupational health and safety, and accreditation from the Ethiopian Conformity Assessment Enterprise.

“In the international market, it is not enough to simply say your products are of high quality,” Getahun said. “You must be verified by an independent body. By going through the ISO process, we have moved beyond a ‘local shop’ mindset and are now approaching African buyers with the confidence that our products meet recognized international standards.”

Tekhaf’s 2026 standard vertical powder coating facility gives the company an edge in surface finish and durability. With an annual production capacity of over 15,000 metric tons—more than 45 tons per day—the plant can manufacture aluminum sections up to 4.5 millimeters thick, suitable for large facade projects and high rise buildings such as the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia headquarters and Zemen Bank. Until recently, such sections were imported from China because no local firm met the technical specifications; Tekhaf now says it has filled that gap.

The manager also highlighted the company’s use of LPG gas in the manufacturing process, which helps maintain the straightness of the sections and prevents color fading—addressing common complaints about imported aluminum that can warp or discolor over time. The adoption of an integrated management system (IMS) further strengthens Tekhaf’s profile, linking raw material handling, quality control, and final product delivery under a single framework.

Despite these advances, the company faces structural constraints. The conflict in northern Ethiopia delayed the full start of operations, and the plant has only been running at about two thirds of its 45 ton per day capacity. The main bottleneck is foreign exchange. Since aluminum billets and some key inputs come from China, shortages in hard currency have held back production. The company says it now employs more than 300 workers, most

of whose salaries, raw material imports, and utility costs are foreign currency indexed.

“To be honest, the government has improved its foreign exchange allocation policy; without that support, we would not be able to keep our employees or stay in business,” Getahun acknowledged. “But to meet the kind of regional demand we are seeing, especially from Mozambique, South Sudan, and Uganda, we need a more stable and predictable supply of raw materials.”

To reduce dependence on foreign billets, Tekhaf is building an integrated smelting plant that will melt aluminum scrap and related metals into standardized billets. The facility is designed to insulate the company from global supply chain volatility and, in the longer term, position Ethiopia as a regional hub for finished and semi finished aluminum products. If the smelter comes online as planned, the firm could not only increase its internal capacity, but also begin supplying billets to other regional manufacturers.

For now, the convergence of geopolitical disruption, regional infrastructure needs, and Tekhaf’s new quality certifications is creating a window of opportunity. By turning regional trade bottlenecks into a business model, Ethiopia’s emerging aluminum sector is signaling that, even amid global supply shocks, a “Made in Ethiopia” label can now be a viable alternative in the African construction market.



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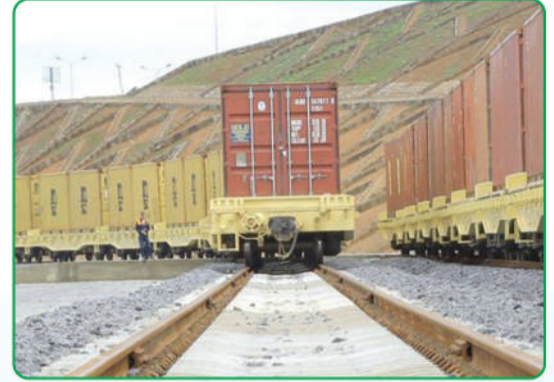
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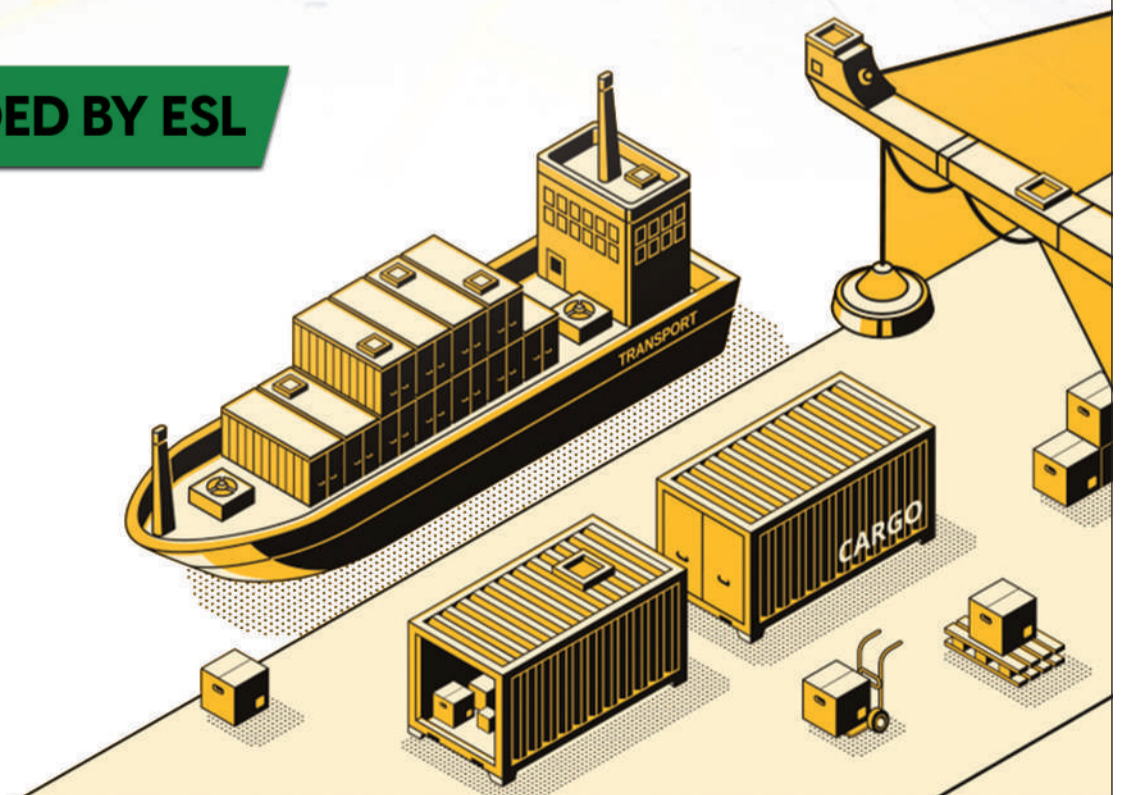


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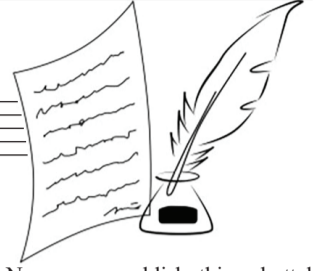
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## Letter to the editor



To: The Editor  
Capital Newspaper

Subject: Rebuttal and Request for Correction  
– Article on Flipper International School Fee Adjustment

We refer to your article published on 26 April 2026 concerning the proposed school fee harmonization and increment at Flipper International School.

We write to formally present a counter-position to clarify material inaccuracies and omissions that have resulted in a mischaracterization of the facts and the decision-making process.

First, the fee harmonization and adjustment were undertaken following a structured and consultative process, culminating in a final vote conducted on 18 April 2026. The outcome reflected the free and informed consent of a clear majority of parents. This decision was not unilateral, nor was it imposed without engagement, as suggested in your report.

Second, the school's proposal was anchored in defined operational and quality-enhancement commitments. These include securing a new rental location to relocate the Lancha branch, implementing salary adjustments for teachers and staff to ensure retention and competitiveness, and upgrading IT infrastructure alongside other quality improvement measures. These commitments were transparently communicated to parents as part of the overall value proposition.

Third, the narrative presented in your article disproportionately relies on the views of a limited number of Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) representatives from the Summit branch. This perspective does not reflect the position of the broader parent body, particularly the more than 300 parents who participated in the voting process and endorsed the harmonization and

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fee adjustment. Presenting a minority position as representative of the majority materially distorts the reality on the ground

Furthermore, parents' approval was informed by prevailing market conditions, including inflationary pressures and the rising cost structure of delivering quality education. The adjustment aligns with broader market benchmarks and sustainability considerations faced by private educational institutions.

Finally, we categorically state that certain

PTA representatives from the Summit branch neither represent nor have the mandate to speak on behalf of parents from the Lancha branch, Beklobet Lower Secondary, and Beklobet Early Years. Their position does not reflect the consensus across these constituencies. We are also concerned that their approach does not demonstrate a constructive commitment to resolving the matter through dialogue and good-faith engagement.

In light of the above, we respectfully request

that Capital Newspaper publish this rebuttal to ensure balanced reporting and to correct the public record.

Sincerely,

*The Parent-Teacher Associations*  
*Lancha Branch*  
*Beklobet Lower Secondary*  
*Beklobet Early Years*

## Bishoftu Airport Tender . . .

support the project. Claudio Pasqualucci, Trade Promotion Commissioner at the Italian Embassy in Addis Ababa, emphasized that the move from preparation to execution now rests entirely with the Ethiopian government.

"The commencement of the work depends entirely on the Ethiopian authorities," Pasqualucci said. "We can say with certainty that there are massive Italian companies with a high interest in these projects. These companies have the capacity to bring not only their own experience but their entire technical supply chain."

What distinguishes the Italian approach, he noted, is the integration of financing and engineering. Through SACE and CDP, Italy is offering a government backed financial model alongside construction and project delivery expertise—a formula aimed at easing Ethiopia's budgetary pressure while maintaining high quality European standards.

Italian private sector interest is not limited to isolated contracts. Companies are prepared to implement an "integrated supply chain approach," combining construction, technology, and advanced engineering across the different lots of the Bishoftu project, which are expected to cover runway construction, terminal systems, and logistics infrastructure.

"We are all active and on standby," Pasqualucci added. "The moment the Ethiopian authorities issue the tender and ensure a fair and transparent process, Italian companies are uniquely qualified to compete. We bring not just machinery, but the financial capacity to make these projects a reality."

The Bishoftu project is scheduled to be unbundled into several technical sectors, a move that many observers say will allow both local and international firms to participate in specific components without being locked out by the sheer scale of the overall project. Design work is reported to be nearing completion, with Ethiopian authorities now focused on identifying lead contractors and finalizing the procurement framework.

The airport push is part of a broader strategic alignment between Ethiopia and Italy. On March 18, 2026, the two countries held a high level dialogue in Rome that brought together an Ethiopian delegation led by Finance Minister Ahmed Shide and Italy's "Mattei Plan" Task Force, which includes senior officials from the Italian Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, as well as institutions such as SACE, CDP, and the construction group Webuild.

Among the issues discussed were the financial structuring of the Koysha Hydroelectric Project and

*Continued from page 1*

the possible use of integrated financial instruments to fund the Bishoftu Airport development. The Bishoftu initiative is viewed as a flagship project under Italy's Mattei Plan, launched in 2024 to promote investment driven cooperation across Africa, with an emphasis on infrastructure, energy, and strategic-mineral sectors.

The relationship with Italy now extends beyond airports and hydropower into high technology and critical minerals. The Italian Trade Agency (ITA) is currently implementing a three year study on Ethiopia's strategic minerals, with a specific focus on tantalum—a heat resistant metal essential for aerospace components, jet engines, and rocket systems.

"Italy is a highly sophisticated country in the aerospace sector," Italian officials told Capital. "Identifying these opportunities through research will allow Italian companies to process these minerals right here in Ethiopia, creating added value for Ethiopia's exports."

Despite the lingering impact of the global pandemic, bilateral trade between Ethiopia and Italy has rebounded strongly, reaching about 450 million euros in 2025. While Ethiopian and Italian officials describe that figure as modest given the historical depth of their ties, both sides expect the volume to double within the next three years as new reforms and infrastructure collaborations take root.



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# Africa Air cargo beats broader downturn as Middle East conflict remakes global trade flows

By Groum Abate

African airlines defied the global downturn in air cargo, recording the strongest growth of any region in March 2026 while the wider industry was dragged down by the Israel US Iran war reshaping Middle East transit corridors.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) reported that global air cargo demand, measured in cargo tonne kilometers (CTK), fell 4.8 percent year on year in March, with international operations down 5.5 percent. Capacity also contracted, with available cargo tonne kilometers (ACTK) falling 4.7 percent globally. But within that picture, African carriers stood out: their freight demand rose 7.0 percent while capacity dipped 4.6 percent, lifting the cargo load factor by 5.4 percentage points to 49.6 percent—well above the global average of 47.9 percent.

Africa's 7.0 percent surge made it

the best performing region in global air cargo for March, according to IATA's latest traffic data. The continent's share of global cargo tonne kilometers remained relatively small at about 2.1 percent, but its growth rate contrasted sharply with the Middle East, where demand collapsed by 54.3 percent and capacity fell 52.4 percent.

IATA attributed the global decline largely to the severe disruption at major Gulf hubs such as Dubai, Doha, and Abu Dhabi, where airspace restrictions linked to the US Israel Iran conflict have forced airlines to cancel or reroute flights. The region normally acts as the main air bridge between Asia, Europe, and Africa, so the pullback hit transit dependent trade strongly, especially on routes that pass through the Gulf.

For African markets, this dislocation appears to be opening up new opportunities. The Africa-Asia trade lane, one of the busiest corridors for the continent, recorded year on year growth of 22.6 percent in March—

the highest among all major lanes and the ninth consecutive month of expansion. Africa's total share of global cargo tonne kilometers on this lane has risen to about 1.3 percent, reflecting stronger onward flows of manufactured goods, textiles, perishables, and raw materials.

As Middle East linked corridors staggered, Africa's position at the edge of the main disruption zone has become strategically important. IATA's lane level data show that while Europe-Middle East cargo fell 57.6 percent and Middle East-Asia dropped 58.6 percent, intra Asia trade and Asia-Europe traffic held up better, in part because of increased use of alternative routing.

Africa's growing connectivity with Asia has benefited from this shift. With more freight being rerouted away from conflict affected airspace, some African linked lanes are seeing higher volumes and tighter capacity, which tends to push up freight rates. Data from logistics and rate tracking platforms confirm that several

Europe-Africa lanes have recorded double digit rate increases as Middle East based capacity is withdrawn from the network.

For African exporters and importers, the situation is double edged. On the one hand, higher air freight costs are adding pressure to supply chains already exposed to volatile fuel and geopolitical risks. On the other, stronger demand for Africa linked routes signals that carriers are increasingly willing to use the continent as a connecting node or an end market, which could attract more direct services and investment over time.

Africa's resilience is not limited to freight. Passenger traffic also showed robust growth, reinforcing the region's role as one of the few bright spots in an otherwise strained global market. IATA's March 2026 passenger data show that African airlines reported a 20.6 percent year on year increase in demand measured in revenue passenger kilometers (RPK), compared with

global growth of just 2.1 percent.

Capacity on African routes grew 10.3 percent, pushing the passenger load factor up 6.5 percentage points to 76.2 percent—the largest relative improvement among regions. Within international markets, African carriers saw demand jump 19.2 percent even as Middle East carriers recorded a 60.8 percent slump linked directly to airspace closures and flight cancellations across the Gulf.

With jet fuel prices up 106.6 percent year on year in March and global refining margins surging, the cost of operating in the region will remain a key constraint. IATA's Director General Willie Walsh warned that the abrupt withdrawal of Middle East linked capacity has tested the resilience of global supply chains, and that the industry's ability to keep freight flowing will depend on how quickly networks can rebalance and how fuel supply disruptions evolve.

## Africa puts climate delivery, water security at center of development push

By our staff reporter

Africa's climate and development debate is shifting from promises to delivery, with leaders at the 12th African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD-12) calling for a stronger focus on implementation, financing, and accountability as the continent prepares for COP32.

At the heart of the discussions in Addis Ababa this week was a blunt message: Africa does not lack ambition. What it lacks is a global and domestic system capable of delivering climate and development commitments at the scale required. That concern ran through the 7th Africa Climate Talks, where Claver Gatete, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), said the world's climate response is falling behind the urgency of the crisis and that trust is eroding because commitments are too often not matched by action.

Gatete said the global climate system is under strain just as climate impacts are intensifying faster than responses. Emissions cuts remain insufficient to keep the world on track for the 1.5 degrees Celsius target, while finance for vulnerable regions continues to lag far behind promises made in successive negotiations. For Africa, the stakes are especially high. The continent contributes less than 4 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, yet it faces worsening droughts, floods, rising seas, and unpredictable weather that are already disrupting food production, water supply, infrastructure, and public finances.

The financing gap is one of the most glaring challenges. African countries need an estimated 277 billion US dollars a year through 2030 to implement their nationally determined contributions, yet the continent receives only about 11 percent of the funding required. Gatete argued that Africa should not be defined only by its vulnerability. The continent also holds some of the most important climate solutions, including abundant renewable energy resources, biodiversity for nature-based action, and a young population capable of driving innovation, green growth, and new forms of industrial development.

That broader vision is shaping Africa's

approach to COP32, which Ethiopia is preparing to host in 2027. Leaders in Addis Ababa said the conference must not become another stage for pledges without delivery. Instead, it should be an implementation-focused summit built around measurable outcomes, stronger finance tracking, and accountability systems that can close the gap between ambition and action. The call is for climate finance to move from commitment to deployment, with adaptation given far greater priority than it has received so far.

Adaptation is increasingly being framed not as a side issue, but as a core development priority for Africa. For countries facing climate shocks, investing in resilient agriculture, infrastructure, early warning systems, and water security is essential to protecting lives and sustaining growth. Yet adaptation remains underfunded, undertracked, and often excluded from the kind of predictable financing that could make a lasting difference. Gatete said even low-cost tools such as early warning systems

are still not widely available across the continent.

Water emerged as one of the most powerful themes of the forum. In a high-level session on clean water and sanitation, Gatete said water must be treated not only as a basic human need but as critical economic infrastructure. He noted that water underpins health, food systems, energy production, cities, industry, and regional integration. That framing reflected growing concern that water insecurity is no longer an isolated challenge, but a systemic risk that can slow industrialization, strain public health systems, and deepen inequality.

The numbers show both progress and persistent gaps. Since 2015, nearly 300 million Africans have gained access to basic drinking water and close to 190 million to basic sanitation. But only 40 percent of Africans currently have access to safely managed drinking water, while just 30 percent have safely managed sanitation. In 2024, more than 200

million people still practiced open defecation, a situation that carries serious consequences for health, productivity, and dignity. Gatete said Africa's industrial future depends on securing its water base, pointing out that hydropower, thermal energy, green hydrogen, agro-processing, mining, and manufacturing all rely on reliable water systems.

Climate change is making the problem worse. More frequent droughts, floods, and hydrological variability are intensifying stress on already fragile systems, while rapid urbanization is stretching services in many cities beyond capacity. Informal settlements remain especially vulnerable, with weak sanitation and poor water access compounding health and economic risks. The pressure is not only environmental but financial, and speakers at the forum said Africa needs about 64 billion US dollars annually to achieve water security and universal sanitation, far above current investment levels.

Across the forum, the financing

debate remained central. Speakers said Africa's development ambitions are being constrained not by a lack of ideas, but by the scale, cost, and structure of available finance. High borrowing costs, limited concessional resources, and a global financial architecture that often penalizes African countries are making it harder to invest in climate resilience, infrastructure, and social development. The region's cost of capital remains too high, while domestic resource mobilization and public financial management systems continue to face serious constraints.

Panelists called for more blended finance, debt-for-climate swaps, risk-sharing mechanisms, and better project preparation so that African countries can build pipelines of bankable investments. They also pointed to the need for stronger public-private partnerships and more credible data systems to improve confidence and attract capital. Discussions highlighted examples from Rwanda, where climate resilience has been more tightly linked to national planning, as well as debt-for-development swap initiatives in Senegal, The Gambia, and Ghana. These were presented as examples of how innovative finance can help expand fiscal space and support long-term investments.

The private sector also featured prominently in the debate, with sessions at the forum emphasizing that public resources alone will not be enough to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals. Leaders said the private sector must be seen not only as a source of capital, but as a driver of jobs, technology, and industrial transformation. But to mobilize that capital at scale, Africa needs clear rules, stronger institutions, better pipelines, and partnerships that can turn promising ideas into investable projects.

As the forum drew to a close, the message was clear: Africa is ready to lead, but it needs a financial system and a climate regime that deliver at the same pace. With Ethiopia preparing to host COP32, the continent is positioning itself to push for a more credible climate agenda rooted in implementation, justice, and measurable results. For Africa, the test ahead is not whether it can make the case for action. It is whether the world will finally help turn that case into delivery.

## FAFLA launches in Addis Ababa to localize African freight and transit standards

By our staff reporter

Africa's freight and logistics sector has taken a major institutional step toward continental leadership with the founding of the Federation of African Freight Logistics Associations (FAFLA) in Addis Ababa.

The new federation held its inaugural assembly on Monday, April 27, 2026, hosted by the Ethiopian Freight Forwarders and Shipping Agents Association (EFFSAA). The event was billed as a turning point where Africa shifts from being an "observer" in global logistics governance to an active leader shaping its own freight and transit standards.

For decades, African freight forwarders have operated under the umbrella of international bodies such as FIATA and IATA. But with the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the need for an independent, African led coordinating body has become increasingly urgent. FAFLA is designed to fill that role, bringing together national freight

forwarding associations from across the continent.

In his opening remarks, Dawit Woubisnet, President of EFFSAA and a founding board member of FAFLA, said the federation represents a backbone for Africa's economic independence. "For a long time, African logistics professionals have remained observers within international systems," Dawit stated. "Today, that history has changed. Africa, with its 1.4 billion people, possesses massive potential. We are no longer just participants in the global market; we are the architects of our own trade and industry."

The federation's core mission is to harmonize transit standards, enhance professional capacity, and strengthen institutional partnerships so that the continent's logistics framework can fully support the AfCFTA agenda. By aligning procedures, documentation, and clearance processes across borders, FAFLA aims to reduce delays, lower transport costs, and improve the reliability of moving goods within

Africa and beyond.

FAFLA's primary objectives are closely tied to the wider goals of the African Continental Free Trade Area: facilitating regional trade, enabling infrastructure development, attracting investment, and creating jobs in the logistics and transport sectors. The federation will also focus on professional training, certification, and knowledge sharing to raise the technical and service standards of freight forwarding associations from Cape Town to Cairo.

Beyond the political symbolism, the launch of FAFLA is seen as a technical necessity for Africa's industrial ambitions. Efficient logistics is a key determinant of how competitively African producers can access regional and global markets. With FAFLA now in place, stakeholders say the continent is better positioned to standardize procedures, negotiate as a unified bloc, and shape rules that reflect African realities rather than simply adapting to those imposed by external organizations.



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# Africa's aviation moment: IATA urges governments to treat air travel as economic infrastructure

By Groum Abate

Airlines, airports, and African governments gathered in Addis Ababa this week under a clear message from the International Air Transport Association (IATA): aviation is not a luxury, it is a strategic pillar of long term economic growth that must be prioritized, not taxed to death.

Speaking at IATA's Focus Africa Conference, Kamil Alawadhi, Regional Vice President for Africa and the Middle East, laid out what he described as a "strategy for aviation in Africa." The core argument was that well managed air transport can drive trade, tourism, regional integration, and job creation far more effectively than the narrow revenues governments collect from airline tickets and charges. "Aviation is economic infrastructure for Africa," he said. "Its value lies in the long term benefits it delivers."

### A Continent Ready to Take Off

The timing of the call is no accident. Across Africa, air travel demand is climbing steadily, with the continent's aviation market projected to grow at roughly 4.1 percent per year over the next two decades, effectively doubling by 2044. In 2023, air transport already contributed about 75 billion US dollars to Africa's GDP and supported some 8.1 million jobs, according to IATA Oxford Economics data.

Ethiopia, host of the conference, illustrates the potential. IATA's Value of Air Transport report for the country estimates that aviation supports about 2 billion US dollars in economic activity, equivalent to 1.2 percent of GDP, and around 527,000 jobs across the wider economy, including tourism and supply chains. With passenger numbers projected to triple by 2044 and 60 percent of the population under 25, the country sees aviation as a key lever to turn demographic momentum into productive jobs and skills.

### Safety at the Core

None of this growth can be sustained without a strong safety foundation. While Africa has made progress—aviation accident rates fell from 12.13 to 7.86 per million sectors between 2024 and 2025—the region still lags the global average of 1.32 and remains the highest among all regions.

To address the gap, IATA is urging governments and regulators to deepen implementation of International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs). Effective implementation across 46 sub Saharan African states currently stands at about 60 percent, below the global average of roughly 69 percent and the 75 percent target. The association also pressed for faster, more transparent accident investigations, highlighting that only 19 percent of accident reports were published between 2019 and 2023, compared with a 63 percent global average.

Greater use of safety audit programs such as IATA's Operational Safety Audit (IOSA), IATA Safety Audit for Ground Operations (ISAGO), and the Collaborative Aviation Safety Improvement Program (CASIP) was presented as a way to strengthen airline performance, aid regulators, and promote a more consistent, risk based approach across the continent.

### Cost, Competitiveness, and "Blocked" Funds

Beyond safety, several structural issues are holding back connectivity and investment. IATA pointed out that the cost of doing aviation business in Africa is about 15 percent higher than the global average, driven largely by taxes, charges, and regulatory burdens. persfin.

Of particular concern are passenger data charges such as the API PNR fee, which in some countries reaches levels far above global norms. Tanzania, for example, levies an API PNR charge of 45 US dollars one way—among the highest in the world—while Angola,

the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya also exceed international benchmarks. These fees, the association argues, distort ticket pricing, reduce affordability, and weaken connectivity, contravening ICAO's own guidance.

Another longstanding issue is the repatriation of airline revenues. Despite international agreements that allow airlines to transfer funds earned in African markets, billions of dollars remain "blocked." IATA reported that African countries account for the largest share of globally blocked airline revenues, with 774 million US dollars stranded as of March 2026. Algeria tops the list with 258 million US dollars tied up, followed by the XAF monetary zone, Mozambique, Eritrea, and Angola. persfin.

Alawadhi warned that the situation is not only a financial irritant but a threat to connectivity. If airlines cannot repatriate earnings, they may cut frequencies or suspend routes altogether. Algeria, he said, urgently needs to act, noting that repeated engagement with trade and central bank authorities has yielded limited results.

### Easing the Rules of the Game

For Alawadhi, aviation will not thrive unless "doing business" becomes genuinely easier. Two issues stood out at the conference: visa requirements

and corporate taxation.

Nearly half of all intra African travel still requires visas obtained before departure, which suppresses regional mobility, tourism, and economic integration. IATA highlighted that countries and regions that have eased visa rules have seen stronger tourism flows, more resilient routes, and greater use of regional air services. The argument mirrors wider African Union efforts to advance the African Single Air Transport Market (SAATM) and reduce barriers to movement across borders.

On taxation, the association urged governments to preserve residence based corporate taxation for airlines rather than moving toward source based regimes under UN tax discussions. Because aviation is inherently cross border, taxing a single ticket across multiple jurisdictions risks double or even multiple taxation. IATA views residence based taxation—where airlines pay corporate tax at their headquarters—as simpler, fairer, and more aligned with the sector's operational reality.

### Sustainability and Energy Security

As the world shifts toward greener aviation, IATA is positioning Africa as more than a passenger: it can also be a supplier of climate solutions. The association highlighted the continent's potential in the Carbon Offsetting and

Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA), which relies on Eligible Emission Units (EEUs) to help airlines offset emissions. persfin.

Sub Saharan Africa, it said, could make up to 57.6 million EEUs available to airlines, turning carbon markets into a source of climate finance. Yet only a handful of countries—among them Tanzania, Malawi, Rwanda, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Madagascar, and Nigeria—have begun entering this space.

Even more striking is the region's potential for Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF). IATA's global feedstock assessment suggests that sub Saharan Africa could supply up to 106 million tonnes of SAF suitable feedstock by 2050, drawn from agricultural residues, forestry waste, municipal solid waste, and selected energy crops on degraded land. To turn this potential into reality, the association called for predictable, incentive based policies and investment in collection and processing infrastructure that can scale beyond the roughly 1.5 million tonnes of announced renewable fuel capacity today. persfin.

### Ethiopia's 20 Year Aviation Horizon

For Ethiopia specifically, the message is that the moment to invest is now. IATA's projections show the country's air passenger demand tripling by 2044, driven by population growth, rising

incomes, and the country's strategic role as both a tourism destination and an aviation hub.

The association outlined three key priorities for Addis Ababa: building cost efficient infrastructure, especially at the upcoming Bishoftu airport and related facilities; expanding training and capacity building through institutions like Ethiopian Aviation University; and embedding sustainability into the sector's growth path. With Ethiopia estimated to hold around 16.1 million CORSIA eligible emission units, the country could position itself as a notable player in global carbon markets while aligning its aviation expansion with the industry's 2050 net zero goal.

At the closing of the Focus Africa Conference, IATA's core plea was for African governments to treat aviation as a long term enabler, not a short term cash cow. The data suggests that every dollar invested in safe, affordable, well connected air transport multiplies across tourism, trade, and downstream services. Whether the continent can fully capture that value, the association warned, will depend less on the number of new routes and more on the political will to reduce costs, unblock funds, and align regulations with the sector's cross border reality.

## Aqua for All urges Ethiopia to mobilize private sector in WASH Sector with robust policy framework

By Eyasu Zekarias

As Ethiopia races to close widening gaps in water, sanitation, and hygiene infrastructure, the international organization Aqua for All is calling on the government to establish a clear, strong policy framework that can unlock private sector participation in the WASH sector.

The Netherlands based nonprofit argues that traditional funding models, which rely heavily on government budgets and foreign aid, are no longer enough to meet Ethiopia's 2030 development goals. To reach universal access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, Aqua for All says the government must treat the private sector not as a side partner but as a central pillar of the WASH ecosystem.

Hzekiel Aynalem, Aqua for All's WASH Finance Program Manager and Country Representative for Ethiopia,

told reporters that while the country has made progress in expanding water coverage, current efforts move too slowly to achieve the ultimate target of 100 percent public access. "If we want to reach 100 percent community benefit at the required speed, the private sector must play its role," he said.

Ethiopia, he noted, has seen rapid transformation in sectors such as telecoms, finance, and renewable energy, but the WASH sector has remained largely stagnant by comparison. He described it as an "untapped market" whose profitability is still under recognized due to the absence of clear incentives, coherent regulation, and visible success stories for investors.

"There have been gaps in showing the private sector what can be gained from this market," Hzekiel said. "Our goal now is to bridge that gap and show that the water and sanitation sector can be a profitable and sustainable business

environment."

The financing challenge is substantial. Data indicate that Ethiopia faces an annual funding gap of about 1.14 billion US dollars to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6). Relying only on the traditional "3Ts" model—taxes, tariffs, and transfers—is widely seen as insufficient to keep pace with population growth and urbanization.

Aqua for All is pushing for "market led" solutions that can move away from the 40 year legacy of donor driven, grant heavy projects where communities contribute little and sustainability is often in doubt. The organization argues that the government cannot fill the gap alone with its limited fiscal space.

Financial institutions, however, have long regarded WASH investments as high risk, in part because they are dealing with public services where revenues are unpredictable and governance standards

vary. To counter that perception, Aqua for All is working to build investor confidence through innovative financing and risk sharing structures.

"We don't just provide direction; we share the risk," Hzekiel said. By combining grant capital, technical support, and innovative financial instruments, the organization aims to make the sector more attractive to commercial banks and microfinance institutions.

A flagship example is a 400 million birr loan facility established in partnership with Bunna Bank, which has become the first private bank in Ethiopia to launch a dedicated credit line for water and sanitation projects. Aqua for All contributed grant capital to cover part of the risk, allowing the bank to lend to microfinance institutions and WASH focused businesses. Those institutions, in turn, on lend to households and small entrepreneurs for water connections, sanitation upgrades, and small scale service delivery.

The facility, which is scheduled to operate until 2030, is expected to reach at least 134,000 people in its second phase alone, helping to expand access to clean water and basic sanitation in underserved urban and peri urban areas.

Despite such local successes, Aqua for All stresses that broader, systemic change will require a national policy mandate. The organization has worked with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Water and Energy to develop a WASH Financing Strategy, but it says turning that strategy into enforceable policy and detailed implementation guidelines is now essential.

The upcoming One WASH National Program (Phase 3) is expected to place greater emphasis on private sector participation, including opportunities for public private partnerships and blended financing. Yet Aqua for All believes the government must go a step further by sending a clear, high level signal that the private sector is not only welcome but is central to the future of the WASH sector.

"We believe there needs to be a stronger and more specific direction from the government regarding the private sector," Hzekiel urged. "When policies and strategies are supportive, the confidence of financial institutions to invest increases."

## Africa France relations take new turn at Nairobi AI and Green Finance Summit

By our staff reporter

Africa and France are set to redefine their long standing relationship at a major summit in Nairobi, with the two sides shifting away from the traditional donor recipient model toward a more balanced partnership in artificial intelligence, green industry, and international financial system reform.

The "Africa Forward Summit 2026," co organized by Kenya and France, will take place in Nairobi on May 11 and 12. Announced last week in Addis Ababa, the summit marks a significant departure from the historically francophone centric framework of Franco African ties, with Nairobi chosen as the first English speaking African host city for such a high level France Africa dialogue.

The summit will be co chaired by Kenyan President William Ruto and French President Emmanuel Macron and is positioning itself as a milestone in the broader push to reshape the global financial architecture so that it better serves African economies. The main theme, "Reform of the International Financial Architecture," underscores the urgency of mobilizing sustainable financing, reducing Africa's

dependence on debt driven models, and increasing the continent's voice in global financial decision making.

At a briefing in Addis Ababa, Galma Mukhe Boru, Kenyan Ambassador to Ethiopia and the African Union, described the initiative as a response to contemporary global realities. "This initiative is aimed at responding to today's global realities by building practical partnerships that bring visible results," he said. The summit is expected to conclude with the adoption of the "Nairobi Declaration," which will outline a joint roadmap for Africa France cooperation on finance, climate action, and economic sovereignty.

French Ambassador to Ethiopia and the African Union Alexis Lamek framed the event as a signal of changing dynamics. "This summit is a significant indicator that the relationship between France and African countries has changed," he said. Unlike earlier formats focused largely on unilateral aid, Lamek emphasized that the Nairobi summit is designed to deliver "tangible and mutual benefits" in areas such as green industry, digital innovation, and health self sufficiency.

The summit will also highlight Africa's growing digital and entrepreneurial

landscape. More than 400 young entrepreneurs, artists, and digital influencers from across the continent have been invited, including Ethiopians such as Kit Dut, founder of "Assam AI," an artificial intelligence platform that provides translation services, and digital artist Fanuel from Qadamawi Studio.

A dedicated business forum, to be held at the University of Nairobi on May 11, will bring together more than 1,500 CEOs, investors, and innovators. Organizers hope the event will help transform Franco African ties from a donor recipient relationship into a model of mutual investment, particularly in the digital economy and local manufacturing for the health sector.

Ambassador Lamek stressed that the international system must work more equitably for all countries, not just wealthy ones. "The international system must work equally for everyone, not just for wealthy countries," he said. By positioning the summit as a "living bridge" between Africa and the G7, France and its African partners aim to ensure that African voices have a prominent role in shaping global discussions on finance, climate change, and trade.

# Capital NEWS IN BRIEF

## Clashes Intensify in Sudan's Blue Nile as Army and RSF Alliance Trade Blows

Military operations escalated on Saturday in Sudan's Blue Nile region between the army and an alliance of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the SPLM-N led by Abdel Aziz al-Hilu, amid conflicting reports over territorial control. The RSF and its allies launched a major offensive in the southeastern region last March, seizing the strategic town of Kurmuk and several surrounding areas. ... The intensified fighting and drone activity in the western and southern parts of the region have created a dire humanitarian situation. Thousands of civilians have been forced to flee their homes toward the regional capital, Ed Damazin.

Sudan Tribune

## Court Rejects Live Broadcast Request in Machar Trial

The special court trying suspended First Vice President Dr. Riek Machar and seven co-accused on Monday rejected a defense request to broadcast proceedings live on the South Sudan Broadcasting Corporation (SSBC). Defense lawyer Kur Lual Kur had last week requested a one-week adjournment to prepare the accused for questioning by judges and asked that the trial be televised live. During the 72nd session at Freedom Hall in Juba, Judge Stephen Simon Isaac said the court would not revisit its earlier decision barring live broadcasts. ... Presiding Judge James Alala Deng adjourned the trial until Monday, May 4, 2026, for the questioning of the accused.

Radio Tamazuj

## New Pirate Group Behind Latest Somali Hijacking: Officials

A pirate attack off Somalia is the work of a new group of "opportunistic criminals", security officials said on Tuesday, complicating a threat that costs the shipping industry billions of dollars. Piracy was rampant off the coast of Somalia in the 2000s, peaking in 2011 with hundreds of attacks, but was significantly reduced by international naval deployments and new tactics by commercial shipping. Yet the past week has seen oil tanker HONOUR 25 and cement carrier SWARD hijacked in the first major incidents in months. The SWARD seizure was the work of a group operating from the port town of Garacad in Puntland state of northeastern Somalia, a Puntland security official told AFP. That is further south than the usual piracy hotbed focused on a cluster of three coastal towns -- Hafun, Bander Beyla and Eyl -- which is where the HONOUR 25 oil tanker has been taken. The new group is mostly formed of "rural youth" from an area "awash with weapons", motivated by poverty, and anger over illegal fishing by ships from China, Yemen, Iran and beyond. ... A second Puntland security official told AFP the group that seized the SWARD were all from the same clan and sub-clan. That complicates counter-measures by the state, which could be seen as an attack on the clan as a whole.

AFP

## Puntland Warns Somalia's Statehood at Risk Amid Deepening Electoral Deadlock

The president of Puntland, a key federal member state in northeastern Somalia, warned Tuesday that escalating political disputes could collapse the

country's governing framework if a consensus is not reached before the federal leadership's term expires next month. President Said Abdullahi Deni stated that without a comprehensive political agreement accepted by all stakeholders before President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's term ends on May 15, the future of the federal system is in jeopardy. ... The warning comes as Somalia faces a constitutional crossroads, with the federal government and regional states at odds over electoral models and power-sharing arrangements. Puntland has long maintained a semi-autonomous status while remaining a pillar of the federal structure, though relations with the central government in Mogadishu have grown increasingly strained. Deni emphasized that Puntland is prepared to protect its own interests and will confront federal leaders if they are perceived to be undermining the constitutional order. However, he noted that the state remains committed to the defense of the Somali people and national stability.

Garowe Online

## Rights Group Urges Saudi Authorities to Halt Executions of Ethiopians, Calls for Addis Ababa's Immediate Intervention as Three Already Executed

Human Rights Watch (HRW) has called for urgent action to halt the imminent execution of Ethiopian migrants in Saudi Arabia, warning that dozens face death sentences following proceedings marred by due process violations. In a call issued today, HRW said "at least 65 Ethiopian migrants are at imminent risk of execution" for drug-related offences, with three already executed on

21 April. ... The warnings come as the Tigray Youth Affairs Bureau last week raised similar alarm over a "mass death sentence" against Ethiopian detainees in Saudi Arabia. In a letter to Ethiopia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Bureau called for immediate diplomatic engagement to halt the executions and protect those detained. ... Both HRW and Tigray regional officials say many of those facing execution are migrants who fled war and economic hardship, including the two-year devastating war in the Tigray region, and undertook dangerous journeys through Yemen into Saudi Arabia in search of work. Some were reportedly convicted for carrying khat, a substance legal and widely consumed in parts of Ethiopia but banned in Saudi Arabia, often without knowing it was illegal or after being coerced. Addis Standard

## Term of the Day

### THE 4 PS OF MARKETING

#### Definition

The four Ps of marketing describe the key decisions businesses make to bring a product to market: what they offer (product), what they charge (price), where it's available (place), and how they promote it (promotion). The four Ps, sometimes referred to as a marketing mix, form a framework businesses use to bring a product or service to market successfully.

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# Spotlight

Ever catch the perfect picture with your digital camera or camera phone and wish you could find a way for others to experience it? Here is your chance. If you find yourself at the right place at the right time and happen to catch an amazing scene you believe someone else should see, send us your news pictures with no more than 30 words to [spotlight@capitalethiopia.com](mailto:spotlight@capitalethiopia.com) and we will publish it.

PHOTO: Anteneh Aklilu

## KfW Development Bank becomes an ATIDI Shareholder, Enhances German Investment Opportunities in Africa

The German development bank KfW acting on behalf of and for the account of the Federal Republic of Germany has become the latest shareholder in the African Trade & Investment Development Insurance (ATIDI). KfW becomes the 13th Institutional shareholder in Africa's premier development insurer, further strengthening the organization's capital base and its capacity to support trade and investment across the continent.

The official signing of the subscription agreement between the two organizations is being marked on the occasion of a meeting held today in Nairobi between ATIDI's CEO and the German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Reem Alabali Radovan. The new shareholding underscores Germany's commitment to strengthening its economic partnership with Africa and to supporting African institutions that facilitate trade and investment across the continent.

## Building a united front to address structural barriers to sustainable development in Africa

Major groups and other stakeholders at the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD12) are in agreement on the need for urgent action to overcome structural barriers that hinder development across the continent.

This category of ARFSD stakeholders includes civil society, business and industry organizations, and academic and research institutions gathered to address the pressing challenges impeding progress towards the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063. The discussions revealed uneven progress and structural constraints

They underscored that despite some advancements, progress in Africa remains uneven and significantly constrained by major obstacles, such as growing debt vulnerabilities, declining official development assistance, data gaps, weak accountability, and shrinking civic space.

Participants underscored the importance of adopting people-centered and rights-based approaches to ensure that no one is left behind. This entails a particular focus on vulnerable groups, including women, youth, persons with disabilities, and marginalized communities. To support these efforts, they called for inclusive and disaggregated data systems, gender-responsive budgeting, and stronger connections between national commitments and local implementation.

## Ghana rejects US health deal over data concerns

Ghana has walked away from a proposed US health aid deal, citing concerns over terms requiring the sharing of sensitive health data. The rejected agreement, negotiated under the Trump administration's "America First Global Health Strategy," would have channeled \$109 million in US health assistance to Ghana over five years while encouraging greater local responsibility for disease control. However, officials in Accra reportedly resisted mounting pressure to finalize the agreement, ultimately rejecting its terms ahead of an April deadline. The decision mirrors similar setbacks in Zimbabwe and Kenya, where data-sharing provisions have also sparked pushback. While the US seeks to reshape global aid partnerships, Ghana's stance highlights growing tensions over sovereignty, privacy, and the future of international health cooperation.

### AUTHENTIC LOCAL FLAVORS



### NAP TIME



### CHINESE ARTS



## Africa pursues integrated solutions for climate, water, energy, and food crises

Leaders and experts convened at the UN Conference Centre in Addis Ababa to tackle Africa's interconnected challenges related to climate, water, energy, and food security.

The dialogue on "Climate-Water-Energy-Food Nexus Solutions for Africa's Sustainable Development" was a hybrid event and part of the #ARFSD12 pre-events, which brought together representatives from UN agencies, the African Union, Resident Coordinators, and ministers to discuss a unified way forward.

Organized under the United Nations Africa Regional Collaborative Platform (RCP) Opportunity and Issues Based Coalition 4 (OIBC4) the dialogue aimed to equip UN Resident Coordinators and other key stakeholders with insights on integrated Climate-Water-Energy-Food solutions, identify best practices, and propose ways to dismantle policy barriers.

The dialogue focused on sharing integrated approaches, showcasing best practices, and discussing strategies at addressing policy and implementation barriers. Participants explored financial instruments, the roles of communities, and identified solutions for water and climate risks, as well as avenues for sustainable development. The event sought to enhance resilience, diversify energy sources, leverage regional assets, and guide leadership towards sustainable growth in Africa.

## FINAS 2026 Summit Sets the Stage for Action on Financing Africa's Food Systems

Over one thousand stakeholders from across government, finance, development, and the private sector are set to convene in Nairobi for the Financing Agri-Food Systems Sustainably (FINAS) 2026 Summit, seeking to drive a dialogue to unlock sustainable financing for Africa's agri-food systems.

Scheduled to take place from 30 June to 2 July 2026, the summit will be held under the theme: "Towards Sustainable Financial Architecture for Africa's Food Systems." Building on the outcomes of previous editions, FINAS 2026 will place a strong emphasis on implementation, investment mobilisation, and measurable outcomes across the Africa's agri-food systems financing landscape.

Africa's agri-food systems remain central to economic growth and livelihoods, contributing up to 20-30 percent of GDP in many countries and employing more than 60 percent of the workforce. Yet the sector continues to face a financing gap estimated at over USD 100 billion annually, with agriculture receiving less than five percent of formal bank lending in most markets. These gaps disproportionately affect smallholder farmers, women, youth, and agri-SMEs, even as they produce up to 70-80 percent of the continent's food supply.

At the same time, climate change, market volatility, and rising food import bills are increasing the urgency for resilient, inclusive, and scalable financing solutions.

## Cities around the world call for accelerating the shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy

As city leaders and national governments gather at the First Conference on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels, co-hosted by Colombia and the Netherlands, one message is clear: transitioning away from fossil fuels is the most effective way to guarantee energy security. Current global volatility has proven that fossil fuel dependence is a direct threat to household budgets, national financial stability and global insecurity. By moving away from the price shocks and supply disruptions inherent in fossil fuel dependence, we can deliver what communities actually need: energy that is affordable, reliable and resilient against global crises. This conference stands as one of the most promising outcomes of COP30, signaling a concrete shift from global pledges to local implementation. Earlier this month, over 25 cities from around the world joined the governments of Colombia and the Netherlands in a virtual dialogue co-convened by C40 and ICLEI, ensuring the conference reflects a truly global subnational perspective and showcases the transition in action at the local level.

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# Development and the Sakai principle

■ Alazar Kebede

Development discourse in the twenty-first century often sounds highly technical. It is filled with terms such as “GDP growth,” “infrastructure investment,” “productivity gains,” and “structural transformation.” These indicators matter, but they also risk narrowing the meaning of development to a purely economic exercise. Against this backdrop, the Sakai Principle offers a different lens which is one that foregrounds human dignity, ethical responsibility, and the lived experiences of communities. If development is to remain meaningful, it must be humanized, and the Sakai Principle provides a compelling framework for doing so.

At its core, the Sakai Principle emphasizes that development should prioritize human well-being over abstract metrics. Economic expansion, technological progress, and institutional reform are not ends in themselves. They are tools meant to improve the lives of people. When these processes lose sight of the individuals they are supposed to serve, development becomes detached from reality. The Sakai Principle therefore insists that policies, projects, and institutions be evaluated primarily through their impact on human lives.

This idea may appear intuitive, yet it is frequently overlooked in practice. Governments and international organizations often prioritize large-scale initiatives—mega infrastructure projects, industrial corridors, or rapid urbanization strategies because they produce visible outcomes and quantifiable statistics. However, such initiatives can sometimes overlook local contexts and community needs. Villages may be displaced for dams, informal workers may lose livelihoods due to redevelopment, and ecosystems that sustain communities may be degraded in the name of progress. The Sakai Principle reminds policymakers that development cannot be considered successful if it marginalizes or harms the very people it intends to uplift.

Humanizing development begins with recognizing people not merely as beneficiaries but as participants. The Sakai Principle argues that communities must have agency in shaping their own development trajectories. Too often, development programs are designed in distant capitals or international headquarters with minimal consultation with those directly affected. This top-down approach can produce policies that are technically sound but socially disconnected.

A human-centered model, by contrast, encourages participatory governance. Local knowledge becomes a resource rather than an afterthought. Farmers understand the rhythms of their land, informal workers grasp the realities of urban economies, and indigenous communities hold generations of ecological knowledge. When development initiatives integrate these perspectives, they become more sustainable and culturally grounded. The Sakai Principle thus aligns with broader movements advocating participatory development and grassroots empowerment.

Another important dimension of the Sakai Principle is ethical responsibility. Development decisions often involve trade-offs. Building a highway may stimulate economic activity but could displace communities or disrupt ecosystems. Expanding industrial zones may create employment but also introduce environmental risks. The Sakai Principle does not deny these trade-offs; instead, it demands that they be confronted transparently and ethically.

This ethical orientation is particularly important in an era defined by rapid technological change. Artificial intelligence, automation, and digital platforms promise unprecedented

productivity gains. Yet they also raise questions about employment displacement, digital inequality, and surveillance. If technological development proceeds without a human-centered framework, it risks amplifying social disparities. Applying the Sakai Principle means ensuring that technological progress remains accountable to human welfare rather than simply maximizing efficiency.

The humanization of development also requires attention to dignity. Poverty is not only a material condition but also a social and psychological experience. People who lack access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities often face stigmatization and exclusion. Development strategies that focus exclusively on income levels may overlook these deeper dimensions of human deprivation.

The Sakai Principle insists that development must restore dignity alongside prosperity. This involves strengthening institutions that protect rights, expanding access to quality education and healthcare, and ensuring that marginalized groups have meaningful representation. When individuals feel respected and included in social and economic life, development becomes transformative rather than merely incremental.

Environmental sustainability is another domain where the Sakai Principle offers critical insight. Traditional development models frequently treated nature as an external resource to be exploited for economic gain. However, climate change and ecological degradation

have revealed the limitations of this mindset. Communities around the world particularly those in vulnerable regions are experiencing the consequences of unsustainable development.

A humanized development paradigm recognizes that environmental stewardship is inseparable from human well-being. The Sakai Principle encourages policies that balance economic growth with ecological resilience. Sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, and community-led conservation initiatives illustrate how development can simultaneously support livelihoods and protect ecosystems. In this sense, the Sakai Principle aligns with emerging global frameworks that emphasize sustainability and intergenerational responsibility.

Critics might argue that prioritizing human-centered values could slow economic growth or complicate decision-making. Participatory processes require time, ethical deliberation introduces complexity, and environmental safeguards may raise costs. Yet these challenges are not weaknesses, they are safeguards against the failures of purely technocratic development.

History offers numerous examples of development strategies that achieved rapid growth but produced deep social inequalities or environmental damage. When such imbalances emerge, societies often face political unrest, economic instability, or ecological crises that ultimately undermine long-term progress. By contrast, development grounded in human

values may proceed more carefully but tends to produce more durable and equitable outcomes.

The Sakai Principle also invites a rethinking of how success is measured. Gross domestic product remains a useful indicator of economic activity, but it cannot capture the full spectrum of human well-being. Education quality, healthcare access, environmental health, and social cohesion are equally important markers of progress. By broadening the metrics used to evaluate development, policymakers can better align strategies with the ultimate goal of improving human lives.

In practice, implementing the Sakai Principle requires institutional change. Governments must strengthen mechanisms for public participation, ensure transparency in development planning, and integrate social impact assessments into major projects. International organizations and development agencies must move beyond standardized models and support locally tailored solutions. Academic institutions and policy researchers also have a role to play by generating knowledge that bridges technical expertise with social realities.

Equally important is the cultural dimension of development. Societies possess diverse values, traditions, and aspirations. A development strategy that ignores these cultural contexts risks eroding social cohesion. The Sakai Principle therefore advocates sensitivity to cultural identity and local meaning systems. Development should not homogenize societies but

enable them to flourish according to their own values.

Ultimately, the significance of the Sakai Principle lies in its moral clarity. Development is not merely about building roads, increasing exports, or expanding industries. It is about improving the quality of human life. When development strategies respect dignity, empower communities, and protect the environment, they fulfill their true purpose.

As the world confronts complex challenges—from climate change and technological disruption to persistent inequality—the need to humanize development has never been more urgent. The Sakai Principle provides a reminder that progress must remain rooted in humanity. Without that foundation, development risks becoming an empty pursuit of numbers rather than a genuine pathway to shared prosperity.

In reaffirming the centrality of human well-being, the Sakai Principle does more than critique existing models of development. It offers a constructive vision for the future. A future where growth is inclusive, technology serves society, and communities actively shape their destinies. In such a vision, development is not simply something done to people; it is something built with them and for them.

*Capital features a variety of independent voices; the opinions articulated in this column are the author's own and operate independently of our corporate viewpoint.*

## The Djibouti-Ethiopia corridor powering Ethiopia's trade offers lessons for Africa

■ By Eugene Torero

More than 95% of Ethiopia's imports and exports travel along a single corridor linking Addis Ababa to the Port of Djibouti. Every truck on that road carries the weight of an economy serving more than 120 million people. What happens at those checkpoints shapes the price of food in the capital, the viability of a flower exporter in the Ethiopian highlands and the credibility of Africa's ambitions under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Ethiopia is landlocked but land-linked with its immediate neighbours. Geography fixes that reality. Policy determines what the country does about it. The Djibouti-Ethiopia corridor stretches roughly 900 kilometres from the Red Sea to the Ethiopian highlands. When goods move smoothly, businesses reach markets on time and supply chains hold. When procedures slow at ports or borders, the consequences ripple outward - raising the time and cost of moving goods and weakening the competitiveness of businesses that depend on them.

The scale of the problem is well documented. According to a recent World Bank report on Ethiopia's transport and logistics sector, it takes 40 days to clear inbound goods from seaports into the country, compared with a middle-income country average of three days. Ethiopia's total logistics costs as a share of GDP stand 26% above that same middle-income average of 10 to 15%. A 2024 UNCTAD report estimates that road transport alone accounts for roughly 29% of the final price of goods traded within Africa, compared with around 7% for goods traded beyond the

continent. These figures translate directly into business decisions—whether a shipment remains profitable, whether exporters can meet delivery schedules, whether producers remain competitive in international markets.

Reform, then, is not a technical exercise. It is an economic necessity.

The AfCFTA, which entered into force in 2021, connects 54 countries with a combined GDP exceeding \$3 trillion. Yet trade agreements alone cannot deliver economic integration. Goods must move quickly and predictably across borders. A single certificate delayed by manual procedures can hold an entire shipment in place.

Progress along the Djibouti-Ethiopia corridor shows how such systems can begin to change.

In October 2025, Ethiopia introduced an electronic phytosanitary certification system—ePhyto, enabling agricultural exporters to obtain and verify plant health certificates digitally. The platform connects to international verification systems and Ethiopia's electronic single window. Exporters who previously relied on paper documentation can now submit certificates electronically, allowing regulatory agencies to verify compliance more quickly and with greater transparency. The system was developed with technical support from TradeMark Africa in partnership with the Government of Ethiopia, with financing from the European Union through Agence Française de Développement.

A parallel reform targets freight visibility along the corridor. The Integrated Fleet Management System will allow authorities and logistics operators to monitor truck

movements in real time, improving coordination between regulators, transport operators and logistics companies. Together, these reforms reinforce a broader lesson: efficient corridors depend not only on roads and ports, but on institutions capable of coordinating policy, managing digital systems and sustaining reform over time.

Corridor governance remains the most complex piece of this work. Last month, Djibouti, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Uganda agreed to establish the DESSU Corridor Management Authority - a joint structure designed to coordinate oversight and operations across the corridor. For traders and transport operators, such coordination reduces uncertainty. For investors, it signals that the corridor will function predictably.

Progress on these reforms was reviewed during the 9th National Oversight Committee meeting held in Addis Ababa this week, where government institutions and development partners assessed implementation of the TradeMark Africa Ethiopia Country Programme. The programme supports digital trade systems, logistics management, standards infrastructure and regulatory reform, with financing from the European Union through Agence Française de Développement and additional support from the United Kingdom, Ireland, the Netherlands and Sweden.

The meeting also acknowledged that significant work remains. Laboratory infrastructure for sanitary and phytosanitary compliance has yet to be fully deployed. Ethiopia continues to make progress on its WTO accession negotiations. Plans to pilot electric freight vehicles

along the corridor will require sustained cooperation between transport operators, regulators and energy providers.

Such challenges are characteristic of structural reform. Progress rarely follows a straight line. What matters is whether institutions continue to review outcomes, address bottlenecks and maintain the political commitment to improving how trade moves.

The Djibouti-Ethiopia corridor already carries the overwhelming share of Ethiopia's trade. Improving its efficiency benefits farmers, manufacturers and exporters across the country, while reducing costs that ultimately reach consumers.

Its significance, however, extends beyond Ethiopia. Across Africa, regional trade corridors face the same fundamental questions—how to align regulations, digitise certification systems and coordinate governance across borders. If reforms along this route continue to take hold, the Djibouti-Ethiopia corridor may offer something valuable to the continent: not a template to replicate, but evidence that sustained institutional reform can change how trade moves.

Africa's economic integration will not be achieved through declarations. It will emerge through the practical work of building systems that allow goods to cross borders with speed, transparency and trust.

*Eugene Torero is Regional Director for Horn of Africa and Rwanda, TradeMark Africa*

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# INTERVIEW



## AFRICA'S AVIATION TECH SPEND NEEDS BETTER INTEGRATION



**A***frican aviation is growing fast, but the digital systems that support it are struggling to keep up. That is the central message from SITA's latest Air Transport IT Insights report, which shows that airlines and airports in Africa and the Middle East are investing heavily in technology but are not yet getting the full value from that spending. In this interview with Capital's Groum Abate, SITA's President for Africa and the Middle East, Selim Bouri, explains why data integration, financing gaps and uneven digital priorities remain major obstacles — and what needs to change as Ethiopia expands its aviation infrastructure. Excerpts;*

**Capital:** Why do many African airlines and airports still operate with systems that do not fully connect with one another?

**Selim Bouri:** This issue is actually global and not unique to Africa; it affects the entire aviation market and industry. Currently, there is a worldwide emphasis on increasing investment in technology. However, when we examine the situation in Africa and the Middle East, we notice a discrepancy between the investment levels of airlines and airports. While all airlines are actively investing in technology, not all airports are doing the same. They do not share the same priorities in their technology investments. Although airports are making significant investments in new technologies, particularly in AI, they do not do so at the same scale or with the same urgency as airlines.

The main challenge today is not just the technology itself,

as you mentioned, but rather the integration of data across systems. Currently, the focus on data investment is unequal between airlines and airports. Each entity tends to invest in its own specific areas, leading to some optimizations. However, this lack of integration can hinder the ability to maximize those optimizations and, in the worst-case scenario, create additional problems by failing to manage disruptions effectively. Disruptions have become a part of daily operations for airlines and airports.

Without proper management and integration of different systems, what should be an isolated incident can escalate and disrupt the entire network.

**Capital:** What is the biggest barrier to real-time data sharing across Africa's aviation ecosystem?

**Selim Bouri:** There are several barriers to this issue, stemming from a combination of factors. These include regulatory fragmentation, sovereign concerns, and varying levels of

sensitivity regarding data and information among different parties. However, the primary challenge lies in the speed of technology investment. According to our study, 100% of airlines surveyed in Africa and the Middle East are investing in and planning to increase their investments in real-time data processing and data-driven operations, which is better than the global average. In contrast, less than half of airports—only 43%—are planning similar investments, significantly below the global average of around 70%.

Consequently, the integration and optimization that could result from leveraging data across the board will not occur if investment levels do not improve. Additionally, airlines often have more control over their customers and better access to financing, which gives them an advantage. In comparison, airports in Africa and the Middle East face greater challenges in securing financing.

It's quite challenging due to the uneven distribution of access to financing within the ecosystem. Therefore, it's crucial to find effective strategies to ensure that investments are not made in isolation—such as by a reactor, airline, government, or airport—but rather in a way that optimizes and maximizes integration.

The impact of this integrated approach would be multiplied, benefiting everyone involved.

Currently, the biggest challenge lies in identifying the right focus for investment in these technologies. Investment should not be limited to specific areas; for example, funding for airports should extend beyond just the airport space. It must also encompass the technological components that facilitate effective integration across the entire ecosystem.

**Capital:** How much is full system integration costing African airlines in terms of delays, disruptions, and operational inefficiencies?

**Selim Bouri:** It's difficult to provide a specific number focused solely on Africa. However, we know that delays and disruptions cost hundreds of billions of dollars annually. This amount can often equal, if not exceed, the operating costs of airlines, making it a significant issue. The costs in Africa are even higher due to the operational impacts of fewer active routes and hubs. In the event of disruptions, the recovery options are limited, further complicating the situation.

The key challenge is not merely preventing disruptions, as they are now an unavoidable reality. Instead, we must ensure that every system and investment is robust and resilient enough to handle these disruptions. This is particularly important as the African aviation market is growing, with airlines and airports expanding.

To sustain this growth without causing disruptions, we must focus on more than just increasing the number of aircraft or building new

# INTERVIEW

airports, which takes time. It is essential to invest in technology that enables effective management of current growth, optimizing passenger processing and, more importantly, enhancing overall aircraft operations.

The improvements in passenger processing and border management will only be realized with the right technology. This requires a comprehensive approach rather than a piecemeal one; integration and integrity of data are crucial. This is a key finding from our global study.

At SITA, we believe this principle is particularly relevant to Africa, where substantial growth is occurring. However, this growth cannot be addressed by waiting for the construction of new airports and hubs, which could take 5 to 10 years. We need to act now.

**Capital: What needs to change for aviation technology investment in Africa to produce better returns?**

**Selim Bouri:** Investments must be prioritized effectively and timed appropriately. While adding space and aircraft is essential, these solutions will take time to implement. Currently, the aviation industry faces significant supply chain challenges affecting aircraft manufacturers, indicating that these solutions are mid- to long-term. In the short term, we must focus on managing the immediate growth and associated challenges, such as rising fuel prices, delays, and disruptions, which increase costs for airlines and airports.

To address these challenges, investments should be allocated wisely between current needs and future growth. Current data shows that in Africa and the Middle East, airport investments are overly focused on long-term goals, neglecting immediate needs. Today, the priority for airlines is to leverage data, artificial intelligence, and optimization, while airports are primarily investing in basic telecommunications and IT systems.

The real challenge is to accelerate these efforts. If optimization on the airline side is not matched by improvements at the airport or border, it could lead to disruptions. It's vital to establish a fair investment scheme that enables airports to secure the necessary financing for immediate improvements, as they do not directly sell tickets like airlines do. We cannot afford to wait for new infrastructure; we must enhance existing facilities now.

**Capital: Is the current pace**

**of digital transformation in African aviation keeping up with the continent's traffic growth?**

**Selim Bouri:** Not yet. Despite some progress, we are still far from achieving this. Africa is currently the fastest-growing market for aviation and air transport, which is promising. However, when we examine the pace of investment in technology, it falls short. Less than 43% of airports are planning to increase their investment in technology. This indicates a disconnect; while airlines are investing heavily—proportionally more than those in the rest of the world—airports are lagging.

Airlines in Africa and the Middle East recognize the need to invest in technology to improve operations and interconnect with the global aviation network. It's crucial that airports receive similar attention for technological upgrades. Airports typically have less control over their customers and face greater challenges in accessing financing. Therefore, it's essential to establish equitable financing avenues for airports, whether through concessions or by involving airlines in funding airport technology.

Ultimately, if technology is not implemented uniformly, no one will benefit. For instance, if an airline invests significantly in data and technology to leverage AI and data-driven decision-making, but operates in an airport that lacks data integration, they will not reap the rewards. In the event of disruptions, they will bear the costs. Thus, creating a fair cross-financing model between airports and airlines to support technology investment is vital. Currently, Africa has not reached the necessary level or speed of technology investment to match traffic growth, which is poised to be substantial. This growth presents a great opportunity for Africa, but we must ensure it translates into economic prosperity rather than costs incurred from delays or inefficiencies.

**Capital: What risks do African airlines face when they continue to mix legacy systems with newer technologies?**

**Selim Bouri:** The primary risk is the potential for increased fragmentation rather than integration. In the best-case scenario, airlines may not fully capitalize on new investments and technologies. In the worst-case scenario, this could lead to more disruptions. For example, if we implement advanced technology in areas such as aircraft operations



or disruption management but fail to upgrade passenger processing systems, we risk undermining overall efficiency.

This means there will be a delay in allowing passengers to reach the gate, so any improvements made on one side will effectively be lost. Similarly, without proper data integration for border management and baggage handling, processing passengers in five minutes becomes meaningless if they end up waiting three hours due to issues with aircraft connections, baggage distribution, or fuel management. This creates an ecosystem where if all components are not integrated with the right technology, the overall effect will be negligible.

The integration of legacy and new technologies is crucial. We need to focus on standardization and appropriate levels of investment, especially in

Africa, where there are opportunities for new constructions that do not face the same constraints as more mature markets burdened by outdated systems. Africa has the chance to adopt the latest and standardized technologies immediately.

The key point is that investments should not necessarily focus on the newest technology but rather on proven, standardized technologies that can evolve. While this may involve higher initial costs, it ensures that the implemented systems can scale up or down as needed. The greatest risk lies in creating silos, which could force a complete system replacement, jeopardizing operations. If African airports and airlines fail to invest in standardized and upgradeable technology, they may face significant challenges ahead.

**Capital: Okay, my last question is to what extent are African airports prepared to handle**

**passenger and cargo volumes with their current digital systems?**

**Selim Bouri:** Progress is being made, but as studies indicate, it is inconsistent and often very limited. Airlines are investing more than airports, and within airport investments, a significant portion is focused on infrastructure—specifically, building square meters—rather than on advanced technologies that enable ecosystem integration.

We need better coordination among all stakeholders, including airlines, airports, and government agencies, especially regarding border control, visa processing, passport checks, and biometrics.

If investments are not made in an integrated manner, there is a risk that we will not be able to keep pace with the rapid growth in passenger numbers compared to the slower speed of constructing new airports.



# “STORIES THAT MATTER”: ADDIS INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL MARKS 20TH ANNIVERSARY

The 20th edition of the Addis International Film Festival (AIFF) is set to mark a milestone for African documentary cinema, reaffirming the Ethiopian capital as a hub for human rights storytelling and independent filmmaking.

The 20th Addis International Film Festival will run from April 29 to May 3, 2026, in Addis Ababa, hosted by Initiative Africa at multiple cultural venues across the city.

AIFF is widely described as the largest independent documentary cinema festival in Africa, focusing on films that tackle peace building, inequality, women’s rights, children’s rights, health, and environmental justice.

The festival’s core mission is to use documentaries and short films to raise awareness about pressing social issues and to equip local and international filmmakers with tools for advocacy and creative storytelling.

The 2026 program is expected to feature a



carefully curated selection of some 30–50 films, Q&A sessions with directors, and workshops

alongside panel discussions, and digital rights. Over 13 consecutive years up to 2019, AIFF built

a growing network of filmmakers, activists, and audiences from Ethiopia and beyond, helping local documentarians gain visibility on the continent and the global festival circuit.

The 20th anniversary edition is being framed as a moment to reflect on the festival’s role in mentoring young African filmmakers and amplifying under reported stories—from climate induced displacement to civic space restrictions—through the lens of non fiction cinema.

In 2024, the festival was named one of the “world’s coolest festivals,” a nod to its reputation for combining political urgency with cinematic quality.

As Ethiopia’s media landscape evolves, the 20th Addis International Film Festival is positioning itself not only as a screening event but as a platform for dialogue among policymakers, civil society actors, and creative communities around the future of free and fearless storytelling in the Horn of Africa.

## H O T M U S I C T A B L E

### HOTTEST ARTISTS

### APRIL 23 - APRIL 29, 2026

### HOTTEST TRACKS

RANK	ARTIST	RADIO	TV	TOTAL PLAY
1	Dawit Tsige	103	83	186
2	Tewodros "Teddy Afro" Kassahun	107	0	107
3	Michael Belayneh	59	41	100
4	Hana Girma	43	52	95
5	Neway Debebe	77	14	91
5	Mastewal Eyayu	78	13	91
6	Fikeraddis Nekatibeb	46	38	84
7	Eyob Mekonnen	43	12	55
8	Lemlem Hailemichael	41	13	54
9	Rahel Getu	23	30	53
10	Haleluya Tekletsadik	35	15	50

RANK	TRACK	ARTIST	RADIO	TV	TOTAL PLAY
1	Hayyee	Hana Girma	19	39	58
2	Demama	Dawit Tsige	18	39	57
3	Zarem Atirsagn	Fikeraddis Nekatibeb	27	19	46
4	Dar Dar	Dawit Tsige	16	19	35
4	Yelebe	Haleluya Tekletsadik	22	13	35
5	Emetalehu	Mastewal Eyayu	24	9	33
6	Ethiopiaye	Rahel Getu	5	25	30
7	Shih Bibal (Back to 90s)	Tewodros "Teddy Afro" Kassahun	29	0	29
7	Gen Yet Hager	Girma Tefera kassa	22	7	29
8	Shegiye	Rophnan	25	2	27
8	Zemedye	Hibist Tiruneh	11	16	27
9	Dehena Nat	Neway Debebe	17	8	25
9	Shillimii	Daangaa H Qananii	2	23	25
10	Kololee	Aadam Mohaammad	2	21	23

THIS DATA IS GATHERED BY A 24/7 AUTOMATED RECORDING & ANALYZING AII SYSTEM FROM 35 TV & RADIO STATIONS. THERE WERE MORETHAN 8,509 TOTAL MUSIC PLAYS ACROSS THE BROADCAST MEDIUM FOR THIS WEEK.

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# Merid Tafesse, the Lion Hearted

**O**n the sunny Saturday evening of April 25, the long-awaited opening of Prince Merid Tafesse's Refraction had arrived. I was running late but arrived in the nick of time to hear Desta Meghoo, curator extraordinaire, deliver razor-sharp remarks with Merid smiling, standing by her side. French Ambassador Alexis Lamek and the newest Director of the Alliance Ethio-Française, Olivier Mougnot, all on the podium, delivered speeches while my heart throbbed with anticipation. I wondered: what did the first family of Ethiopian art have to offer viewers? What lay behind the wall of glass in the newly renovated, dimly lit gallery?

Then the Ambassador flanked by Merid, Desta, and Olivier, cut the red ribbons with scissors. A flood of lights followed, exposing the REFRACTION experience — art as far as the eye could see. I almost sprinted into the gallery. Instead, I hugged my dear brother and sister and cautiously began my way into the exhibition with the other invited guests for the special pre-opening.

My journey began in Gallery 1 of 3, giving the feeling of walking through a labyrinth. My mind flashed to the mythical Ariadne's Thread and the Minotaur. The peculiar sensation of levitation and joy was overwhelming.

I understood what Merid said in his opening statement: "I will not say much, as a lot has already been stated in my art."

The pure brilliance of each work, the variation in technique and size, and the sheer volume of 61 works — from 5cm x 15cm to 4m x 3m — leaves one breathless. Words cannot synthesize the experience, especially with the knowledge of the path taken over the past 15 months: from the demolition of their beautiful mid-century modern Moa Anbessa Art Studio, Gallery, and home in Kazanchis for river development, followed by temporary displacement for three months, then settling into a new apartment for the past twelve months with constant engagement to secure a replacement lot. That replacement became the space for a temporary studio to create ten large works. The new Moa Anbessa Art Studio Gallery and residence will be built there shortly.

After all this, the aesthetics were crowned King — they emerged stronger than ever. This is the marvel of the human spirit!

I said to myself: Merid the Lion Hearted! The first family of art in Addis Ababa — Merid and Desta Meghoo — are a testament to the flowering of the human spirit, where love, resilience, dedication, knowledge, paramount skill, and energy reign supreme.

The curatorial statement succinctly and elegantly explains: REFRACTION... inviting



Desta Meghoo and Merid Tafesse

viewers to experience 'forbidden fruit'... process and analysis... raw expression and emotion, silently shared by all."

Merid is a lover of fine art and a guardian of his human right to produce art, which he generously offers to the Addis community and

beyond as a leading artist with a wide social media presence.

For me, the questions are: What is the community's response? What is the influence of commercial forces, and the impact of proximity to power?

None of the above matters. Why?

Merid is steady, and his work is a testament to the heights Ethiopian art has reached. It should be acknowledged accordingly, as our art is displayed in palaces, private and public spaces — historic and newly built alike.

Undoubtedly, all 60 works of art exemplify the highest level of professionalism and painterly flair, transporting us to realms beyond through the sheer energy of their vibratory aura emanating out of their 2D concrete existence.

Finally, the curatorial work is beyond perfection. From the framing of the smaller pieces in black wood, to the descriptive labels, display of giant paintings, and projection mapping, the mind-bending arrangement of the spectrum of works is captivating.

"Refraction," as Desta reminds us, happens when light passes from one medium to another, skewing what the brain processes and what the eyes see. This opens large emotional and intellectual pastures and deep lakes to explore, enjoy, and float on.

In a world where Palantir tweets provide finality in 20 or so characters, stock markets formalize

insider trading via betting sites such as Polymarket, and the potential for decimation and defense has billions of dollars dangling on the grifts of the Orange Man — where the Persian Gulf, Hormuz, is in our daily thoughts — we realize and appreciate art that imitates life, and vice versa, in Merid's case.

Passing from one medium of consciousness to another consciousness, let Refraction be the definition of winning, making us all coexist in a linguistic universe where, eventually, the philosophy that holds one race, thought, or ideology superior and another inferior is totally and permanently discredited and abandoned.

Let us bet on art and let our winning strategy be love. Let us realize the materiality of existence is just a medium, and that meaning exists in Refraction.

Merid the Lion Hearted will reach even higher, and I look forward to witnessing the peaks the first family of art out of Ethiopia will reach. Join Desta and special guests for "Let's Talk About Art..." with Merid on Friday, May 8th at 4 PM at Alliance Ethio-Française to find out for yourself.

## Diplomatic photo exhibition opens in Addis Ababa to support Ethiopian talent

**A**diplo matic photography exhibition titled "Africa through the Eyes of Diplomats: Africa Close to Your Heart" opened on Wednesday at the Hyatt Regency Addis Ababa, showcasing intimate images captured by over 28 ambassadors and international organization representatives during their travels across the continent.

This second edition of the visual art project brings together the diplomatic community to share personal perspectives on Africa's vibrant landscapes, rich cultures, and the spirit of peaceful coexistence. The exhibition serves as more than an artistic display; it highlights the role diplomats play as informal ambassadors who strengthen cultural understanding by reaching audiences far beyond formal exhibition halls, say the organizers.

In his welcoming message read by his representative, Gedion Timothewos Hessebon, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, noted the importance of the initiative, stating that the project offers the public a unique opportunity to view the beauty and diversity of the continent



through the eyes of those who live and work within it.

Julia Pataki, Ambassador of Romania, who initiated the project last year, reflected on the deep connection the diplomatic community has developed with Africa, quoting the sentiment that "Africa is not just a place; it is an emotion, a state of being where the rhythm of life beats in harmony with the pulse of the wild."

Speaking at the opening, Ambassador Pataki, reflected on the profound bond formed between the diplomatic community and their host continent. "In this second edition, the unique perspective of the diplomatic community resident in Ethiopia reveals the profound connection with a continent we have the chance to visit, live in, and gain a deeper understanding from its resilience," she said.

Ambassador Pataki, who initiated the visual art project last year, expressed her pleasure in seeing it evolve into a lasting community fixture. "I am happy to see that 'Africa Through the Eyes of Diplomats' is becoming a tradition," she added. "We are grateful to have been part of it, and we hope that the magic of Africa will be carried forward by the next generation of ambassadors."

The exhibition invited visitors to immerse themselves in these stories and participate by voting for the three standout images that resonate with them most. A unique aspect of the project is its commitment to the local creative economy: all exhibited works are available for purchase, with every cent of the proceeds dedicated to empowering the next generation of talented

Ethiopian photographers. Yasser Bagersh of the Culture Club and Cactus Group, and Otto Kurzendorfer, General Manager of the Hyatt Regency Addis Ababa, emphasized their shared commitment to supporting local talent and fostering international dialogue. "We are proud to provide a platform where creativity and diplomacy come together to showcase Africa's rich diversity," said Kurzendorfer.

The exhibition spearheaded by the Ambassador of Romania and supported by ambassadors from Australia, Bangladesh, Burundi, Canada, Czechia, Mexico, the Kingdom of Morocco, South Africa, and the UNESCO Country Representative. It is organized in partnership with Ethiopia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Culture Club, and the Hyatt Regency Addis Ababa.

The photographs are available for purchase at tiered price points depending on size between 5,000 and 14,000 birr. Organizers invite the public to experience these immersive perspectives and continue to support the initiative as it seeks to become a growing tradition in Addis Ababa's cultural calendar.



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Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

## Call for Transformative Companies in Digital Economy

**Partner with GIZ PSD-E to scale ICT, BPO, or digital content solutions in Ethiopia.**

GIZ's Private Sector Development Ethiopia (PSD-E) Project, implemented on behalf of the German Government invites legally-registered private companies to apply for the **Transformative Company Support Programme** in the field of Digital Economy. The programme seeks ambitious companies with scalable business models that contribute to job creation, local value addition, and sustainable supply chains.

Selected companies will receive tailored, non-financial technical assistance through a jointly defined Technical Support Agreement. They will also collaborate with PSD-E on joint initiatives that generate wider development impact and drive sector-wide transformation.

### KEY DETAILS

**Who should apply:** Legally registered private companies in Ethiopia with a minimum of 3 years of operation and financially solvent.

**Geographic scope:** Ethiopia

#### Focus sectors:

- ICT Services
- Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) Services
- Digital audiovisual content creation

**Type of support:** Non-financial technical assistance and implementation support for joint development impact initiatives.

**Application Deadline:** 29 May 2026, 11:59 PM EAT

**Queries:** For questions related to this call, please write to: [Info.PSDEthiopia@ke.ey.com](mailto:Info.PSDEthiopia@ke.ey.com)

### HOW TO APPLY

Scan the QR code or refer to the link below to access the full Call for Proposals document and submit your online application form through the link mentioned in the Call for Proposals document.



**Link:** <https://lnkd.in/dRnFZDZT>

**NOTE:** GIZ reserves the right to amend, suspend, or cancel this call, request clarifications or additional information, and reject any application. Submission of an application does not guarantee selection or the conclusion of a Technical Support Agreement.



## INVITATION TO BID

### Sale of Unserviceable Touchscreen Displays and UPS

**REF#PRO32-3-752-PMU/26-4-1**

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) invites interested bidders to participate in a closed bid exercise for the sale of unserviceable touchscreen displays and UPS.

The bid items are to be sold "as is, where is" without recourse to warranties of any kind. Bid with some information will be available from **29 April 2026 – 19 May 2026** on UN working hours and days from Monday to Thursday morning time between **9:00 AM to 12:30 PM** afternoon time **15:00 PM to 17:00 PM** and on Friday **9:00 AM to 13:00 PM**.

For any queries regarding this bid, please contact the Bid Officer, **Tel. 0115445163** extensions (35163).

Physical inspection will specifically take place on the following dates: **April 29; May 1, 4, 6, 8, and 11,13,15 and 18 from 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM**.

For physical inspection purpose, please contact Inventory Control Unit of ECA in person or through telephone **0115-443115** extensions (33115).

Interested bidders may collect the bid document from the Procurement Unit, **in Room no. NG.45.04** of its Secretariat Building (Niger) in the ECA compound at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, during working hours, starting from **29 April 2026 – 19 May 2026** on UN working hours and days from Monday to Thursday morning time between **9:00 AM to 12:30 PM** afternoon time **15:00 PM to 17:00 PM** and on Friday **9:00 AM to 13:00 PM**.

The **closing date** of the bid submission will be **on 19 May 2026 at 16:00 PM**, and the **opening** will be on **21 May 2026 at 10:00AM**. No Proposal shall be received after this **deadline**. Bidders should deposit **Birr 200** in United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UN ECA) account No.1000090977858 and collect bid document from Supply Chain Management Section Procurement unit 4th floor **Room No. NG.45.04**.

Bidders will be expected to submit a bid bond of 10% of the total bid amount in the form of CPO as a guarantee to participate in closed bid exercise.

**The 10% Bid bond will not be returned** to the awarded bidder who failed to collect his/her award. Submission of bid on the basis of other bid is strictly prohibited.

**The Economic Commission for Africa reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received whenever such rejection is in the interest of the organization.**

# Society

## From bombs to banks: The new frontier redefining global conflict

■ By Gzachew Wolde

The landscape of global conflict is rapidly evolving, particularly since the end of the Cold War. Events like the post-9/11 era and the financial upheaval of 2008 have accelerated this transformation, ushering in a new paradigm where traditional military engagements are increasingly replaced by economic warfare. However, economic warfare often operates in a murky grey zone, lacking clear declarations or endpoints.

Traditional warfare was visible, loud, and bloody. It involved the use of bullets, bombs, missiles, tanks, ships, and soldiers, with the goal of destroying enemy forces, infrastructure, or territory. It had defined thresholds, including declarations of war, ceasefire treaties, peace agreements, and mechanisms for accountability regarding war crimes.

In contrast, economic warfare exists in a grey area, typically without a formal "start" or "end." Actions such as freezing central bank assets or imposing bans on high-tech exports can occur overnight, escalate gradually, and be lifted as bargaining chips. This ambiguity complicates the ability of domestic populations and international bodies to demand proportionality or judicial review.

Examples of conventional warfare include World Wars I and II, the Vietnam War, the Iran–Iraq War, the Gulf War of 1991, and the early stages of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. These conflicts utilized conventional weapons to inflict pain and damage on the enemy.

Conversely, economic means—such as trade restrictions, sanctions, tariffs, currency manipulation, asset freezes, investment controls, and supply chain weaponization—are becoming prevalent strategies to weaken or defeat adversaries without engaging in direct, large-scale combat. This form of conflict can have a more profound impact than even the most advanced weaponry, as economic pressures can reach far and wide, often with no clear trajectory, resembling a new version of the Cold War.

While the original Cold War was characterized by ideological blocs and proxy battles, today's multipolar economic warfare is more fragmented. Economic warfare has evolved into a stealthier, more pervasive tool than kinetic strikes, reshaping global power dynamics

in ways that the original Cold War never anticipated. Though it may seem hyperbolic to compare it to a new version of the Cold War, the economic damage inflicted can indeed be more extensive than that caused by any projectile.

A tariff or visa ban lacks a radar signature; there is no missile defense against a sudden ban on dual-use machine tool exports. The defense lies in resilience—through stockpiles and alternative suppliers—or deterrence, by holding critical assets that the adversary needs. Unlike missiles, which can be intercepted, tariffs and export bans operate at the speed of bureaucracy and policy decisions.

The reach of economic warfare can exceed that of hypersonic missiles. For instance, U.S. sanctions on Russia following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine froze over \$300 billion in assets, spiked global energy prices, and indirectly threatened food security in Africa due to fertilizer shortages. Similarly, U.S. measures against Iran since 2018, including sanctions and an oil export ban, resulted in a 90% reduction in oil exports, forcing Tehran to barter with China and causing a ripple effect of higher global LNG prices.

Economic warfare is often characterized as invisible, deniable, and continuous, making it difficult to intervene through legal sanctions. This form of warfare has a serious and widespread impact on civilians in distant locations who bear no responsibility. Such actions may be classified as either legal or extralegal, yet their effects are immensely powerful, capable of reaching long-range targets more swiftly than supersonic missiles and causing more damage than cluster bombs.

Weaponizing interdependence by disrupting supply chains and dismantling interconnected financial systems and energy flows has become a strategy for exploiting vulnerabilities, creating existential risks. Economic warfare now serves as the next-best option for coercion below the nuclear threshold. Since 2008 (and more clearly after 2014 and 2022), rivals such as Russia and China have developed counter-weaponization tools—such as foreign currency reserves, SWIFT alternatives, and commodity leverage—indicating a need to revise the old playbook.

A tariff hike or asset freeze

can be framed as measures for "national security" or "anti-money laundering," rather than acts of war, even though they can have more severe consequences than conventional physical conflict. Unlike a bombing campaign that has a defined end, sanctions can persist for decades, as seen in the cases of Iraq in the 1990s and ongoing measures against Iran and Russia since 2014.

The legality of such actions is often ambiguous. They may technically fall under WTO exceptions (such as the GATT Article XXI security exemption) or UN Charter Article 41 (sanctions), yet they can also be unilateral and extralegal. The financial contagion effect means that sanctions on a Russian bank can disrupt grain shipping insurance, leading to increased food prices in places like Cairo or Nairobi. This collateral damage occurs without the use of bombs, and its impacts can be far-reaching because they are non-kinetic.

The spillover effects are significant: sanctioning a Russian bank can disrupt grain and fertilizer supply chains, raising food prices in Africa and the Middle East, while targeting Chinese tech firms can disrupt global semiconductor production, affecting automakers in Germany and electronics assemblers in Vietnam. Unlike traditional battlefields where civilians can flee, the collateral damage of economic warfare is embedded in globalized systems and often impacts neutral or uninvolved countries the hardest.

In an era where nuclear deterrence has made direct great-power conflict seem suicidal, states have shifted to subtler instruments of coercion. Economic warfare—comprising sanctions, trade barriers, currency manipulation, and supply-chain disruptions—has emerged as the weapon of choice, inflicting strategic pain without the need for military action.

This transition from kinetic warfare to economic pressure represents a profound evolution in great-power competition, blending statecraft with market forces. It is war by other means, yet lacks the oversight typically associated with traditional military engagements. The new norm suggests that conflicts are increasingly waged through economic means rather than conventional military actions.

Nuclear-armed states (Russia,

China, and the U.S.) are less likely to engage in direct conflict, yet they readily utilize economic tools to inflict pain—actions that, in a pre-nuclear era, might have prompted airstrikes or blockades. This creates a dangerous stability/instability paradox: while direct clashes are reduced, low-intensity economic conflict persists, undermining global governance.

Economic warfare now occupies a space below conventional warfare but above diplomacy, highlighting the complex dynamics of modern international relations.

The transition from kinetic warfare to economic coercion represents a significant evolution in great-power competition, merging statecraft with market forces. Traditional warfare involved symmetric force (such as tanks facing tanks) with clear frontlines and oversight from the Geneva Conventions. In contrast, economic warfare exploits the vulnerabilities of globalization by targeting interdependence. It is warfare by other means, yet lacks established rules for oversight. This serves as a humble call for world leaders to convene and create mechanisms to address this hidden threat.

This new form of conflict employs tools like sanctions, trade restrictions, and currency manipulation to exert pressure on adversaries without direct military action. The implications of these strategies are profound, causing damage that often extends beyond immediate targets, affecting civilian populations and destabilizing regions in ways that conventional weapons cannot. Is it too much to suggest that this constitutes a subtle world war?

The absence of robust rules and oversight mechanisms in economic warfare heightens risks to global stability, as tools such as sanctions and financial restrictions can operate more swiftly and broadly than traditional military actions. World leaders must prioritize multilateral dialogue to establish binding frameworks that ensure accountability and proportionality. The evolution of economic warfare signifies not just a tactical shift but a fundamental change in the nature of international relations.

*Capital features a variety of independent voices; the opinions articulated in this column are the author's own and operate independently of our corporate viewpoint.*

# True financial inclusion requires reaching everyone

By Gedion Belete

In Ethiopia, approximately more than 87% of the population lacks access to formal credit. For a young entrepreneur in Addis Ababa with a viable business idea but no collateral, or a rural farmer seeking capital to invest in equipment, the barrier is unbeatable. This is not a minor gap it is a structural failure that leaves millions of capable individuals and small businesses locked out of economic opportunity. Lending policy plays a central role in shaping who gets access to finance and who remains excluded.

In most banking systems, credit naturally flows toward established clients: those with collateral, steady income, and proven repayment histories. While this approach protects banks from risk, it also creates a self-reinforcing cycle of exclusion. New borrowers: no matter how capable cannot access credit because they lack the very markers that the system uses to measure creditworthiness. As a result, financial inclusion remains limited, and economic opportunities are unevenly distributed across the population.

Institutions such as the National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE) and policymakers including the finance minister play a decisive role in shaping how credit is allocated across the economy. Lending policies are not merely technical tools they reflect national priorities, whether that is stability, growth, or inclusion.

The challenge is real: How do policymakers balance the legitimate need to maintain financial discipline and protect the banking system with the equally pressing imperative to expand access to those who have traditionally been excluded? This tension is not unique to Ethiopia. Across the developing world, central banks and finance ministries face the same question.

## A Concrete Solution: The 15% New-Borrower Requirement

What if lending policy went a step further? Imagine a system where banks are required to dedicate at least 15% of their lending portfolio to new borrower individuals or businesses with little or no prior access to formal credit. Such a rule would directly challenge the status quo by ensuring that first-time entrants are consistently included in the financial system.

Banks would be required to define "new borrowers" using clear, auditable criteria for instance, individuals with no prior loan history in the formal banking system, verified through credit registries. To prevent gaming, regulators would monitor approval rates and portfolio performance, ensuring banks are genuinely extending credit rather than simply approving trivial loans. Banks that fail to meet the 15% target within a defined grace period would face proceeded penalties: first, mandatory reporting and corrective action plans; eventually, regulatory sanctions or penalties that increase the cost of non-compliance.

Banks will resist this requirement, and their concerns deserve serious engagement. A 15% new-borrower mandate could increase default rates, as inexperienced borrowers present higher risk. It may also require banks to invest in new infrastructure training credit officers, developing alternative assessment tools, and building systems to manage higher transaction costs for smaller loans. These are real costs that will likely be passed on to consumers through higher interest rates or fees.

However, the social return on this investment is substantial. Research from similar interventions shows that default rates for new borrowers stabilize within 2-3 years as borrowers develop repayment discipline, and that the net benefit of increased economic activity, job creation, business growth, tax revenue far exceeds the cost of higher credit losses.

The specific percentage is worth debating. Some might argue for 10% to reduce bank burden; others propose 20% to maximize inclusion. The ideal number depends on a country's banking infrastructure, the baseline default rate, and the size of the unbanked population. The important point is that some binding requirement creates accountability, whereas voluntary guidelines rarely move markets.

For example India offers instructive evidence. Under the Reserve Bank of India's priority sector lending framework, banks must allocate 40% of net bank credit to priority sectors, including agriculture and small businesses. Between 2010 and 2020, this requirement helped expand formal credit access to over 300 million previously unbanked Indians. While not all borrowers succeeded the overall impact was transformative. Agricultural productivity increased, rural entrepreneurship surged, and millions moved from informal to formal credit systems.

For individuals, the benefits of formal credit access are direct: capital to start businesses, pursue education, or manage financial shocks without resorting to predatory informal lending. For the broader economy, the impact would be multiplied. Research from the World Bank shows that each percentage point increase in financial inclusion correlates with 0.5-1% additional GDP growth over five years, driven by increased entrepreneurship, job creation, and a more inclusive growth trajectory.

In Ethiopia specifically, with youth unemployment exceeding 25% in urban areas and agricultural productivity stagnating, financial inclusion is not a poverty relief program it is an economic imperative.

A successful 15% requirement would require complementary measures:

- Capacity building: Regulators and banks would need to invest in training staff in alternative assessment methods analyzing transaction data, cash flow patterns, and social collateral rather than physical assets.
- Credit registry development: A robust credit information system is essential to identify new borrowers and track their repayment behavior.
- Gradual phase-in: Rather than implementing the requirement immediately, policymakers could phase it in over 2-3 years, allowing banks time to build capacity.
- Regular review: The policy should be evaluated annually, with adjustments made based on implementation experience and evolving financial conditions.

A new-borrower requirement is not a hypothetical policy proposal it is a proven lever for expanding financial access when thoughtfully designed and implemented. The evidence from India, combined with the urgent need for inclusion in Ethiopia, points toward a clear policy imperative: lending rules that incentivize banks to move beyond their traditional comfort zones can unlock economic opportunity for those who have long been left out.

The question for policymakers is not whether financial inclusion is important, that is settled. The question is whether they have the will to reshape lending policy to make it real. In doing so, they would not only lift millions out of exclusion; they would unleash growth that benefits the entire economy.

*Gedion Belete is a journalist and communications manager and can be reached via gedionb4@gmail.com*

*Capital features a variety of independent voices; the opinions articulated in this column are the author's own and operate independently of our corporate viewpoint.*

## Entrepreneur PROFILE:

### RESUME

**Name:** Melat Berhe  
**Education:** Degree  
**Company name:** Zoma Hair Oil  
**Title:** Founder and Manager  
**Founded in:** 2023/24  
**What it does:** Produces and markets high-quality hair oils and shampoos  
**Hq:** Dire Dawa  
**Number of Employees:** 20



### STARTUP CAPITAL

30,000 birr

### CURRENT CAPITAL

Growing

### BIG PICTURE

**Reason for starting the Business:** Desire to protect people's hair and skin health  
**Biggest perk of ownership:** Seeing one's own creative results turn into a product that brings change and being able to create job opportunities  
**Biggest strength:** High focus on product quality and honest customer service  
**Biggest challenge:** The process of obtaining production inputs on time and in sufficient quantities  
**Plan:** Expanding product types and widely promoting Zoma products  
**First career:** Second-hand clothing retail

### PERSONAL

**Most interested in meeting:** Successful large-scale industrial owners in the sector  
**Most admired person:** None  
**Stress reducer:** Working on new creative projects and spending time with family  
**Favorite pastime:** Researching new natural products and working on business promotion  
**Favorite book:** None  
**Favorite destination:** China and Turkey  
**Favorite automobile:** Toyota Land Cruiser

## DAILY EXCHANGE RATE

May. 2, 2026



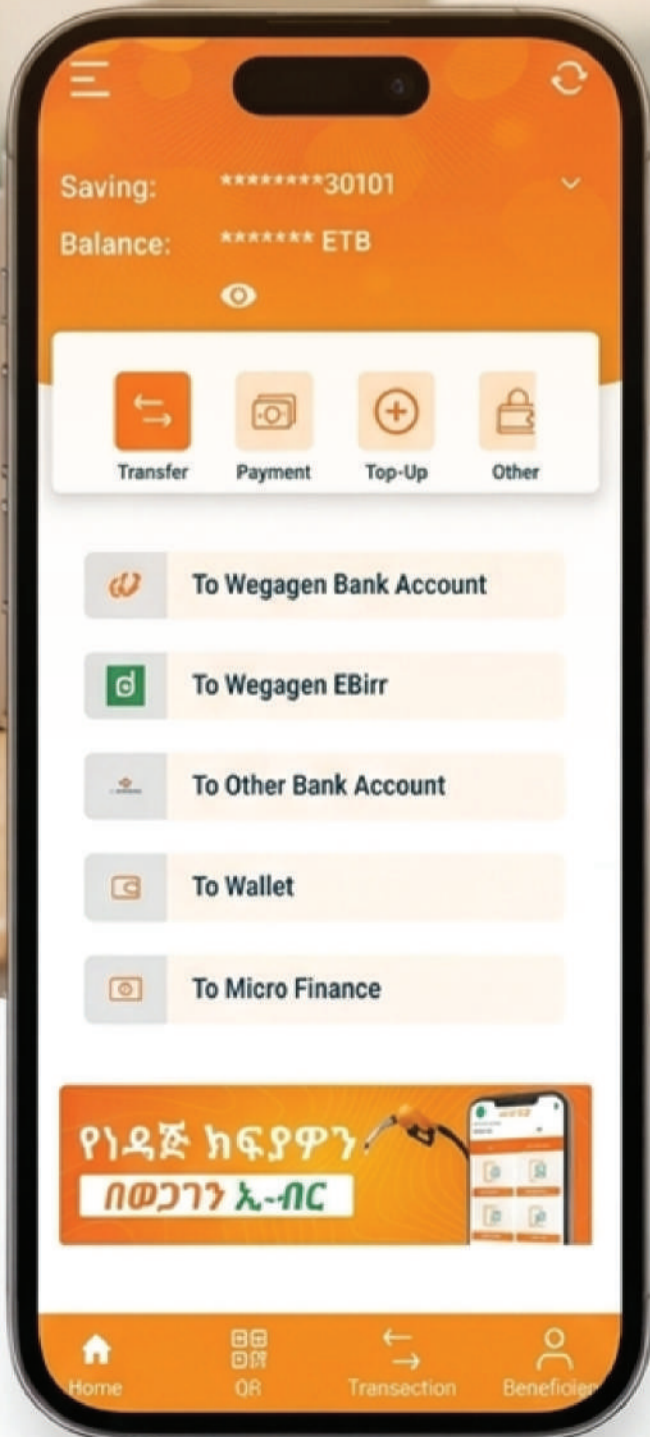
CURRENCY	BUYING	SELLING
US DOLLAR	154.59	157.68
POUND STERLING	209.98	214.18
EURO	181.20	184.82
SWISS FRANK	197.68	201.63
SWEDISH KRONER	16.77	17.10
CHINESE YUAN	22.63	23.08
UAE DIRHAM	42.08	42.92
JAPANIS YEN	0.98	1.00



# ወጋገን ሞባይል ስልጠና ላንክ

ወጋገን ሞባይል መተግበሪያን ከጎግል ፕሌይ ወይም ከአፕ ስቶር በማውረድ አልያም \*866# በመጠቀም በማንኛውም ጊዜ እና ቦታ ሂሳብዎን በምችኑ ያንቀሳቅሱ።

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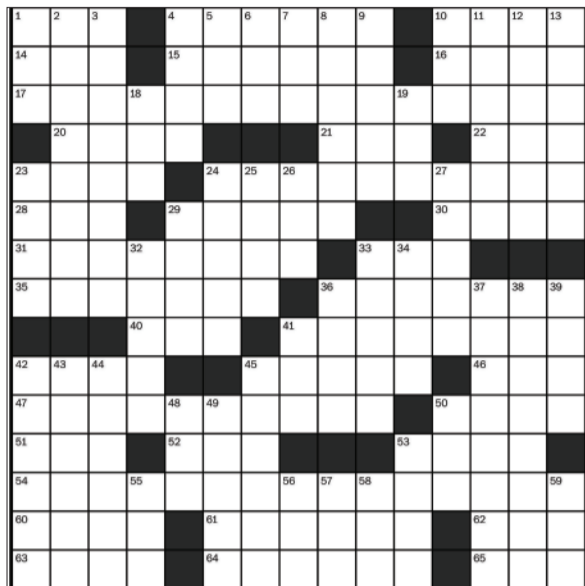


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# Entertainment

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE



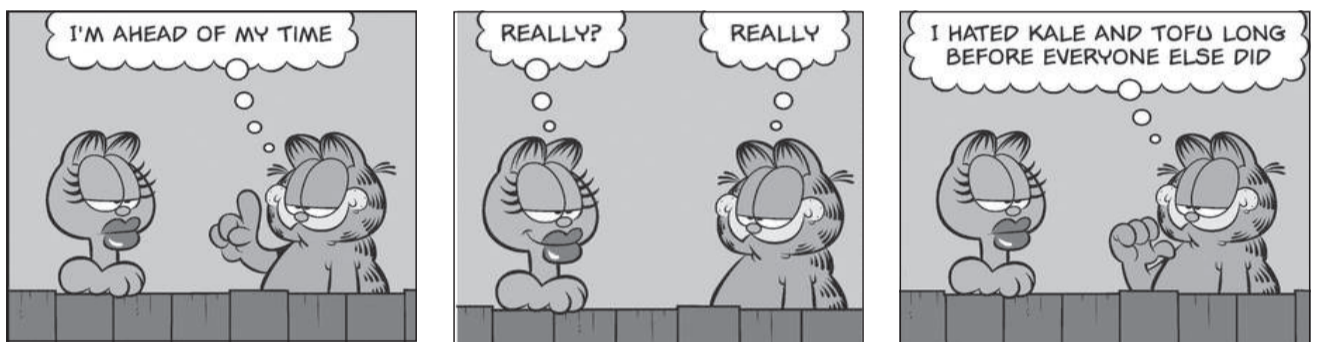
### ACROSS

- 1. Unaccounted-for period
- 4. Six-time WNBA All-Star Thomas
- 10. Textspeak qualifier
- 14. Timetable abbr.
- 15. Talked up
- 16. Lion's "I'm going to eat you!"
- 17. Encouragement to a writer who shows an early penchant for rhyme?
- 20. Singer Jason with the album "Love Is a Four Letter Word"
- 21. Core muscles
- 22. Ga. capital
- 23. Shadow
- 24. Carefully evaluate pasta?
- 28. Quartz suffix
- 29. Much sitar music
- 30. Actress Russo
- 31. Gardener who only plants the most exquisite ivy?
- 33. Pop duo \_\_\_ & Him
- 35. Scale intervals
- 36. Cry of frustration
- 40. Waze tech
- 41. Anthem for a Colorado ski resort?
- 42. Taylor, to Swifties
- 45. Actor Vaughn
- 46. Compass dir.
- 47. Weapon wielded by a particularly dangerous snake?
- 50. Punsutawney figure
- 51. Individual
- 52. Small battery
- 53. Experts
- 54. Safes made in the Volunteer State?
- 60. Lake into which the Cuyahoga empties
- 61. "A Real Pain" Oscar winner Culkin
- 62. Mama deer
- 63. Heap affection (on)
- 64. Has disdain for
- 65. 1975 TV debut, familiarly

### DOWN

- Down
- 1. Writer/editor Roxane who co-owns the online literary magazine *The Rumpus*
- 2. Like basmati rice
- 3. Appealing to one's baser nature
- 4. Encyclopedic in range
- 5. Reed of the Velvet Underground
- 6. Actor Brynner
- 7. Time zone wd.
- 8. Some cars
- 9. Vinegary marinade
- 10. Cholera
- 11. Spirits
- 12. Hurry
- 13. "... if you know what's good for you!"
- 18. Berkeley, familiarly
- 19. Brandy letters
- 23. DVR option
- 24. Wind instruments?
- 25. Big personalities
- 26. Word often seen under a tilde?
- 27. \_\_\_ code
- 29. Say "I'll be there," say
- 32. Old quarter back
- 33. Cake serving
- 34. In fine fettle
- 36. Kansas or Alabama
- 37. Climbers' supports
- 38. Demand
- 39. Neutrogena shampoo
- 41. Passing through
- 42. November sticker
- 43. Bread
- 44. "I can't wait to see what's inside!"
- 45. Pickle brand
- 48. "Hair Love" voice actress Issa
- 49. Soaks up the sun
- 50. Newark-based insurer, on stock tickers
- 53. Kitchen array
- 55. Once called
- 56. Job listing letters
- 57. Make a blunder
- 58. Many an airport shuttle
- 59. Salt, in French

Solution: see below



## WEEKLY HOROSCOPES



### Aries

There is a stressful energy at work. Don't get emotional if you have a confrontation with an aggressive, demanding, or critical person. It isn't a personal matter. Not everyone will agree, and you may be challenged. Continue expressing your opinions in a calm and direct way. Ignores rumors and office gossip. If you waver, you might be perceived as weak or ineffective. The last few days of the week are fortunate for seeking a new or better position.



### Cancer

You may prefer the comfort of a crowd this week. Enjoy adding input and opinions even if you don't take a lead position. Accept any leadership role if asked. Never hesitate to acknowledge when someone else is doing a good job. This builds goodwill and trust. Your mind is sharp. You can anticipate problems and see potential opportunities. Friday is an expansive day if you're looking for a new or better job.



### Libra

You have some strong opinions about how to do things. Positions of authority might be easier than working for others. You may feel pinned down by routines this week. If you can't find ways to break the monotony, at least bring interesting lunches or snacks you can share. Improving your working relationships can make even dull work easier to accept. Create or review a clear set of procedures and guidelines. The more organized you are, the better.



### Capricorn

Reach out and recognize anyone who is doing a good job. In stressful times, finding things to be positive about has a powerful effect. Midweek is a luckytime to interview for a new or better position. Your good memory and the ability to adapt can earn you well-deserved attention. Accept any opportunity for additional training. Week's end is a high-energy time. You're likely to be able to do work in half the time it takes someone else.



### Taurus

The energy this week supports positive relationships. You may be able to bring people together and seek workable compromise solutions. A stressful situation with co-workers will improve with a cooler attitude. Avoid taking on other people's duties. Focus on accomplishing the tasks at hand. You can give a sympathetic ear to someone going through a difficult situation. Other people's opinions will have a stronger impact at week's end. Seek a consensus when making decisions.



### Leo

This week you can be particularly practical and hardworking. Colleagues will depend upon your methodical approach. Success comes through patience and attention to detail. Stick to regular routines midweek. You're likely to work best alone. Participating in a large group can be distracting. The end of the week is positive for finding something better. Be as honest and direct as possible in all your dealings. Ignore office gossip. It's best not to make assumptions, especially those based on rumor.



### Scorpio

No matter how determined, hardworking, and talented you are, you simply can't be as successful working alone. It takes a team to accomplish big projects. Learning how to shine while working cooperatively is critical to your success. Look for ways to improve your work relationships. Your natural confidence can give others hope. It can also make you seem like the one who wants all the credit. Do your best to be an active part of a working group.



### Aquarius

You have good reason to feel proud of yourself. Put extra effort into your usual tasks. Cleaning your work area can also help you feel more inspired. Do your best to make things very neat and clean, with everything in its own specific place. Hardworking, flexible individuals who are able to stick to given tasks will have a great week. There is the potential for a work flirtation turning into something more. Be sure this is appropriate.



### Gemini

Remind yourself that it's lucky to have any job in the middle of a big financial crisis. Accept whatever you have to do with good humor. Your quickness and an alert intelligence make you a fast learner. Accept challenges this week. At the end of the week you may seek a new position or add extra duties to your busy schedule. You'll be happiest if you're working toward a position of power and influence.



### Virgo

Stay in close contact with customers or co-workers. Return calls and e-mails within 24 hours. It's a wise habit to set aside some time each day to get back to people. Even if you don't know the answer to a question or can't resolve an issue, staying in close communication supports your interests. Focus on easy projects in the afternoon this week. You'll be happiest in flexible situations where you can be freely creative.



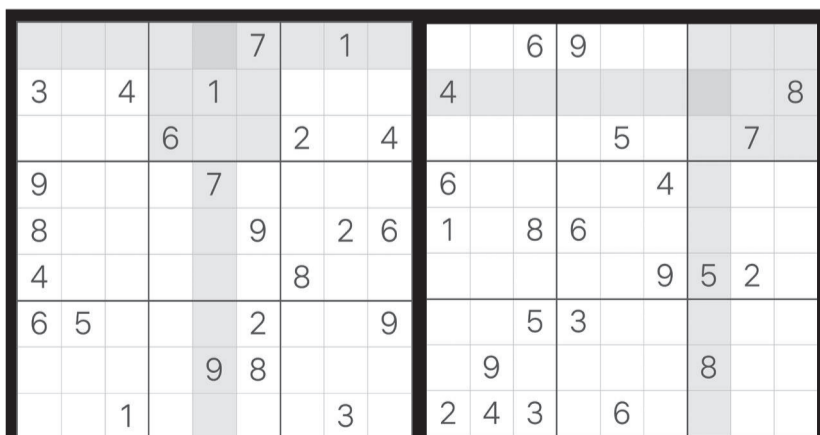
### Sagittarius

You may be doing a wonderful job, but no one is paying much attention. Be sure you aren't playing the martyr. It's important to balance work and play. It's also important to delegate, even if people aren't as skilled as you are. Focus on creating and nurturing positive business relationships. The more people who care about you and your concerns, the easier it will be for you to position yourself for success.



### Pisces

The energy is great for presenting your ideas and selling. Be confident and wear a winning smile. The busy days in the middle of the week are likely to be distracting. Expect to juggle multiple commitments. You'll need to be flexible and ready to accommodate last-minute changes. Dressing your best and wearing a big smile will help improve your attitude and bring positive interactions with staff and clients. Don't take criticism personally. Use it as a springboard for making improvements.



## Sudoku

The game is easy, the rules are simple. All you have to do is make sure you fill every 3x3 box every row and every column, without repetition, using the number 1-9.

## Word search



- MARGE GRAMPA
- LISA OTTO
- CARL
- BART SIDESHOW BOB
- PATTY CLETUS NELSON
- BARNEY WILLIE
- WILLIE APU
- MR BURNS SMITHERS
- HOMER SELMA
- SELMA KRUSTY
- NOE LENNY

## Crossword Solution



## Ethiopia Innovations and Growth Lead

### Farmers First

#### About One Acre Fund

Founded in 2006, One Acre Fund equips 5.5 million smallholder farmers to make their farms more productive. Across nine countries that together are home to two-thirds of Africa's farmers, we provide high-quality farm supplies, tree seedlings, accessible credit, modern agronomic training, and a wide range of other agricultural services. On average, this model enables any farmer to increase their income and assets on supported land by more than 35 percent, while permanently improving their resilience. This is all made possible by our team of 9,000+ full-time staff, drawn from diverse backgrounds and professions.

To learn more, please see our [Why Work Here](#) blog post.

One Acre Fund has been working with farmers in the Amhara region of Ethiopia since 2014, with a specific focus on trees since 2018. The Ethiopia program has now expanded into the South Region of Ethiopia in 2024. Our aim with the tree program is to provide not only short-term income opportunities but also long-term benefits, such as soil health improvements and erosion control, so that farmers build resilience over time.

#### About the Role

The Innovations & Growth Lead will be an essential part of our leadership team in one of One Acre Fund's fastest-growing country programs and report directly to the Country Director.

As an Innovations & Growth Lead, you will sit at the intersection of high-level strategy and "last-mile" delivery, shaping the strategy to plant **100 million trees and generate over \$100M additional impact for 440,000 Ethiopian farmers by 2030**. You will also pioneer the revenue models that will make our impact self-sustaining.

You will lead a high-performing team of innovators and M&E specialists to turn a 5-year vision into a rigorous "Learning Agenda": designing the field trials, mastering the data, and proving what works before we scale it to 440,000 households. You will ensure that every piece of data collected in the field informs our highest-level strategic decisions. If you are obsessed with evidence-based growth and love solving complex operational puzzles in the field, this is for you!

Success is measured by your ability to reach OAF Ethiopia's 2030 objectives. You will:

- **Support our network of 1,000+ nursery managers** by improving their production and finding new ways to generate income.
- **Engineer innovative, scalable solutions** to maximize income for every farmer reached, unlocking opportunities for youth and women.
- **Secure our seed supply** through large-scale adoption of the best varieties and partnerships like the Jimma Research Centre.
- **Define the next frontier and move beyond existing programs to identify "what's next."** You will lead the feasibility studies to transition OAF Ethiopia from a traditional NGO model to a revenue-generating organization. You will investigate the regulatory landscape and operational requirements, and research and test the most impactful agricultural practices, products, and services for our farmers.

In a single week, you could present our Learning Agenda to our Steerco, deciding which new programs (like **carbon credits** or **market access**) are ready for a pilot and which aren't yet viable. You would then work with the Tree innovation team to turn raw avocado trial data into a **"Go/No-Go" recommendation** for national expansion, before travelling to a remote nursery to troubleshoot a pilot in person, interviewing nursery managers to identify why **avocado grafting success rates** are lagging, and pivoting the training approach on the spot.

#### Responsibilities

- **Translate our strategy into action:** Lead multi-year impact strategies and translate them into specific field interventions across the organization.
- **Drive the "Learning Agenda":** Define annual critical questions. You will decide which new services or products enter our pipeline based on scale and ROI, then set SMART objectives. For example, explore the possibility of adding high-value trees.
- **End-to-End Trial Management:** Design multi-year impact models, oversee the full lifecycle of field trials, empower and coach the impact team to research and implement impactful activities, from hypothesis and budgeting to operational workflows and staff training to translating it into actionable recommendations.
- **Evidence-Based Decision Making:** Partner with our Monitoring & Evaluation teams to analyze trial data and drive "Go/No-Go"



recommendations for the Country Director.

- **Champion the professional evolution** of your direct reports, providing the coaching and clarity needed to turn high level organizational vision into rigorous, field-level results.

#### Career Growth and Development

We have a strong culture of constant learning, and we invest in developing our people. You'll have weekly check-ins with your manager, access to mentorship and training programs, and regular feedback on your performance. We hold career reviews every six months and set aside time to discuss your aspirations and career goals. You'll have the opportunity to shape a growing organization and build a rewarding long-term career.

#### Qualifications

Across all roles, these are **the general qualifications we look for**. For this role specifically, you will have:

- A proven track record with a minimum of 7 years of experience in managing complex projects or operations, or social enterprise programs in emerging markets, e.g., in agricultural innovation, extension, research & development, marketing, product development, consulting or MEL in agriculture, public health, or education (including 3+ years in one of our countries of operation).
- Experience identifying strategic gaps and designing "Learning Agendas" - knowing exactly which questions we need to answer through field trials before committing to a national-scale rollout.
- **Field-First Mindset:** Significant experience living and working in rural or "last-mile" settings, with a deep understanding of the associated operational challenges.
- **Experimental Design & "Piloting" Mindset:** Proven ability to design and execute field trials or pilot programs. You understand how to set up a "test vs. control" environment to see if a new intervention actually drives impact, you understand KPIs and success metrics and you have the judgment to adjust as needed when challenges come. **Evaluation Frameworks:** Analyze qualitative/quantitative field data, and turn raw results into a "Go/No-Go"
- recommendation for leadership. A plus if experience working with Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) teams to
- Farmers First
- design surveys.
- Experience managing large teams (5-10+ team members) and delivering projects successfully. English required, Amharic preferred.

#### Preferred Start Date

As soon as possible

#### Job Location

On-site in Addis Ababa or Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, with regular visits to our field areas of operations (around 35% of the time).

#### Benefits

Health insurance, housing, and comprehensive benefits

#### Eligibility

One Acre Fund can support a work permit for this role. However, nationals of (or those with an extensive professional background and work history in) our countries of operation are preferred.

#### Application Deadline

25 July 2026. Please note that we hire on a rolling basis which means that applications are reviewed and processed on a continuous basis until a hire is made.

One Acre Fund never asks candidates to pay any money or pay for tests at any stage of the interview process. Official One Acre Fund emails will always arrive from an [@oneacrefund.org](mailto:@oneacrefund.org) address. Please report any suspicious communication here ([globalhotline@oneacrefund.org](mailto:globalhotline@oneacrefund.org)), but do not send applications or application materials to this email address.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI), and anti-racism are deeply connected to our organization's mission and purpose. One Acre Fund aspires to build a culture where all staff feel consistently valued, represented, and connected – so that our team can thrive as professionals, and achieve exceptional impact for the farmers we serve.

We are committed to equal employment opportunity regardless of race, color, ancestry, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, gender, gender identity or expression. We are proud to be an equal opportunity workplace.



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 **great ethiopian run**



## سباق زايد الخيري

### ZAYED CHARITY RUN

Ethiopia May 2026

#### Running for Kindness: Addis Ababa Hosts the Zayed Charity Run Today

This morning, as the sun rises over Meskel Square, the streets of Addis Ababa are not just waking up - they are moving with purpose.

Today, Ethiopia hosts the globally renowned "Zayed Charity Run" for the very first time, marking a historic moment where sport, solidarity, and service converge in the heart of the capital.

Runners - elite athletes, invited guests, and influential figures - are gathering at the starting line of the 5km race, one that begins and ends at Meskel Square, but whose impact stretches far beyond the finish line.

#### Momentum Built Before Race Day

The significance of this moment was underscored just two days ago, during a press conference that brought together high-level officials from both Ethiopia and the United Arab Emirates.

Among those present were Mohammed Bella Al Kaabi, Chairman of the Higher Organizing Committee of the Zayed Charity Run, and Ahmed Sari Al Mazrouei, Secretary General of the Emirates Red Crescent. Representing Ethiopia was Mekiyu Mohammed, State Minister at the Ministry of Culture and Sports.

In their remarks, officials emphasized the race's dual mission: strengthening international friendship while delivering tangible support to critical healthcare services in Ethiopia. The event, they noted, is not just about athletic performance but about shared humanity.

#### High Stakes, Greater Purpose .... READY, SET, KINDNESS

Today's race participation is by invitation only - bringing together a selected group of runners that includes top athletes, business leaders, running enthusiasts and public figures.

The elite competition itself carries historic weight. Each winner receives 600,000 ETB, the highest prize ever awarded for a 5km race in Ethiopia.

But beyond the prize money, the race is driven by a deeper cause.

Under the banner "Run for Kindness", all proceeds and support generated from the event will go toward a vital institution: Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital, Cardiac Center.

#### A Global Legacy Meets Ethiopia

Since its launch in 2001, the Zayed Charity Run has grown into an international symbol of giving, making its mark in major cities such as Abu Dhabi, New York, Beijing, Miami, and Nairobi. Today, that legacy arrives in Ethiopia - a country synonymous with long-distance running excellence.

Yet the significance of today's race lies not only in Ethiopia's reputation as a "land of champions," but in what the event stands for: using sport as a force for compassion.

As runners take their marks this morning, the energy at Meskel Square reflects more than anticipation - it reflects purpose.

In a country where running has long been a source of pride, today offers a new dimension to that legacy. Not just racing for medals, but showing running is caring.

And as the starting signal echoes across the city, one message leads the way: Run for kindness.

Advertisement



## INVITATION TO BID

### SALE OF OBSOLETE FURNITURE AND SCRAP

**REF# P RO3 2 - 3 - 7 50- P M U/2 6 - 4 - 1**

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) invites interested bidders to participate in a closed bid exercise for the sale of obsolete furniture and scrap.

The bid items are to be sold "as is, where is" without recourse to warranties of any kind. Bid with some information will be available from **22 April 2026 – 12 May 2026** on UN working hours and days from Monday to Thursday morning time between **9:00 AM to 12:30 PM afternoon time 15:00 PM to 17:00PM and on Friday 9:00 AM to 13:00 PM.**

For any queries regarding this bid, please contact the Bid Officer, **Tel. 0115445163** extensions (35163).

Physical inspection will specifically take place on the following dates: **April 22, 24, 27, and 29; May 1, 4, 6, 8, and 11, from 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM.**

For physical inspection purpose, please contact Inventory Control Unit of ECA in person or through telephone 0115-443115 extensions (33115).

Interested bidders may collect the bid document from the Procurement Unit, in **Room no. NG.45.04** of its Secretariat Building (Niger) in the ECA compound at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, during working hours, starting from **22 April 2026 – 12 May 2026** on UN working hours and days from Monday to Thursday morning time between **9:00 AM to 12:30 PM afternoon time 15:00 PM to 17:00 PM** and on **Friday 9:00 AM to 13:00 PM.**

The **closing date** of the bid submission will be **on 12 May 2026 at 16:00 PM**, and the **opening** will be on **14 May 2026 at 10:00AM**. No Proposal shall be received after this **deadline**. Bidders should deposit **Birr 200** in United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UN ECA) account No.1000090977858 and collect bid document from Supply Chain Management Section Procurement unit 4th floor **Room No. NG.45.04.**

Bidders will be expected to submit a bid bond of **10% of the total bid amount** in the form of CPO as a guarantee to participate in closed bid exercise.

**The 10% Bid bond will not be returned** to the awarded bidder who failed to collect his/her award. Submission of bid on the basis of other bid is strictly prohibited.

**The Economic Commission for Africa reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received whenever such rejection is in the interest of the organization.**

# Capital **SPORT**

## Sawe makes history with first official sub-two-hour marathon in London

In a huge, once-inconceivable moment in sports history, Sawe smashed the men's world record by 65 seconds in winning the London Marathon in 1 hour, 59 minutes and 30 seconds on Sunday.

"What comes today is not for me alone," Sawe said of his extraordinary feat, "but for all of us today in London."

Remarkably, the second-place finisher, Yomif Kejelcha of Ethiopia, also dipped under 2 hours by crossing the line in 1:59:41 in his first-ever marathon, while Jacob Kiplimo of Uganda broke the previous world-record time — set by Kenya's Kelvin Kiptum in Chicago in 2023 — by seven seconds, finishing in 2:00:28.

The 29-year-old Sawe, who retained his title in London, said it was a "day to remember for me" and thanked the huge crowds who lined the streets of the British capital to cheer him on.

"I think they help a lot," he said, "because if it was not for them you don't feel like you are so loved ... with them calling, you feel so happy and strong."

In an exhilarating sight, Sawe ran quicker as the race went on, covering the second half of the marathon in 59 minutes and 1 second.

He pulled clear with Kejelcha after 30 kilometers and then made his solo break in the final two kilometers, sprinting



Sebastian Sawe

along the finish on The Mall to loud cheers.

Under two hours has been done before — unofficially

Breaking two hours in a marathon has been a long time coming — and has been done before.

However, when Eliud Kipchoge — the Kenyan long-distance great — achieved the feat in Vienna in 2019, it was in a specially tailored race called the 1.59 Challenge that was arranged by British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe in favourable conditions, on a 6-mile (9.6-kilometer) circuit, and using rotating pacemakers.

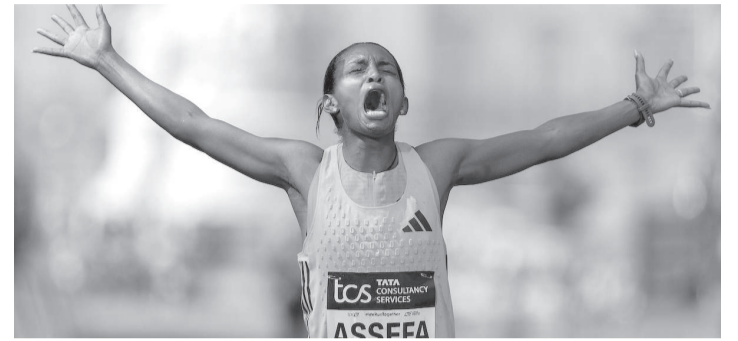
That meant it wasn't classed as an official race setting, so Kipchoge's time of 1:59:40 didn't go in the record book. In any case, Sawe surpassed that time by

10 seconds on a mostly flat course across London in dry, sunny conditions.

"The goalposts have literally just moved for marathon running," Paula Radcliffe, a former winner of the London Marathon, said during commentary of the race for the BBC.

At the turn of the century, the world's best time for the men's marathon was 2:05:42, set by Khalid Khannouchi in Chicago in 1999.

Khannouchi broke his own record by four seconds in 2002 — the last time the fastest men's marathon was run in London — and it has been whittled down gradually over the last 24 years by a succession of Kenyan and Ethiopian runners, including Haile Gebrselassie, Wilson Kipsang, Kipchoge and most recently Kiptum.



Tigist Assefa

## Tigist Assefa retains her London crown with another world record

Ethiopian sees off the challenge of Hellen Obiri to break her own women's-only marathon mark with 2:15:41.

On a truly historic day for distance running, Tigist Assefa emerged triumphant at the London Marathon on Sunday morning (April 26) for the second year in a row, breaking her own women's-only world record by nine seconds with a run of 2:15:41.

The Ethiopian's surge as she approached the final turn on to The Mall saw her win a fascinating battle with the Kenyan duo of Hellen Obiri, who clocked a big personal best of 2:15:53 on her London debut, and 2021 winner Joyciline Jepkosgei (2:15:55).

Assefa has never finished outside of the top two during her marathon career but, while there have been record-breaking highs, she has also missed out on major titles when the races have come down to a two-way battle. Sifan Hassan pipped her to the Olympic crown in Paris, for example, while Peres Jepchirchir beat her to the world title in Tokyo last summer by the finest of margins.

In London, Assefa had the fiercest of opposition to contend with once again. London debutant Obiri, two-time winner of Boston and New York marathons, has been a formidable force for many years and over many events. She has won a 3000m world title indoors, two world 5000m gold medals outdoors on the track, not to mention two Olympic silver medals and a world cross country victory for good measure.

Meanwhile, Jepkosgei's lowest London finish in her previous four attempts had been third and she possesses a marathon personal best of 2:14:00 from Valencia last December.

With Jepchirchir and Hassan both having withdrawn in the lead-up to London through injury, it was expected that the battle for honours would be waged between Assefa, Obiri and Jepkosgei — and so it proved. After the opening 15km, when only Kenya's Catherine Amanang'ole did her best to hang on to their speedy coat tails, it was that trio who surged away and set up a superb contest.

There was no secret to the fact that Assefa, the third-fastest woman in history with 2:11:53 from Berlin three years ago, was targeting her women's-only mark and the opening stages were fast. Very fast. The first 5km was covered in 15:39, and the second in 15:24 — at that point putting the leaders on schedule for a finishing time of 2:10:58. While that pace didn't last in the bright sunshine, the leaders were very much ahead of schedule as they hit the halfway point — the only slight barrier to their progress having come at the 20km drinks station when Obiri was almost sent tumbling by one of the pacemakers cutting in front of her to grab a bottle.

While they had planned to reach 13.1 miles in 67:30, instead they went through in 66:12 — meaning a projected time of 2:12:24. Was it too fast, though?

"I came into the race wanting to beat my own record and I knew it was in good shape, said Assefa. "I was aware that [early pace] was very fast but after that it slowed, I felt very good and I just concentrated on winning the race."

It was around mile 17 that the pacemakers stepped away and left the leading trio to it. Assefa seemed caught in two minds, looking around to double check on what her rivals were doing. Would she make the long break for home or hold on to rely on her well-known finishing speed? She decided on the latter, a move that represented a gamble given Obiri's impressive record when racing comes more down to strength of will and becomes about tactics rather than all-out speed.

Concentration levels seemed to have dipped somewhat at the 30km point, too, when Assefa chose not to pick up her drinks bottle, while Obiri and Jepkosgei weren't exactly smooth in collecting their fuel.

Obiri was the first to show her hand and decided to take charge, going to the front with around 6km to go and trying to force the pace, surging and testing her opponents as they went. Her final effort to break free came on Birdcage Walk, with around 800m left, but that push only took her fractionally clear and, as it turned out, Assefa was biding her time to strike.

"I just waited until my moment to push for the line," said Assefa and she did just that as she approaching that famous turn in front of Buckingham Palace. By the time she had rounded that bend she was free and clear — able to enjoy the closing metres and a hard-earned victory.

After Assefa's 2:15:50 in 2025 and Jepchirchir's win in 2:16:16 in 2024, it was the third successive year that the women's only mark had fallen in London.

Behind them, Ethiopia's Degitu Azimeraw was fourth with 2:19:13, while Amanang'ole finished fifth in 2:21:20 and Eunice Chebichii Chumba of Bahrain was sixth in 2:23:44.

Eilish McColgan was the first British athlete home, finishing in seventh place with a time of 2:24:51 that was 26 seconds outside of her Scottish record of 2:24:25 from 12 months ago.

World bronze medallist Julia Paternain, who runs for Uruguay and grew up in the UK, was eighth in 2:25:47, with Britain's Rose Harvey ninth in 2:26:14. Louise Small completed the British top three in 2:28:29 in 11th spot, with Jess Warner-Judd 12th in 2:29:28. (AW)

## Jimma hosts 3rd "Discover Ethiopia Classics" Race, championing sports tourism and polio eradication



The historic city of Jimma became a vibrant hub of athletics and public health advocacy on April 26, 2026, as it hosted the third stage of the "Discover Ethiopia Classics" race series. The event, which drew more than 4,000 participants, successfully blended the promotion of sports tourism with a critical, global mission: "END POLIO NOW."

Organized by the Great Ethiopian Run in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism, the race series aims to showcase Ethiopia's cultural heritage and beauty through athletics. Jimma, renowned as the birthplace of coffee, offered a unique backdrop for runners who traveled from across the country and ten different nations to compete.

The event featured 15km and 5km races, along with dedicated categories for children. While the 15km race attracted over 100 elite runners from Addis Ababa and beyond, the 5km event saw significant participation from local

fitness enthusiasts and families. Among those taking part was Jimma Mayor Taha Kedir, who joined thousands of citizens to highlight the city's commitment to healthy living and community engagement.

Beyond the competitive spirit, the race served as a major public health platform. Under the slogan "END POLIO NOW," organizers collaborated with Rotary Ethiopia, the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, the CORE Group, and national health authorities to urge parents to prioritize timely childhood immunization. The race functioned as a comprehensive educational campaign, mixing physical fitness with a vital message to protect children against polio.

The impact of the run began well before race day. Aligned with World Immunization Week (April 24–30), Jimma transformed into a hub of awareness on April 24 and 25.

The Jimma edition was made possible through the support of a wide range of partners, including Ethio Telecom, Telebirr, Pepsa, Dashen Bank, Midroc Horizon, Top Water, Haile Hotel and Resorts, and African Hospital. This event marks the third successful chapter of the six-city "Know Ethiopia Classics" tour, following earlier editions in Debre Berhan and Hawassa.

As the series gains momentum, organizers are already looking ahead to the next challenge. The "Discover Ethiopia Classics" tour will now head to the "Home of Champions," Bekoji, where the next stage is scheduled for May 24, 2026. The series continues its mission to spotlight host cities across the country, proving that Ethiopia's potential for sports tourism and social impact remains as vast as the terrain covered by its runners.



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