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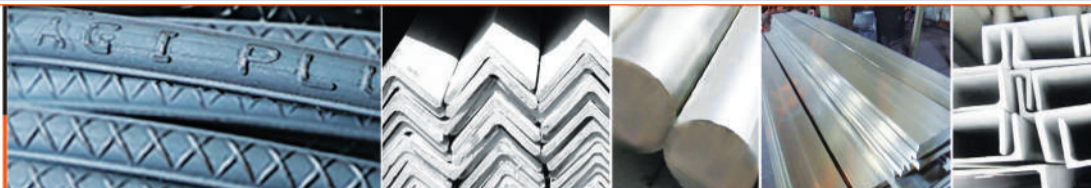
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Ethiopia expects birr stability in 2026/27 despite heavy FX pressures

By Muluken Yewondwossen

The Ministry of Finance projects the birr will stabilize in the upcoming 2026/27 fiscal year, despite a 15 percent depreciation against major foreign currencies over the past year.

During his federal budget presentation to Parliament last week, Finance Minister Ahmed

Shide forecasted a 9.8 percent overall economic growth for the coming fiscal year. This growth is expected to be driven by a 7.1 percent increase in agriculture, 11.6 percent in industry, and 8.5 percent in the services sector, with the economy maintaining strong momentum despite unforeseen global developments.

However, Ahmed acknowledged potential

challenges from the ongoing Middle East conflict, which has been factored into the government's budget planning.

Ethiopia is projected to import goods worth USD 25.8 billion in 2026/27, with fuel imports alone accounting for approximately USD 6 billion.

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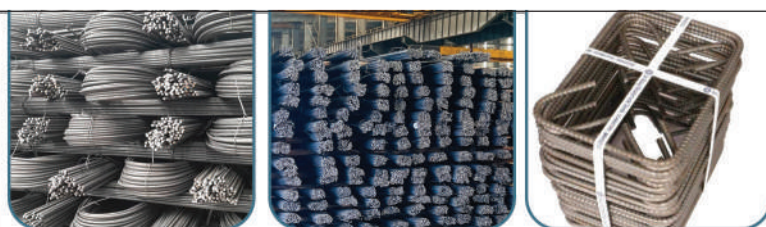
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South Africa's xenophobia crisis is a threat to Africa

South Africa's recurring attacks on foreign nationals are no longer just a domestic embarrassment; they are a continental wound. Each new wave of violence deepens mistrust across Africa, damages South Africa's standing as a regional power and leaves many Africans feeling hurt, angry and betrayed.

For years, South Africa has benefited from Africa's solidarity, labour, trade and political support. Migrants from across the continent have helped build businesses, filled labour gaps and strengthened informal economies in South African cities and townships. So when they are attacked, chased away from clinics, harassed in markets or targeted by vigilantes, the pain is felt far beyond South Africa's borders.

That is why many Africans are distancing themselves from the violence. They are not rejecting South Africans as people; they are rejecting the idea that a country born from the struggle against oppression can repeatedly turn its anger on other Africans. The contrast is painful. A nation that once inspired the continent is now too often associated with exclusion, abuse and silence.

The most troubling part is the state's response. South Africa's government often speaks the language of sovereignty, law and order, but too often allows anti-immigrant gangs and vigilante groups to set the tone on the ground. That is not governance. It is complicity by neglect.

When public officials meet these groups, allow them access to national platforms or fail to enforce court orders against unlawful conduct, they help legitimise them. That gives vigilantes the confidence to continue. It also tells victims that the state is hesitant to defend them. In that vacuum, violence becomes a political tool.

The crisis is not simply about border control or undocumented migration. It is about power, accountability and the rule of law. Xenophobia thrives when leaders find it useful, when local actors profit from exclusion and when police enforcement is selective. In South Africa, migrants are often used as scapegoats for unemployment, crime and service failures that are far more complex than hostile slogans suggest.

This is why the violence keeps returning. It is not random. It is organised, repeated and politically profitable. Some groups gain votes, some gain influence, others gain access to resources and protection. Meanwhile, ordinary migrants lose livelihoods, dignity and sometimes their lives.

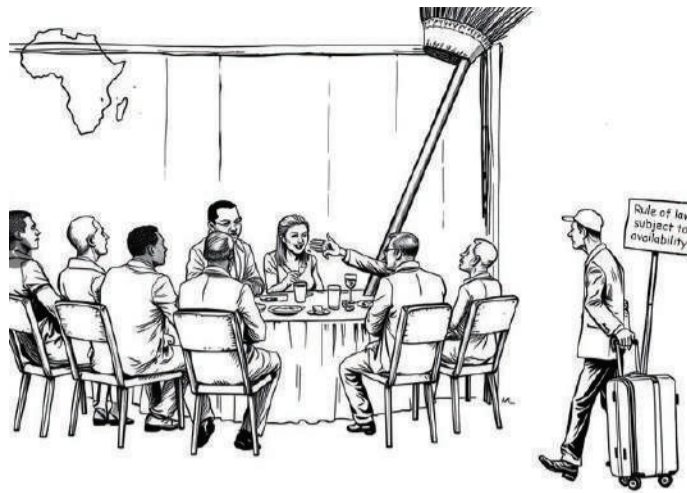
For the rest of Africa, the lesson is sobering. Continental unity cannot survive if African states tolerate attacks on Africans inside their own borders. The promises of integration, free movement and shared prosperity lose credibility when people are assaulted for looking foreign. Trade and diplomacy also suffer, because trust is the hidden currency of regional cooperation.

South Africa must do more than condemn xenophobia in speeches. It needs to prosecute perpetrators, dismantle the networks that organise exclusion and ensure that police protect everyone, not only citizens. It must stop rewarding groups that traffic in hate and enforce the law consistently, even when politically inconvenient.

It must also confront the deeper social problem: the willingness of some politicians and activists to turn desperation into hostility. That requires leadership, not slogans. It requires the state to defend constitutional democracy against those who want to replace it with mob justice.

Africans across the continent are watching closely. They are hurt because they know South Africa's violence is not only against migrants; it is against the idea of Africa itself. If the country wants to remain a respected regional power, it must prove that its laws are stronger than its mobs and that its democracy can still protect the vulnerable.

Without that, the crisis will keep spreading, and the damage will not stop at South Africa's borders.



By Greg Ardér

COMMENT

Xenophobic mobs set June 30 deadline, raising fears of the next July 2021 riots

On a dirty pavement outside Durban's Home Affairs Refugee Reception Centre, a huddle of terrified people is waiting for June 30, an ominous deadline that anti-illegal immigration groups have set for undocumented foreigners to leave South Africa.

The threat now hangs over the city after more than a week of xenophobic violence, public assaults and inflamed social media mobilisation.

Beyond the fear and chaos, the question more people are asking is: who is organising and financing a movement that analysts warn could push South Africa towards another July 2021?

The traumatised group of about 60 people encamped outside the Home Affairs centre on Che Guevara Road over the weekend cuts a stark contrast to the strutting bravado of the aggressive anti-foreigner demonstrators who terrorised parts of Durban.

Both groups represent the state's failure to deal with xenophobia.

The Che Guevara Road refugees say they are legal foreigners with papers to prove it, but are too scared to leave the makeshift roadside camp because of fears that thugs marauding through the city will attack them.

In the past week, their migratory story played out as they sought refuge at the Durban Central Police station, the Diakonia Centre (an inner-city hub for social and non-government agencies), and, finally, on the pavement in Che Guevara Road.

Their lives were turned upside down after a mob of xenophobes demanding their repatriation got the attention of eThekweni Mayor Cyril Xaba, who sent them to be verified at Home Affairs.

Victimisation

There, the city said, officials checked the papers of 457 foreign nationals, and only two people were found to be without proper documentation.

For Bishop Raphael Bahebwe, the number is a cruel validation of the victimisation foreigners suffer. Last week was a terrifying bang that ended in a bureaucratic whimper.

They were hauled out of their homes and workplaces by armed vigilantes, slapped around, beaten and interrogated.

Their workplaces were invaded and shut down, sometimes in the presence of the police, in incidents filmed and shared on social media.

Instead of demanding that the law be upheld, the provincial government and the eThekweni administration met March and March, an organisation that

appears to lead an informal coalition of demonstrators.

"I said to the police, 'Why don't you just take your uniform and give it to March and March and Dudula?'" Bahebwe told DM.

"They are the new South African police because the police don't do their jobs."

"Who are Dudula and March and March?"

"Who is Ngizwe Mchunu?"

Mchunu is a controversial radio personality and self-proclaimed Zulu chauvinist at the forefront of demonstrations against foreigners.

Bahebwe asked: "How is it that people can pull us out of our homes and our places of work?"

"How do they even know who a foreigner is?"

"Earlier this year, they confronted a policeman from Limpopo in Durban."

Bahebwe, a refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, is a permanent resident in South Africa. For him, the xenophobic demonstrations are witch hunts, giving cover to criminals and extortionists.

In response to the xenophobia, foreigners of various nationalities have banded together to help one another.

"The authorities must tell us what to do now," Bahebwe said.

"Victims of xenophobic attacks went to the police station individually when this first started happening the week before last."

"They told the police, 'We are legal, you must protect us.'"

"But the police never gave anyone case numbers. We were chased from the police station to Diakonia, and then here."

It has been a week of trauma, rubber bullets and tear gas.

Burundian refugee Jeanne Nahimana, in South Africa since 2003, spoke to Daily Maverick from her pavement bed at the weekend. Her only comfort over the past three days has been donations from Gift of the Givers.

"I had to leave my home in town this week. We are scared. We go to the toilet in the street. There is no water, and some people are sick."

"We don't know who's going to come and beat us"

Rebecca Furaha, from the DRC, left her job in Estcourt this week, immediately after politicians there started threatening foreigners.

"I was afraid, so I came to my family in Durban. We are still afraid. We don't

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◀ Managing Editor

Teguest Yilma
tegest@capitalethiopia.com

◀ Editor-in-chief

Groom Abate
groom@capitalethiopia.com
Addis Ababa, Yeka sub-city,
Wereda: 06 H. No. 514,
011 618 3253/011 661 0976

◀ Deputy Editor-in-chief

Muluken Yewondwossen
muluken@capitalethiopia.com

◀ Reporters

◀ Eyasu Zekarias
eyasu@capitalethiopia.com

◀ Graphics Designer

◀ By Capital

◀ Photographer

◀ Anteneh Akllilu
antenehak@capitalethiopia.com

◀ Sales Account Executive

Meseret Tsegaw
meseret@capitalethiopia.com

◀ Columnists

◀ Alazar K.
alazar@capitalethiopia.com

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Address: Addis Ababa, Bole Sub City, Wereda 1, House no. New

Mob: +251-944 73 23 00
+251-911 22 69 00

Tel: +251-11 618 32 53
+251-11 661 0976
+251-11 662 6958

E.mail: info@capitalethiopia.com
capitalethiopianewspaper@gmail.com

Website: www.capitalethiopia.com

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CAPITAL SUBSCRIPTION

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Government struggling to recover over 14 billion birr in misappropriated funds from past years

By Eyasu Zekarias

The Federal Office of the Auditor General (OFAG) announced that, out of a staggering 21.57 billion birr and an additional USD 23,200.43 identified for recovery due to illegal or irregular financial practices in past budget years, only 31 percent — approximately 6.61 billion birr — has been successfully recovered. This leaves more than 14.95 billion birr and the entire foreign currency amount unrecovered to date, underscoring what the audit report describes as a persistent culture of financial unaccountability.

OFAG recently presented its consolidated audit report for the 2017 Ethiopian fiscal year to the House of Peoples' Representatives, exposing severe delays and weaknesses in federal institutions. While a few entities, such as the Kombolcha Customs Branch Office and Arba Minch University, showed commendable corrective efforts by recovering 99 percent and 80 percent of their irregular payments respectively, major branches such as Kaliti, Modjo and Adama Customs lagged far behind.

Federal institutions also largely ignored directives to provide full documentation for unsupported expenditures. Out of 2.92 billion birr identified over the years as lacking supporting evidence, valid documentation was presented for only 1.8 percent, leaving nearly 2.87 billion birr completely unaccounted for.

In response to these persistent irregularities, the Ministry of Finance intervened during the budget year by imposing financial penalties and issuing stern written warnings to the top management of seven federal institutions that failed to implement laws and directives.

Beyond the outstanding arrears from previous years, the Auditor General's Office carried out extensive oversight work during the 2017 budget year. After revising its plan due to security concerns and institutional mergers, the office audited 1.51 trillion birr, achieving 99.53 percent of its annual target. The financial review showed some positive shifts: the number of institutions receiving an unqualified, or clean, audit opinion increased by 13.8 percent year on year, rising from 116 to 132.

In addition, no federal institution received a disclaimer of opinion due to a total breakdown in the accounting system. However, the report strongly criticized five major federal institutions that received adverse audit opinions because of material and pervasive irregularities in their financial reports. The detailed analysis of the 2017 budget year highlighted critical areas where public funds continue to be wasted due to systemic gaps, indicating that the government's revenue collection structure is burdened by a

massive accumulation of outstanding arrears.

A joint assessment conducted across 11 customs branches and 12 revenue branches exposed 6.85 billion birr in uncollected customs duties and tax debts, representing a sharp 65.11 percent increase compared with the previous year.

The Dire Dawa Revenue and Customs branches alone accounted for the largest share of this deficit, with billions in uncollected government revenue. Illegal tax practices and non-compliance with the Value Added Tax (VAT) law cost the government an additional 1.21 billion birr in potential revenue.

Furthermore, accumulated uncollected debts and receivables reached 16.32 billion birr across 138 institutions. Most alarmingly, 4.7 billion birr of this amount consists of outstanding arrears dating back more than a decade, with the Ministry of Health and Wachemo University emerging as the top debtors.

According to the report, illegal or unsupported expenditures rose sharply. Payments exceeding 1.18 billion birr were made across 42 institutions without adequate supporting evidence, while 35.8 million birr was recorded as expenditure with no documentation at all.


The Ministry of Health was specifically singled out for making 231.1 million birr in overpayments and duplicate payments, as well as wasting 122.1 million birr on court orders and tax penalties resulting from avoidable payment delays.

Explaining the situation to the House, Auditor General Meseret Damtie said public infrastructure projects continue to suffer from severe delays and weak contract enforcement. Advance payments of 571.1 million birr granted to contractors remain unrecovered, unsupported by active bank guarantees or unexpired, with Mekelle and Wollega universities facing high exposure in this regard.

"Worse still, 23 major construction projects valued at a total of 1.41 billion birr at Gambella, Salale and Bule Hora universities have ground to a complete halt due to severe breaches of contract," she said. She pointed out that operating outside standard procurement procedures and directives has severely drained the government's budget. The audit report noted that more than 1.25 billion birr was used in direct violation of the Procurement Proclamation. This includes 441 million birr in direct procurements that should have been handled through open bidding, and 194 million birr in procurements executed by bypassing the mandatory electronic Government Procurement (e-GP) system.

According to the report, although Ethiopia aimed to reduce the under-five mortality rate to 25 per 1,000 live births by 2030, recent survey data from 2024/25 shows that it has instead risen

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to 51. At Mughar Cement Factory, vital legal protections were bypassed, with performance guarantees not secured for 28 of 34 machinery procurement projects. All projects reportedly experienced delays of up to four years. Furthermore, the factory failed to provide any utilization records showing the whereabouts of more than 21,000 tons of cement produced between 2016 and 2017 E.C., and it has yet to collect 84.3 million birr in credit sales dating back to 2010. When presenting the report to the House regarding the Authority for Civil Society Organizations, the Auditor General said the regulatory body has failed to track the physical addresses of registered NGOs. Out of 5,000

active organizations, only 12 percent have registered their assets, and the tracking system relies entirely on manual paperwork rather than a digital database. As a major example, it was stated that a prominent organization imported duty-free goods worth 403.5 million birr from the Canadian government and then completely diverted the goods from their intended development purpose. In her briefing, Meseret Damtie urged the House of Peoples' Representatives to ensure strict legal accountability, calling on the relevant standing committees to question and hold failing institutional heads accountable in order to safeguard the nation's financial integrity.

Ahadu Bank secures high-rise building, launches AI-Powered banking apps

By our staff reporter

Ahadu Bank has secured a semi-finished high-rise building in the Mexico area of Addis Ababa, marking a major milestone for the young lender as it expands its presence in Ethiopia's banking sector. The bank also launched two new mobile applications — Ahadu Le Kulu for retail customers and Mahder for MSMEs — as part of its push into digital banking. Sources told Capital that the acquired property reportedly consists of two basement levels and 15 upper floors. Sources said Ahadu Bank emerged as the highest bidder in an auction conducted by Nib International Bank on May 21, 2026, and that the bid has since been accepted. The acquisition is expected to provide the bank with its own high-rise



headquarters and support its long-term growth ambitions. At the same time, Ahadu Bank unveiled Ahadu Le Kulu, a retail banking app developed entirely in-house by the bank's technology and software team. Board Chairman Anteneh Sebsibe said the app reflects the bank's motto, "From the Many to the Many," and is designed to bring a full range of banking services directly to customers' hands. He said the app allows users to self-register without visiting a branch, check account information, transfer funds, manage daily cash flow and make payments from anywhere at any time. A notable feature of the app is its artificial intelligence capability, which analyzes user behavior and displays frequently used services more

prominently on the dashboard. The app also generates weekly spending reports and financial analytics to help customers budget more effectively. Ahadu Bank said security was a core consideration in the design of the platform. The app was built in line with international cybersecurity standards and includes modern fraud-prevention systems intended to protect customer data and guard against cyber threats. Alongside the retail app, the bank also launched Mahder, a platform tailored for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. The app serves as both a digital vault and an operational tool, with an integrated digital cash book that helps business owners track sales, expenses and overall performance from their smartphones.



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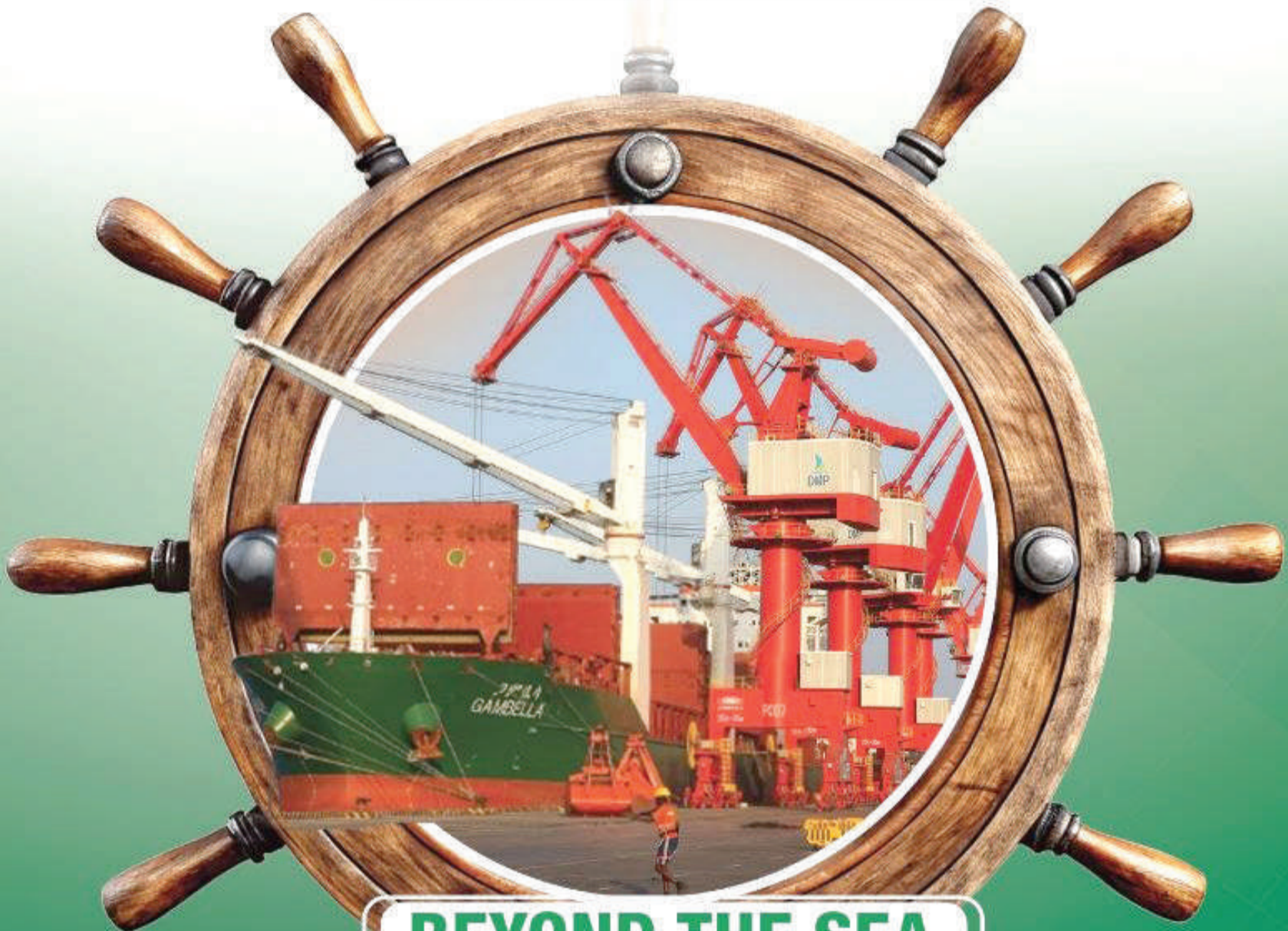
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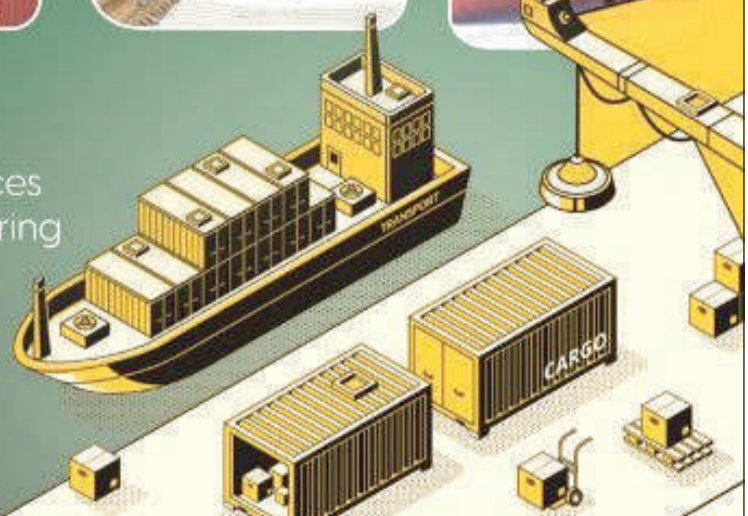
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Ethiopia expects birr . . .

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The minister attributed this higher fuel import bill to rising global energy prices, exacerbated by Middle Eastern tensions. "The impact of the conflict in the Middle East has been considered in our forecasts," Ahmed informed lawmakers.

The government will continue implementing measures to stabilize the foreign exchange market. Ongoing reforms are expected to strengthen the market and contribute to greater stability in the birr's exchange rate.

Despite official claims that the gap between the official and parallel foreign exchange markets has narrowed significantly, the birr has depreciated by at least 15 percent over the current fiscal year, based on average winning rates from National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE) foreign exchange auctions.

Officials maintain that monetary and macroeconomic policies under the government's reform agenda have reduced disparities between the formal and informal forex markets.

Since broad economic reforms began in July 2024, the government has introduced various measures to modernize foreign exchange administration. Recently, new directives have granted commercial banks greater authority to approve deferred import transactions for their customers.

Economists suggest these reforms, which decentralize foreign exchange decision-making from the central bank to commercial banks, could channel foreign currency transactions into formal financial systems and curb illegal market activities.

Experts also anticipate these measures will further reduce the gap between official and parallel

exchange rates. While some analysts estimate the parallel market premium remains above 15 percent, NBE officials indicate it has fallen below 11 percent.

Nevertheless, the parallel market has faced renewed pressure recently, particularly following escalating tensions in the Persian Gulf region, with exchange rates reportedly strengthening by as much as 3 percent.

The NBE is preparing additional legislation and amendments to foreign exchange directives to improve ease of doing business, expand access to foreign currency, and further narrow the gap between official and unofficial exchange rates. Ahmed stated that additional measures would be introduced in the new fiscal year, beginning July 8.

During the first ten months of the current fiscal year, Ethiopia allocated USD 18.4 billion for imports, an 18 percent increase year-on-year. Government officials cited Middle East developments as a primary driver for this surge in foreign exchange demand for imports.

For 2026/27, total imports are projected to reach USD 25.8 billion, with fuel imports alone expected to comprise USD 6 billion.

The proposed federal budget for the fiscal year totals 2.34 trillion birr, with an overall fiscal deficit projected at 2.36 percent of GDP. Excluding principal debt repayments of 214 billion birr, the deficit would decrease to approximately 1.4 percent of GDP.

The government plans to allocate 293 billion birr (approximately USD 1.8 billion), or 12.5 percent of the total proposed budget, to service external debt obligations. Authorities have previously secured

temporary external debt servicing relief and are nearing the final stages of negotiations to restructure these repayments.

Domestic debt servicing is projected to reach 249 billion birr, comprising 26 billion birr (11 percent) in principal repayments and 222 billion birr (89 percent) in interest payments. As part of its ongoing macroeconomic and foreign exchange reform agenda, the National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE) plans to establish an interdealer foreign exchange trading platform and further relax surrender requirements for commodity exporters.

The interbank foreign exchange market officially launched on January 28. It operates through a technology platform built on the infrastructure of the Ethiopian Securities Exchange (ESX), which includes a dedicated foreign exchange trading segment. This platform aims to enhance transparency, competitive pricing, and real-time transaction execution, though its performance to date remains unclear.

The central bank is currently developing a roadmap to deepen the interbank foreign exchange market. In line with commitments made to development partners, this roadmap will include creating an electronic interdealer trading platform that facilitates anonymous, real-time trading among major financial institutions.

This initiative is a key structural benchmark within Ethiopia's reform program, which began at the start of the 2024/25 fiscal year. The NBE aims to operationalize the platform during the first quarter of the 2026/27 fiscal year.

Officials believe a well-functioning

interbank market will improve banks' foreign exchange risk management capabilities and increase transparency. Efforts are also underway to upgrade settlement systems to enable domestic settlement of interbank foreign exchange transactions.

According to the latest IMF review, the NBE will develop new indicators and benchmarks to assess the progress of the foreign exchange market. These metrics will include the size and persistence of the parallel market premium, interbank trading volumes, unmet foreign exchange demand, and banks' net open positions.

These indicators will guide decisions on the gradual reduction and eventual elimination of surrender requirements by the end of the IMF-supported program, which is expected to continue for another 24 months.

The IMF review also notes that the NBE plans to relax rules governing exporters' use of foreign currency retained in foreign exchange accounts. These changes will provide exporters with greater flexibility to meet surrender obligations and capitalize on favorable exchange rates. Implementation is expected at the start of the new fiscal year.

Under Foreign Exchange Directive No. FXD/01/2024, issued on July 29, 2024, exporters were required to convert 50 percent of export proceeds into birr, retaining the remaining 50 percent in foreign currency accounts.

However, a significant amendment introduced on February 11 substantially altered this framework. Service exporters are now exempt from surrender requirements and may retain 100 percent of their foreign currency earnings indefinitely.

Exporters operating within Special Economic Zones (SEZs) are also entitled to full retention of export proceeds.

The revised Directive No. FXD/04/2026 represents one of the most comprehensive overhauls of Ethiopia's foreign exchange regime in decades, incorporating key recommendations under the IMF's Article VIII framework.

Major reforms include the elimination of long-standing exchange restrictions and the authorization for banks to issue internationally recognized foreign currency payment cards for retail and e-commerce transactions abroad. Foreign currency account holders now have expanded rights to directly cover education, medical, and travel expenses for immediate family members.

The minimum balance requirement of USD 100 to open a foreign currency savings account has also been abolished.

Furthermore, profit-making institutions are now permitted to open foreign currency accounts funded by grants and other non-export sources. Ethiopian nationals may also be allowed to make outbound investments on a case-by-case basis, subject to National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE) approval.

Collectively, these measures signify a substantial move toward a more market-oriented and flexible foreign exchange regime.

Directive No. FXD/05/2026, issued last month, further liberalizes the country's foreign exchange system by transferring the authority for approving deferred Letters of Credit (LCs) and Cash Against Documents (CAD) transactions from the NBE to commercial banks.

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Unpredictable policies and overnight legal changes cripple long-term business planning

By Eyasu Zekarias

Regional business leaders and chamber executives have issued a stark warning that a constantly changing and unpredictable legal and regulatory framework has made long-term business planning virtually impossible. They expressed deep concern over sudden policies introduced or amended overnight without consulting the business community. This approach is severely eroding confidence in the private sector and forcing enterprises to focus only on short-term exit strategies rather than strategic investment.

The primary threat to sustainable economic growth stems directly from this legal instability, which leaves both local businesses and potential foreign joint-venture investors unable to plan their future operations. According to corporate representatives, new proclamations and directives are frequently introduced or amended overnight, creating policy volatility that disrupts supply chains, destabilizes financial projections and halts capital projects.

These statements were made during a panel discussion themed “Private Sector Participation in the National Dialogue Process,” organized by the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations (ECCSA) in collaboration with the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission.

Speaking at the forum, Bogale Bitane, president of the South Ethiopia Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations, said a deep culture of fear has emerged, making business owners highly afraid to provide candid policy feedback to government bodies. “A business community that is afraid to express its views has been created,” he warned, explaining that traders are under dangerous structural pressure.

The president noted that under the current environment, laws are changing overnight, with new proclamations stamped and issued before stakeholders can even finish reading the previous ones. Consequently, foreign investors are shunning joint-venture opportunities. He urged the national chamber to move away from passivity and work actively and aggressively toward achieving a predictable legal environment.

The dialogue centered on the reality that the business community is often the first and worst casualty whenever regional conflict arises. According to participants, when conflicts break out, legitimate business establishments become the initial targets of looting, arson and property destruction long before any broader political fallout occurs.

Bogale detailed how business owners who had accumulated wealth and assets over decades — often using a 30/70 bank

loan structure — have watched their factories, heavy transport fleets and buildings completely destroyed overnight. This devastation has plunged former investors and factory owners into severe psychological and economic crisis, reducing them to poverty and forcing them to seek employment from their peers.

To counter this structural vulnerability, the South Ethiopia Chamber has proposed the urgent establishment of a Corporate Social Responsibility Fund for Peace. Managed by the business community, the fund would serve as a financial safety net to support traders impoverished by war, whom the conventional banking system is unwilling to assist.

For his part, Beriha Haftu, president of the Tigray Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations, echoed these concerns. Speaking on behalf of a region recovering from five years of devastating war, Beriha warned that the goals of the national dialogue cannot be achieved if some regional business communities still feel marginalized and excluded.

The financial data presented on post-war recovery was staggering. Beriha explained

that before the war, Commercial Bank loans held by business owners in Tigray stood at 32 billion birr. Due to accumulated interest, compound interest and penalties accrued during the years the region was completely cut off from the national economy, that figure has now risen to 89 billion birr.

“Even though we have been litigating this matter with the federal government and financial regulators for nearly three years, we have yet to receive any solution,” he said. “If we cannot resolve even the current, immediate and obvious post-war crisis, the idea that they will provide solutions to problems accumulated over eras feels discouraging.” He added that issues such as power outages, a lack of stimulus loans, and kidnappings and harassment by armed groups along transit routes are leaving northern business communities incapacitated and unable to contribute their share to national economic revival.

Reinforcing criticism of the government’s timelines, chamber representatives said that while the work currently being done by the National Dialogue Commission is vital, the process is far too late.

They argued that the commission is operating at a time when crises have already escalated to this level because the dialogue did not begin eight or ten years ago, before the problems erupted. Had such deep consultations taken place earlier, the country could have reached consensus from a position of economic strength.

Sector actors also challenged the misconception that peacebuilding is exclusively the responsibility of government security agencies. They strongly criticized views suggesting that business owners should mind their own business and stay out of peace efforts.

Aynalem Abayneh, vice president of ECCSA, said the private sector can play a major role in Ethiopia’s national dialogue process by representing economic interests, promoting stability and contributing practical solutions to national challenges.

“The Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations has a strong interest in supporting national dialogue outcomes that mitigate conflicts and strengthen predictability,” he said.

During the event, Ambaye Ogato noted that given the business

community’s broad membership and reach, it has the potential to serve as an ambassador for peace and unity, thereby strengthening public participation and ownership.

He explained that the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission, which has been operational for three years, developed 10 screening criteria to identify fundamental national issues, drawing from Article 6 of its establishing proclamation. Accordingly, the agendas have been divided into two categories: the first consists of core national issues to be discussed by the public at the national plenary, while the second includes grievances and inputs gathered from the woreda level upward regarding laws and policies that exist but have failed to be implemented by various stakeholders.

According to Ambaye, preparations have been completed to organize the gathered agendas and submit them to regional presidents, executive bodies and the Prime Minister. He said more than 4,000 delegates have been identified through the process, and consultations are scheduled to begin in Addis Ababa on July 14, 2026.

Less than 10% of direct funding: The structural inequality embedded in global philanthropy

By Eyasu Zekarias

Leaders and critics in the sector have warned that the global philanthropic system is facing a severe legitimacy crisis. They noted that the current global aid architecture places restrictions on Africa’s economic sovereignty and serves as a moral cover for worsening wealth inequality.

Leaders attending the 10th East Africa Philanthropy Conference in Addis Ababa highlighted this concern. According to them, less than 10 percent of global philanthropic funds flowing into Africa reaches African organizations directly. Instead, the vast majority of capital remains trapped within a complex web of intermediary organizations outside Africa, local branches of Western non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and global think tanks.

Critics argue that this structural exclusion has left African institutions as mere end users of capital rather than designers of their own development strategies. They contend that by routing most resources through Western intermediaries, NGOs and foreign thought leaders, the global philanthropic system dominates the narrative on African development and deliberately stifles radical or structural wealth redistribution

initiatives.

“Less than 10 percent of global philanthropic funds flowing to Africa reaches African organizations directly,” said Brian Kagoro, Managing Director of Programs at the Open Society Foundations. “The highest number of consultants and beneficiaries are not Africans. I accept that they love Africa; I accept that they employ Africans. But let’s face reality. In this new era, localization without sovereignty is merely an exercise in sanitized colonialism.”

Kagoro warned that unless African philanthropic organizations move beyond merely managing poverty and transition toward building structural economic systems, they risk becoming complicit in the exploitation of the continent. “Philanthropy in Africa should not view itself merely as an aid sector; rather, it must be a platform to discuss continental security in an era where others want to contract us, exploit us and build neo-colonies,” Kagoro said. “If this platform does not change, and if we continue to only talk about how to make what we do more effective, we will become highly potent agents for the recolonization of Africa.” Echoing criticism of frameworks imposed by the West, Evans Okinyi, CEO of the East African

Philanthropy Network (EAPN), also pointed out that the legal and policy infrastructures governing philanthropy in many African countries remain deeply rooted in colonial-era mindsets.

Modern legal frameworks often force organizations into rigid categories — for-profit, non-profit or government — which ignores traditional and fluid African socioeconomic structures where communities blend business with social mutual aid.

Okinyi emphasized that changing this trajectory requires a fundamental psychological shift away from short-term emergency interventions toward long-term, sustainable infrastructure.

“This is a matter of mindset; it is a mindset challenge,” Okinyi said in an interview on the sidelines of the conference. “Many of the Western concepts we adopt on this continent are about short-term gains.

But the challenges we face on this continent are long-term challenges. Therefore, the solutions put into practice must incorporate long-term strategies.”

“We are out of the colonial era, but when we talk about inherited concepts, inherited frameworks and inherited tools from the Global North, colonialism is at work right there,” Okinyi said.

“To break free from those chains, to change the narratives, to build our own frameworks, we must understand and appreciate that Africans have always been donors and philanthropists since ancient times.”

Kagoro warned that when domestic philanthropy remains weak, governments turn more toward private international creditors. While this approach creates cheap money in the short term, it ultimately increases national debt burdens significantly, thereby shifting the weight of interest rates back onto the low-income households that philanthropic organizations claim to help.

Rather than accepting a system where global elites gain legitimacy by supporting basic needs such as water and primary education, Kagoro called on African leaders to focus on capital creation, asset protection and growth. Pointing out that the African diaspora sends more than \$100 billion back to the continent annually — a massive accumulation of capital — Kagoro said governments have failed to properly use these funds for structural economic transformation by linking them to technology, micro-processing or agricultural infrastructure development.

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Africa's cash dependency is choking growth, report warns

By our staff reporter

A new Africa-focused report says the continent's heavy reliance on cash is holding back financial inclusion, small business growth and government revenue, even though Africa has already built some of the world's most advanced digital payment infrastructure. The report argues that the problem is not technology itself, but the incentives and institutions that still make cash the most practical choice for millions of people.

The report, *The State of Cash Dependency and Digital Financial Inclusion in Africa*, says Africa's digital rails have expanded far beyond bank branches, yet cash remains the default for buying food, paying rent, settling debts and running

informal businesses. It says this gap is most visible among street vendors, migrant workers and small traders, for whom cash is still cheaper, faster and more reliable than digital alternatives. According to the report, over 90 percent of mobile money value is still withdrawn as cash at the point of receipt rather than staying in the digital system. It says this "cash-in/cash-out" pattern limits the usefulness of digital finance because people may receive money digitally but still revert to cash for daily transactions.

The report also says cash dependency has serious economic consequences. When transactions do not leave a digital record, lenders cannot properly assess creditworthiness, which makes it harder for small

and medium-sized enterprises to access finance. It adds that governments lose visibility over large parts of the economy, weakening tax collection and limiting the resources available for public services.

One of the report's central findings is that Africa's financial challenge is not lack of access alone, but the failure of digital systems to outperform cash at the level of everyday decisions. It says many merchants still prefer cash because accepting digital payments can involve fees, while consumers keep cash because merchants often require it. The result, the report says, is a self-reinforcing cycle that keeps cash dominant.

The study identifies several barriers to change, including fragmented regulation across

African countries, weak interoperability, identity and documentation gaps, unreliable agent liquidity and low trust in digital finance. It says these problems are not evenly distributed, and that policy responses must differ from one country to another depending on how advanced its payment systems already are.

The report calls for three major shifts: making digital payments cheaper than cash for merchants, mandating real-time interoperability across providers, and building stronger financial products such as credit, savings and insurance on top of payment rails. It also urges governments to digitize public payments, modernize digital identity systems and support the regulatory environment needed

for broader adoption.

The report groups African markets into three broad categories: catalytic markets such as Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana and South Africa; tipping-point markets including Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo; and nascent markets where basic connectivity, identity systems and institutional trust remain the main constraints. Its broader conclusion is that Africa does not need to start from scratch. The infrastructure, innovation and entrepreneurial capacity already exist, but stronger governance, better incentives and coordinated policy are needed to make digital finance the norm rather than the exception.

Africa's cash trap is holding back digital finance

By our staff reporter

Africa's heavy dependence on cash is slowing financial inclusion, business growth and public revenue, according to a new report that says the continent already has much of the digital infrastructure it needs to move beyond physical money. The report argues that the real barrier is not technology, but the incentives and institutions that still make cash the easiest option for millions of people.

The report, *The State of Cash Dependency and Digital Financial Inclusion in Africa*, says Africa has spent decades building payment systems that reach far beyond bank branches, yet cash remains the default for street vendors, migrant workers and informal traders. It says digital finance has expanded access, but has not yet become more useful than cash in everyday transactions.

A central finding is that more than 90 percent of mobile money value is still cashed out at the point of receipt rather than left in the system. That pattern, the report says, limits the ability of digital finance to create transaction records, extend credit, strengthen savings and reduce the cost of remittances.

The report says the economic cost is significant. When transactions are not recorded digitally, lenders cannot properly assess creditworthiness, which makes it harder for small and medium-sized enterprises to get financing. It also says governments lose visibility over large parts of

the economy, weakening tax collection and reducing the resources available for public services.

The study estimates that Africa's SME financing gap stands at about USD 330 billion a year, while around 85 percent of African workers remain in informal employment. It also says the average cost of sending money to sub-Saharan Africa is 8.7 percent, far above the UN target of 3 percent, creating what it describes as an "annual remittance tax" of about USD 8 billion.

The report is especially

critical of the "cash-in/cash-out trap," in which people receive money digitally but immediately convert it into cash because merchants, agents and systems still do not reward them for staying digital. It says merchant acceptance remains low, agent liquidity is unreliable in some markets and mobile money providers often have limited ability to offer savings, credit and insurance products.

The report also divides African markets into three broad categories. Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana and South Africa are described as catalytic markets

where the challenge is now depth rather than access. Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo are identified as tipping-point markets where digital identity, interoperability and better regulation could accelerate adoption. Fragile and conflict-affected states are described as nascent markets where basic connectivity and trust remain the biggest obstacles.

To break cash dependency, the report recommends making digital payments cheaper than cash for merchants, mandating interoperability across payment

systems, and creating stronger financial products on top of payment rails. It also calls on governments to digitize public payments, modernize digital identity systems and build regulatory frameworks that encourage innovation while protecting consumers.

The report concludes that Africa does not need to start from scratch. The infrastructure, talent and innovation already exist, but stronger governance and better incentives are needed to make digital finance the norm rather than the exception.

World Energy report says Africa's transition is gaining ground but still faces major strains

By our staff reporter

The global energy transition has lost momentum, and Africa is improving from a low base while still facing major structural constraints, according to the World Economic Forum's *Energy Transition Index 2026*. The report says Sub-Saharan Africa is making progress in access, affordability and readiness, but the region remains held back by underinvestment, weak infrastructure and uneven policy support.

The index shows that global transition progress has stalled, with the overall score broadly unchanged in 2026 after a modest rebound the previous year. While energy system performance improved slightly,

transition readiness fell for the first time in more than a decade, reflecting weakening conditions for future investment and implementation.

For Sub-Saharan Africa, the report says the region continues to build momentum from a low starting point, especially in electrification and policy progress. But it also warns that the transition remains uneven and vulnerable to financing gaps, access challenges and weak infrastructure.

The report places strong emphasis on the importance of readiness — the policy, financial, human capital and infrastructure conditions needed to sustain energy transformation. It says weaker financing conditions and policy uncertainty are making it harder

to turn ambition into delivery, even as clean energy investment reaches record levels globally.

Africa's performance is viewed in the context of a wider global shift toward energy security. The report says geopolitical shocks, supply chain concentration and rising electricity demand are reshaping energy strategies worldwide, with countries now focusing more on resilience, affordability and domestic capability.

At the regional level, the report says Sub-Saharan Africa has benefited from gradual improvements in regulation and energy access, but the pace is still too slow to close gaps by 2030. It also notes that the region's energy transition is being shaped by its strong sustainability profile and

its need to expand access for millions still outside the grid.

The index highlights that Africa's challenge is not only one of generation capacity, but also of financing, grid development and the ability to support industrial growth. It says countries that strengthen institutions, mobilize capital and improve delivery systems will be best positioned to advance their energy transitions. The report's broader message is that the next phase of the transition will be determined less by technology alone and more by governance, investment and execution. For Africa, that means turning progress in access and affordability into a more stable and resilient energy future.

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Ethiopian Nuclear Energy Commission

Invitation for International Competitive Bids

Country: Ethiopia

Name of Purchaser: ETHIOPIAN NUCLEAR ENERGY COMMISSION (ENEC)

Contract Title: Design, Production, and Installation of a Permanent VVER-1200 Reactor Multimedia Museum Exhibit

RFB Reference No.: ENEC/ICB/2025/VVER-1200-EXHIBIT

1. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ethiopian Nuclear Energy Commission (ENEC) now invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for the Design, Production, and Installation of a Permanent VVER-1200 Reactor Multimedia Museum Exhibit.

2. Major Evaluation Requirement includes:

- a) Demonstrated experience with large-format, curved LED multimedia exhibits 35%
- b) Quality and relevance of past public museum or industrial installations30%
- c) Technical understanding and proposed approach (Capability Statement)20%
- d) Financial and operational capacity15%

3. Bidding will be conducted through International Competitive procurement using a Request for Bids (RFB) as specified in the Ethiopian "Procurement Regulations" and is open to all eligible bidders/service providers as defined in the Procurement Regulations.

4. Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from Ethiopian Nuclear Energy Commission (ENEC), from the date of bid advertisement through an Email address: Enec.et2026@gmail.com and Anteneh.tesfaye@enec.gov.et and inspect the bidding document during office hours from 8:30AM-12:30PM and 1:30- 5:00 PM local time from Monday to Friday before the deadline date and time.

5. The bidding document in English language may be freely accessed by interested eligible bidders/service providers upon submission of a written application/request to the email addresses indicated below (email should be sent for both addresses indicated below). Once email request has been sent to the designated email addresses, the softcopy/ PDF format bidding document will be sent to the requester. To facilitate further communication and correspondence, the bidder should indicate the name of the company, contact/focal person, telephone number, workable email address and relevant information on his/her request email.

6. Bids must be delivered to the address below on or before July 21 2026 10:00 A.M Local Time (Addis Ababa Time). Electronic procurement will not be permitted. Late Bids will be rejected. The outer Proposal envelopes marked "ORIGINAL BID", and the inner envelopes marked "TECHNICAL PART" and "FINANCIAL PART" will be publicly opened in the presence of the Bidders'/Service Provider designated representatives and anyone who chooses to attend, at the address below on **July 21 2026 at 10:30 A.M** Local Time (Addis Ababa Time).

7. All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security of **ETB 500,000.00 /ETB Five Hundred Thousand/ or USD 3,250.00 /USD Three Thousand Two Hundred Fifty/** or equivalent amount in a freely convertible currency in the form of Bank guarantee issued from Commercial Banks. In the case of Bank guarantees issued from other countries other than Ethiopian Banks, the bid security should be counter guaranteed by Ethiopian Commercial Banks.

8. Attention is drawn to the Procurement Regulations requiring the Borrower to disclose information on the successful bidder's beneficial ownership, as part of the Contract Award Notice, using the Beneficial Ownership Disclosure Form as included in the bidding document.

9. The address(es) referred to above is (are):

Ethiopian Nuclear Energy Commission
Att. Dr Anteneh Tesfaye
Director, Corporate administration Cell phone:+251926322829
Kirkos sub city, wolosefer Ethio-china street,
HQ building (INSA Compound);
Ethiopian Nuclear Energy Commission
Postal Code - 1CplAW.
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Email: Enec.et2026@gmail.com or Anteneh.tesfaye@enec.gov.et
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR

REHABILITATION/RECONSTRUCTION OF WASH FACILITIES FOR 8 SCHOOLS IN THE TIGRAY REGION

LRFP-2026-9204518

Topic- UNICEF (Ethiopia) wishes to request eligible bidders to participate in a Request for Proposal (LRFP) for **Rehabilitation/Reconstruction of Wash Facilities For 8 Schools in The Tigray Region**

Details of this bid's requirements and eligibility criteria can be found in the bid document.

Interested and eligible bidders can get the bid document with the below links;

2merkato.com <https://tender.2merkato.com/tenders/6a324eb30a538a5d9c00001>

Any query or clarification regarding this bid shall be sent through an email to

eth-supplyQAconstruction@unicef.org before or on 11:00AM on 3 July 2026. There will be a pre-bid meeting on 24 June 2026 @ 3:00 PM. Bid clarification will be communicated on the same website at 2merkato.com to the public. While sending your request for clarification, please ensure that you specify the RFP number in the subject of your email, and provide the name of your company and contact person.

The due date for submission of proposals/Bids to the UNICEF Addis Ababa Office is on or before 11:59 PM (East African Time) on 07 July 2026. Please read the LRFP for detailed requirements and due dates.

Please quote the respective RFP (request for proposal) number together with the Project title:

Rehabilitation/RECONSTRUCTION OF WASH FACILITIES FOR 8 SCHOOLS IN THE TIGRAY REGION

Submission of bids should be done as per the below requirements.

a) Technical bid submission should be with a separate email from the Financial bid submission

b) RFP reference and whether Technical or Financial submission should be indicated on the Subject of the email.

c) ONLY email submissions are acceptable.

d) To reduce the risk of late delivery emails should be sent in good time before the deadline of the bid submission.



UNHCR
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés

TENDER NOTICE

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Representation Office in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, invites qualified and registered Suppliers to participate in the following tender:

| SN | Tender Subject | Closing Date |
|----|---|------------------------|
| 1 | Request for Quotation ETH-UNHCR RFQ 3074 - For Consultancy for Legal Analysis and Due Diligence on Refugee Occupancy Rights, Housing, and Land Use Rights in Kebribeyah. | 10 July 2026, 05:59 PM |

Interested suppliers can Visit the following portal:

How to become a supplier | UNHCR: please read on this link <https://www.unhcr.org/get-involved/work-us/become-supplier/how-become-supplier>

UNHCR encourages companies to also register on the online United Nations Global Marketplace (UNGM) to receive announcements only. This portal may not be used by vendors for submitting offers.

Announcement for those Tenders are available on **UNGM on this link <https://www.ungm.org/Public/Notice/304282>**

Companies interested in engaging with UNHCR for business opportunities and tender processes are invited to register on the **UNHCR Supplier registration portal, please use this link to access the portal (<https://bit.ly/482Fqam>).**

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 and we will publish it.

PHOTO: Anteneh Aklilu

IFAD scales up sustainable bond programme to boost rural investment, with strong issuance and credit rating upgrade

A new report reveals that 2025 was a strong year for the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)'s sustainable bond programme, which issued an additional US\$340 million in bonds that are channeling private investments into long-term rural transformation around the world. Strong investor demand for IFAD bonds enabled the Fund to meet its 2025 borrowing targets ahead of schedule.

Between 2022 and 2025, IFAD has issued a total of US\$985 million in sustainable bonds that are financing projects expected to reach more than 26 million rural people across 29 countries within the next decade, according to the Fund's 2025 Impact Report released today.

The projects funded by IFAD sustainable bonds span a wide range of investments that are strengthening rural populations' access to markets, restoring and maintaining natural resources, developing inclusive rural finance, creating an enabling environment for rural development through policy and institutional support, improving agricultural production and mitigating post-harvest losses.

Zafiri announces USD 176 million commercial launch to accelerate energy access via the private sector across sub-Saharan Africa

At the Africa Energy Forum in Cape Town, South Africa, Inspired Evolution announced the USD 176 million commercial launch of Zafiri, a blended permanent-capital vehicle focused on expanding access to electricity for tens of millions of people across sub-Saharan Africa.

Inspired Evolution, a leading African climate investment firm, was mandated by the investors to be the investment manager of Zafiri. Founding shareholders include IFC, a member of the World Bank Group; the African Development Bank Group (AfDB), including its Sustainable Energy Fund for Africa (SEFA); The Rockefeller Foundation; Trade and Development Bank Group (TDB Group); Nordic Development Fund (NDF); the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; and FirstRand Limited.

This launch underscores Zafiri's role of investing in and supporting the private sector as part of Mission 300, a joint initiative co-led by the World Bank Group and the African Development Bank Group, with support from The Rockefeller Foundation, Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet, and Sustainable Energy for All, to expand electricity access to 300 million people in sub-Saharan Africa by 2030. Zafiri will spur job creation, help connect more businesses to power, and put electricity to productive use that drives local economic activity.

ECA to host mid-year review to strengthen joint delivery and UN@80 reforms

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is scheduled to hold its Second Quarter Accountability and Programme Performance Review Meeting (APPRM) at the United Nations Conference Centre in Addis Ababa from June 17 to 19.

The event, themed "Enhancing Joint Delivery for Improved Results after UN@80 Reforms: A Mid-Year Review," will bring together ECA's leadership, programme managers, and partners to evaluate progress toward the Commission's 2026 Annual Business Plan targets.

During the APPRM, participants will focus on advancements in ECA's subprogrammes and support divisions, with particular emphasis on collaborative efforts across four key thematic areas: the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), Regional Value Chains, Technology and Digital Transformation, and Macroeconomic Policy and Planning. The meeting will also examine resource mobilization and implementation challenges to pinpoint areas that need acceleration or modification.

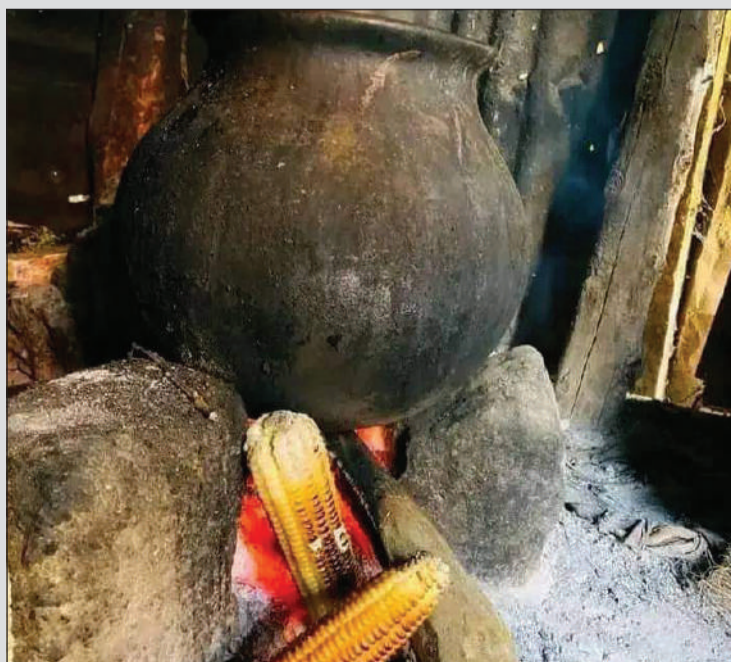
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MEN AT WORK



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70% of Ethiopian households do not purchase toothpaste, new Worldpanel by Numerator data shows

New data from Worldpanel by Numerator suggests that oral hygiene products are not part of the regular shopping habits of many Ethiopian households, with around seven in ten households not purchasing toothpaste in the past year.

The findings point to a significant gap in the adoption of one of the most widely recommended preventive oral health practices: regular toothbrushing with fluoride toothpaste.

Across much of Africa, toothpaste is a staple household product and category penetration typically exceeds 95%. Ethiopia stands apart, with the majority of households not participating in the category at all. The data suggests that the challenge is not simply one of low consumption, but of limited adoption. Many households continue to rely on traditional oral care methods such as chewing sticks and miswak, while factors including affordability pressures, limited product availability in some areas and lower awareness of preventive oral healthcare may also contribute to low toothpaste usage.

Ethiopia Launches Groundbreaking "Makatet Roadmap", Ushering in an Era of Refugee Inclusion

The Government of Ethiopia has officially launched the Makatet Roadmap in Addis Ababa, marking a historic turning point in its approach to refugee protection.

Developed through an intense, nationally driven process involving federal and regional institutions, development partners, UN agencies, civil society and refugee representatives, this comprehensive framework established a unified blueprint for the socio-economic inclusion of refugees while significantly benefiting their gracious host communities. By shifting from temporary humanitarian relief to sustainable, government-led development planning, the roadmap set out to transform existing camp structures into cohesive, self-sustaining human settlements integrated with national service delivery systems.

The high-level gathering at the Adwa Museum served as a national platform to present the finalized multisectoral framework and secure collective investment for its operational phase. The framework has officially been launched by Ethiopia's Honorable Speaker of the HPRs Ato Tadesse Chaffo and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, culminating in a cultural performance refugee youth group.

The Director General of Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) Madam Teyiba Hassen welcomed dignitaries at the ceremony by highlighting the operational shift towards inclusion, noting that the roadmap bridges the gap between the refugee operation and humanitarian landscapes.

KEFI subsidiary names CBE Capital to advise on Gold-Linked preference share issue

KEFI Gold and Copper Plc has announced that its subsidiary, KME Minerals (Ethiopia) Holding S.C., has appointed CBE Capital Investment Bank as adviser for a proposed issuance of U.S. dollar-denominated, gold-linked preference shares aimed at selected financial institutions in Ethiopia.

The announcement was made at the Ethio-British Business Investment Forum in London. According to the company, the proposed instrument — dubbed "Gold Preference Shares" — is intended to support growth in Ethiopia's gold and critical minerals sector while also strengthening ties with major Ethiopian financial institutions.

KEFI said the preference shares would be redeemable at the end of an eight-year term and would carry an annual 15 percent coupon. Investors would also receive an additional return if the gold price received by KEFI exceeds the price prevailing at the time of issuance.

The company said the proceeds are expected to support expansion opportunities and future growth initiatives, with no dilution for shareholders at the listed parent company level.

For climate finance to reach the ground in Africa, national and local governments must work together

As the world faces a growing climate finance gap, Africa is no exception. The continent requires an estimated USD 155 billion annually to meet its climate and development goals, yet only around USD 30 billion is currently mobilised each year. The question is no longer whether more finance is needed, but how to ensure it reaches the cities, regions and communities on the frontlines of climate action.

To address this challenge, national and subnational leaders convened during the 2026 Clean Air Transport Finance Academy for the high-level dialogue, "Unlocking Subnational Climate Finance in Africa: From Barriers to Scalable Solutions," co-hosted by the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy (GCoM) and C40 Cities in partnership with the World Resources Institute (WRI), to explore how stronger partnerships between national and local governments can help unlock climate finance and accelerate action where it is needed most.

Closing this gap will require not only greater volumes of finance, but also stronger mechanisms that enable subnational governments to access, manage and deploy affordable climate finance that drives climate action implementation at scale. Local leaders are responsible for delivering many of the infrastructure, resilience and development investments needed to achieve national climate goals. Yet they often face significant barriers, including limited access to financing, fragmented institutional arrangements, and regulatory constraints that restrict investment flows.

(Press Release)

UN in Somalia calls for safeguarding futures and empowering caregivers supporting survivors of sexual violence

Marking the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, the United Nations in Somalia today called for protecting the futures of Somali women and girls, and empowering caregivers who provide essential services to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV).

Women and girls in Somalia continue to face widespread threats, particularly in conflict-affected areas and regions increasingly vulnerable to climate-related crises.

"Children are also not spared by perpetrators of CRSV, and their recovery and access to justice are made possible by the dedication and commitment of those at the forefront of response efforts," said the Officer-in-Charge of the UN Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNTMIS), Raisedon Zenenga, who highlighted the urgent need for protection and accountability.

This year's theme of "Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Against Children: Safeguarding Futures and Empowering Caregivers" draws attention to the profound and long-lasting impact of sexual violence on children. It also underscores that survivors of rape and other forms of sexual violence need easy access to support services that are responsive to and centred on their needs.

(Press Release)

Ebola Outbreak Could Become Worst on Record, Africa C.D.C. Chief Warns

Health officials on Tuesday warned that the Ebola outbreak in East Africa could

significantly worsen, saying it could last as long as a year and infect thousands of people if current transmission rates go on unabated. The outbreak is already one of the largest on record, and has spread most in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where distrust of the authorities and violence in eastern regions have hampered health workers' ability to help people. "If we don't stop the outbreak very soon it will be worse than what we had in West Africa and eastern D.R.C.," said Jean Kaseya, the director general of the Africa C.D.C., said on Tuesday at an emergency conference on Ebola for African leaders. There have been more than 800 confirmed cases in this outbreak, according to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, and nearly 200 people killed. The worst recorded Ebola outbreak took place between 2014 and 2016 in West Africa and killed more than 11,000 people, according to the World Health Organization.

(The New York Times)

South Sudan to Host Global Logistics Convention in August for First Time

South Sudan will host the Global Logistics Convention (GLC) for the first time in August, bringing together about 1,000 trade, transport and logistics stakeholders from Africa and beyond to discuss investment, regional integration and trade facilitation, organisers said on Wednesday. The three-day event, scheduled for Aug. 25-27 in Juba, is expected to attract freight forwarders, policymakers, investors, researchers and development partners seeking to strengthen transport and logistics networks across the continent. "This is our time to shine as the South Sudanese business community,"

said Deng Daniel Ayuen, president of the South Sudan Freight Forwarders Association, during a media briefing in Juba. Ayuen said the convention would provide a platform for governments and the private sector to explore trade opportunities, address logistical bottlenecks and develop policies to boost cross-border commerce. He said participants would also discuss ways to improve regional trade corridors, including export routes from South Sudan to neighbouring countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo. The convention is being organised in partnership with the Federation of East African Freight Forwarders Associations (FEAFFA), a regional body representing customs agents and freight forwarders across East Africa.

(Radio Tamazuj)

Term of the Day

MONOPOLISTIC COMPETITION

» Definition

Monopolistic competition is a market structure in which companies compete against each other by offering products or services that are only slightly different. As a result, no single product or service dominates the market.

Xenophobic mobs set . . .

Continued from page 2

know who is going to come and beat us." Bahebwe says in the absence of a resolute response from the state, the foreigners are powerless to do anything but sit together on the pavement.

"If they want to kill us, they must come here and do it on this government property. Maybe we will get protection here. We don't want confrontation.

"We are not sure what is going to happen on June 30."

Anti-illegal immigration demonstrators, including March and March members, have set that as a deadline for undocumented foreigners to leave South Africa.

Jean Butoki, a Burundian refugee, says he has been targeted by March and March members on social media, who have put his photo online, demanding he be deported.

"I want to leave South Africa, and if I can get help to leave, I will go.

"I want to take my family to safety, but I don't know where. I can't go back to Burundi, my life is also in danger there. Our lives are in the hands of God. Most of us can't go to work now to support our families.

"If people can attack you in front of the TV cameras and the authorities without consequence, what will they do if they find you alone?"

Bahebwe and others have expressed appreciation to some politicians and civic leaders who have publicly condemned xenophobia, including Economic Freedom Front leader Julius Malema.

In a Sky News interview last week, Malema described the xenophobes as "criminals and extortionists".

In Durban, Bahebwe said organisations like the shack dwellers movement Abahlali base Mjondolo had publicly expressed

support for foreigners being hounded by mobs.

"Abahlali has been helping us. Not all South Africans hate us."

Butoki says the violence is meant to stir up public sentiment to put pressure on the South African government to act against foreigners.

But, he says, citing a United Nations report, it is irrational.

According to the UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency), in 2025, South Africa hosted more than 167,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in a "fragile" environment of rising xenophobia, misinformation and socioeconomic pressures.

'Who's stoking the violence?'

Political analyst Sandile Swana says xenophobia is not linked to rising joblessness or challenging economic conditions.

He believes the source of the violence demands inquiry.

"It is black-on-black violence, and Afrophobia that positions South African politics to the right. Black-on-black violence is not new, and neither is Afrophobia. There has never been any empirical evidence that the country is overrun by foreigners. So what mobilises a poor man in Alexandra to attack a foreigner, thinking that will improve his life?"

Swana said the face of the anti-foreign movement was March and March's Jacinta Zuma, Ngizwe Mchunu and actor Nkosikhona Ndabandaba (who goes by the name Phakel'umthakathi).

"Unfortunately, this has taken on a fearful Zulu character. It is easy to channel tribalism, but I am less impressed by threats of more violence and more interested in who is behind this. It is well-organised and resourced. Who pays for

these people to fly around the country, hold rallies, and bus people to demonstrations? Siphumelele Zondi is a multimedia & journalism lecturer at the Durban University of Technology with a Master's in cultural studies and digital media from Sussex University.

He believes the anti-foreign movement is dangerous.

'Aggressive social media drive'

"My hunch is that there is someone behind the project. The people leading these demonstrations, Jacinta Ngobese-Zuma, Ngizwe Mchunu, and Phakel'umthakathi, have massive social media followings and are using that online popularity to incite.

"This is stirring up resentment towards foreigners. The narrative, not supported by fact, is that foreigners are driving up crime, stealing jobs, clogging the healthcare system and putting a drain on the fiscus.

"That anger is amplified by an aggressive social media drive. That angry algorithm is spiralling. It is online anger harvesting. And, it has an ethnic layer. The more visuals are shared online, the bigger the story gets, even when the story may not be intrinsically that big.

"But the result is the people who are sharing grow in stature and are feted by politicians and authorities as if they have a constituency, when we don't really know if they have. It's not difficult to raise a mob." Zondi added, "Whoever is behind this wants to create anarchy. The question is, who is funding this? These people are criss-crossing the country and organising buses. There is this ominous June 30 deadline. Will it be a repeat of July 2021? We can't take this lightly. July 2021 started with a social media campaign."

Growing hostility

The Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa, representing

more than 30 organisations, released a weekend statement condemning the growing climate of hostility towards refugees and migrants and expressing concern at "deeply disturbing intimidation and violence".

"Equally alarming and unacceptable are reports and visual evidence suggesting the excessive use of force by members of law enforcement agencies against refugees and migrants."

The consortium said inflammatory rhetoric, misinformation and unlawful mobilisation fuelled xenophobic tensions and risked more violence, displacement and intimidation.

"No individual or group has the authority to target, harass, assault, intimidate, or forcibly remove another person on the basis of nationality, migration status, race, or ethnicity. The actions witnessed represent a dangerous erosion of constitutional democracy and pose a serious threat to social cohesion, public safety and the rule of law."

Xenophobia, the consortium warned, could easily get out of control.

According to Human Rights Watch, 62 people were killed in xenophobic violence in 2008 and 12 people in 2019.

Attempts to contact Jacinta Ngobese-Zuma were unsuccessful, but she was quoted in a News24 story over the weekend relating to a demonstration in the Cape where she is reported to have told marchers:

"We are the rainbow nation... and then everyone saw this harmony as an invitation. They took advantage of our Ubuntu. Ubuntu is suspended until further notice

"We don't want a situation where foreign nationals are always painted as the victims, and we are the villains. It's our country, and we're tired of explaining that there is no xenophobia in the country."

INTERVIEW

'Africa's agricultural future is already here'

In an interview with Capital's Group Abate in Rwanda, Bayer's Head of Global Public Affairs, Max Müller, argued that Africa's development challenges are too often shaped by outside assumptions, rigid models and underestimation of local realities. He said the continent's agricultural promise is not a distant possibility but a present reality, driven by farmers, technology and growing innovation across the sector. Excerpts;



Capital: Could we start with the concept of “Western arrogance” that you mentioned earlier? What do you mean by that, and how has it manifested itself in economic development in Africa?

Max Müller: What I have observed in the field across the African continent — and this is not unique to Africa — is that for far too long, we in Europe have had good intentions, but we often approached economic development in a way that said, “We will help you, but only if you do it our way.” I do not think that works. It is not a recipe for success.

Africa is not one single entity. There is no one Africa. What works in Kenya may not work in Côte d’Ivoire. What works in South Africa may not work in Morocco or South Sudan.

Recognizing the diversity of the continent, and the diversity of possible solutions, is very important. What I also meant

is that it was not always fair for people in the West to tell Africans what is good for Africa and what is not. People here know their countries better than we do. They know what works best for them. In some areas, they may need advice or training, but not someone telling them, “This is how you do it, or we will not support you.” That is what I meant by Western arrogance.

Capital: You also said that Africa has potential. How do you describe that?

Max: I would go even further. It is not only about potential, because potential always suggests that something may happen in the future. The future is already here. We see areas of excellence across the continent and across different crop varieties.

Look at chocolate, for example. We like to eat chocolate in the West, especially in Germany. But the prices depend on whether the harvest in West

Africa is productive or not. So it is in our own interest that there are good harvests and effective ways forward that help the farmer. Right now, we are seeing raw products coming out of Africa, but not enough processing. So this is not just about potential, because production is already happening. It is about opportunities.

How do we scale up so that the continent becomes self-sufficient and gains access to innovation and high technology? From our point of view, that is very important. I think this goes beyond potential. It is about making the best of what is already possible, and we see those examples every day.

If you use our hybrid seeds, for example, we increase harvests by more than 18 percent on average. Is that potential, or is that a result? It is a result. We can see what farmers are capable of doing if they are given the right tools. So this

is not only about potential — it is already happening. That is why we strongly believe in the African continent, and that anyone who is not here now will miss the next great success story: the development of this continent.

Capital: A common criticism is that Bayer’s agricultural products are highly advanced but often too expensive for the average African farmer. How do you plan to address that affordability barrier?

Max: “Expensive” depends on how you look at it. If you have a cheaper seed that is less productive and gives you a lower harvest, is that really the better result?

Farmers in Africa are seeing that if they have a quality input, quality fertilizer or a quality crop-protection tool, the outcome will be better. Their harvest losses will be lower, and therefore the investment they make becomes more productive. So it is not only about the price,

but about the value proposition. We are also seeing that lenders, such as banks and other financial institutions, have more confidence in farmers when they know the money they lend has a higher chance of being repaid through the use of high-quality inputs. That increases the likelihood of good results from the fields, through hard work, and gives farmers the ability to repay any financial support they receive.

So I would say it is not about us being expensive; rather, it is about proving consistently that we deliver the best possible outcomes so farmers can become profitable in the strongest way possible.

Capital: Do you have specific structures in place to help smallholders bridge this financial gap?

Max: Absolutely. It is not only about us. You also have the World Bank and other financial institutions, but there are also opportunities from startups.

INTERVIEW

You mentioned Pula as one of the startups bringing together downstream and upstream parts of the value chain.

Smallholder farmers face challenges in accessing financial support — we know that. But banks and financial institutions also worry about whether they will get their money back. Through technology tools and platforms, whether provided by IFIs or private startups and agri-facilitators, we are now seeing greater trust from banks and lenders. They can see that if a farmer has three acres of land and chooses a particular crop because the soil is a perfect fit, and uses inputs A, B and C from a specific source, success is more likely.

That allows us to connect financial markets, banks, lenders and fertilizer producers with smallholder farmers through digital tools, such as smartphones, and still make the system work. The financial market also understands that farmers need a seven-month window, from the investment stage through post-harvest, before they can actually sell their products and begin repaying support.

So I would say the tools are there and they are growing. And interestingly enough, you had colleagues from Ethiopia on stage. There are many agri-tech companies emerging there, and you have banks like Equity Bank that are willing and able to support this development. I am very confident that this is creating more opportunities for smallholder and emerging farmers across the African continent.

Capital: Let us address a critical local bottleneck. Bayer's office in Ethiopia faces significant hurdles in securing foreign exchange to import vital agricultural inputs. How are you navigating this problem?

Max: I was in Ethiopia in February. I understand that this is a major problem, but I also see that there is a lot of activity on the policy side to tackle these challenges. Do we have the perfect solution yet? Not yet. But we have seen some progress, including the involvement of German banks and others.

I think we are moving more and more in that direction. The forex issue is not unique to Ethiopia. We have seen it in other countries as well. We are working with banks, policymakers and international financial institutions on how to overcome it, but also on improving predictability in the political framework. The stability we are now seeing gives more trust and more reason to say, "Let's give this another try."



You came out of a financial crisis, you are repaying your debts and you have a path toward recovery. I have strong confidence that Ethiopia is going to be very productive in this market quite soon. We are trying, together with partners, to create the right solutions for the Ethiopian market in the short term. From what I took away from the trip, we will have good solutions available very, very soon.

Capital: What are the major problems of operating in Africa?

Max: In the past, the lack of success was partly because large commercial farmers produced good results, while many people did not focus on the smallholder problem, since it is more complex. But due to the technical and digital revolution, it is now easier and more feasible to expand access. Bayer has a mission: health for all, hunger for none. Without smallholder farmers, it is impossible for that mission to succeed. So we have adapted the way we look at these issues. We have seen that smaller successes create bigger ones.

The site we built in Zambia is just one example. If we believe in the work of farmers, if they believe in science, technology and quality inputs, the results will prove the case. Then, instead of being recipients of aid, people become entrepreneurs who can sell the products of their



own labor. I think this thinking has become more valid in Africa, with greater belief in its own strengths rather than dependence on others. People are standing up and saying, "We are fighting for ourselves, and we are doing this

in a proper way." That change in attitude and perception also gives businesses the willingness to invest more, and perhaps even take a little more risk, because they see people on the other side who are willing and able to do something good for

this continent.

That is why we at Bayer strongly believe the best days for Africa are ahead. But they are not in some distant future — the future is beginning now.

Capital: So your seeds are sustainable?

Max: Yes. I believe Africa has not only the ability to do this in a short period of time, but that we will get there. Food security is such an important issue, and seeing people starving in a continent that has arable land and the labor to work it is something we will never accept. So we are trying to do whatever we can, for example through a program to give 100 million smallholder farmers around the world access to innovative inputs. That is part of Bayer's sustainability commitment, and we are working toward it.

As I mentioned, by 2030 we want 21.3 million smallholder farmers here on this continent to be able to do that, and we are on a good trajectory. Again, it is not about being recipients of donations; it is about building entrepreneurial farming across the continent. The progress we are seeing is immense.

You can see the pride when people realize what they can produce from their soil with a little initial support at a pivotal moment in their lives. Then they are willing to take their lives into their own hands and create something. That is what makes Africa so strong: the willingness of the people is so powerful.



CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (EOI)

Development of a Methodology for Societal Peacebuilding Through Economic Resilience and Livelihoods

Initiative Africa (IA) invites qualified consulting firms, research institutions, think tanks, universities, civil society organizations, and consortiums to submit Expressions of Interest (EOI) for the development of an innovative methodology aimed at strengthening societal peacebuilding through economic resilience, livelihood creation, and the delivery of essential goods and services.

The assignment seeks to develop a practical and evidence-based framework that demonstrates how economic opportunities, local investment, entrepreneurship, market systems, and community-based service delivery can contribute to social cohesion, stability, and peaceful coexistence in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

The selected firm or organization will be expected to:

- Review international and African experiences and best practices;
- Develop a conceptual and operational methodology;
- Identify pathways linking economic resilience and peacebuilding outcomes;
- Propose implementation, monitoring, and learning frameworks;
- Facilitate stakeholder consultations and validation processes.

Interested organizations should demonstrate:

- Proven experience in peacebuilding, economic development, livelihoods, or social cohesion programming;
- Strong research and analytical capacity;
- Experience working in fragile or conflict-affected environments;
- Familiarity with African development contexts.

Interested applicants are invited to submit:

1. Organizational profile;
2. Relevant experience and references;
3. Brief statement of approach and interest;
4. Key personnel and qualifications.

Submission Deadline: August 01/2026

Expressions of Interest should be submitted electronically to:

Initiative Africa (IA)

Email: info@initiativeafrica.net

Subject Line: EOI – Peacebuilding Methodology Development

Only shortlisted applicants will be contacted.

Initiative Africa is committed to equal opportunity and encourages applications from qualified national, regional, and international organizations.



TENDER NOTICE

FOR PROCUREMENT OF DRILLING AND CONSTRUCTION OF NEW BOREHOLE IN CHIFRA WEREDA OF AFAR REGION

- **Publication Reference:** PTN-039/2026
- **Specific Location:** Chifra Wereda ,
- **Region:** Afar region

1. The subject of the project procurement

Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI), in partnership with the Afar Pastoralist Development Association (APDA), is implementing a project titled **“Sustainable WASH Support to Displacement-Affected IDPs, Returnees, and Host Communities in Afambo, Chifra, and Telalak Woredas, Afar Region”**. The project is funded by the European Union and is implemented in collaboration with the Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo (AICS) and COOPI intends to apply a portion of the grant for the drilling service of **one new borehole in Chifra Wereda**.

2. Contracting Authority

Cooperazione Internazionale - COOPI is an independent non-governmental humanitarian organization with its head quarter based in Italy, Milan and committed in fighting poverty worldwide and building the future that guarantees everyone with adequate living conditions and equal opportunities. Since 1965 COOPI has carried out around 700 development projects and emergency interventions in 50 countries in cooperation with more than 50,000 local workers ensuring direct benefits to more than 60 million people.

3. Description of the Procurement

This procurement tender incorporates drilling and construction of a new Borehole in Chifra Wereda, Afar region.

4. How to obtain the Tender Dossier

The tender dossier/Tender document is available from the Contracting Authority by ONLY contacting via the following Email addresses: log.ethiopia@coopi.org and logistic.eth@coopi.org

Tender technical and financial proposals should be submitted from **22 June 2026 – 21 July 2026 from Monday to Friday 08:30AM to 05:00 PM** at COOPI Coordination Office.

5. Deadline for the Submission of Tenders

The deadline for the submission of tender proposals is by **21 July 2026 at 12:00 PM (Noon) and the opening date will be 21 July 2026 at 2:00 PM in the afternoon** in COOPI Coordination office, Addis Ababa, Bole Sub city- Woreda 06 – House No-088 around Megenagna behind Mama’s Kitchen Restaurant. Any tender received after this deadline will not be considered.

Why Ethiopia's VAT refunds feel like interest-free loans to the state

A Commentary on the Contradictions within the New VAT Refund Directive No. 1132/2026

By Gemechis Mekonnen

The Value Added Tax Proclamation has once again given rise to a controversial directive, this time on VAT refunds. The Ministry of Revenue has already caused a stir with its previous VAT registration directive, prompting members of the legal community to challenge the authority over its application to lawyers. The new VAT refund directive also appears to contain its own contradictions.

The directive begins by stating the noble purpose of VAT refund services based on risk levels, which may be considered an efficient, fair and internationally aligned approach to tax refunds. VAT Refund Directive No. 1132/2026 introduces a more nuanced risk-based framework aimed at tightening control over fraudulent claims and improving efficiency.

However, not far removed from the controversy surrounding the VAT registration directive, an overview of Tax Refund Directive No. 1132/2026 reveals structural contradictions that could undermine its stated goals of efficiency and fairness. The new VAT refund directive has come a long way from its predecessor, VAT Refund Directive No. 164/2021, with technical advances and specialized risk-based refund assessment.

This short commentary examines three major contradictions within Directive No. 1132/2026 that may reduce its intended purpose and considers the way forward.

1. A retained interest-free loan to the tax authority at the cost of business expansion

In one of its more progressive approaches to safeguarding government revenue from fraudulent claims, Articles 4(4) and 13(2) of the directive acknowledge the high costs companies incur while expanding their businesses and operations through the construction of new buildings, factories or warehouses. Therefore, the directive allows such businesses to refund their VAT costs during construction. This appears to be a significant measure in support of business expansion.

However, these rights do not come easily for business owners, and this is the first paradox discussed under the directive. Although this restriction is not entirely new and appears in the previous VAT refund directive, its retention under the new framework remains a persistent problem.

The barrier to this right is that, even if a company is operational while expanding, it cannot use the VAT spent on new construction to reduce the monthly tax bills of its existing operations. Article 13(3) introduces a critical timing condition by effectively deferring refunds linked to construction and capital investment until the project is completed and operational readiness is verified.

This sequencing creates a gap between economic activity and fiscal recovery. Businesses continue to operate and pay taxes on existing activities, while VAT tied to expansion remains outside their liquidity cycle until project completion is confirmed.

This effectively gives the government what amounts to an interest-free loan by delaying the refund and locking away cash flow that should be available to the business until the building or construction project is open for business.

2. A statutory remedy transformed into an unnecessary litigation path

Perhaps the most contentious feature of the new directive, similar to the VAT registration directive, is its expansion of the tax authority's mandate. It may be recalled that legal professionals challenged the constitutionality of extending the tax authority's mandate under the VAT registration directive contrary to the VAT Proclamation. The core argument was that a directive cannot impose additional requirements forcing lawyers and other professionals to register for VAT and keep accounts for VAT irrespective of the proclamation, which requires registration only when income exceeds the two-million-birr threshold.

While there is an ongoing tax dispute between lawyers and the tax authority, the administrative body appears to be doubling down on the

argument for expanding its mandate beyond the parent law, in this case the VAT Proclamation.

To put this into perspective, the VAT Proclamation, under Article 50, explicitly mandates that if the tax authority fails to pay a refund within the required period, it shall pay interest on the VAT refund owed to the business. This provision is intended as a safeguard against administrative delay.

However, under the new VAT refund directive, this self-executing statutory right to interest on delayed VAT refunds becomes conditional through the introduction of new requirements under Article 14(3) of the directive. The directive states that the tax authority shall pay the interest only after the business obtains a court judgment and submits the claim within six months of the ruling, failing which the claim is deemed waived. This introduces a procedural threshold that is not explicitly present in the VAT Proclamation. It effectively transforms what appears to be a statutory remedy under the proclamation into a litigation-dependent claim, thereby shifting the burden to the taxpayer and narrowing rights clearly granted under the parent law.

3. The double standard of enforcement delay
Although nobody welcomes late payments owed to them, comparing taxpayer delays with state delays reveals the asymmetry of administrative justice under the tax administration system.

The Tax Administration Proclamation No. 983/2016 subjects late taxpayers to immediate enforcement measures without a court order, including seizure of assets and swift freezing or deduction from bank accounts. By contrast, the double standard reflected in the new directive shields the state behind a wall of litigation, requiring businesses to spend money on legal fees to recover what is legally their own.

This shows that the government uses its administrative power when taxpayers delay their obligations, but imposes an unnecessary judicial burden on businesses when the government itself delays. When taxpayers delay, enforcement is swift and administrative. When the state delays this potentially owed revenue, recovery becomes slower, conditional and litigation-driven. This double standard creates an uneven framework for liability in late payments while disregarding what is at stake for businesses.

Overall, the introduction of VAT Refund Directive No. 1132/2026 can be seen as a positive development toward establishing a risk-based tax refund assessment system to deter malicious claims. The directive represents a shift toward more structured and risk-sensitive VAT refund administration.

However, its potential is limited by internal contradictions, including the unfair freezing of refund amounts during construction, the requirement for taxpayers to go to court to claim interest on late refunds and the expansion of the directive beyond the statutory rights set out in the VAT Proclamation.

In effect, these contradictions place the cost of bureaucratic inefficiency on the private sector through frozen liquidity, litigation burdens and delayed recovery of funds legally owed to businesses. Therefore, the way forward is to align the directive with the parent VAT Proclamation, avoid constitutional disputes, remove unnecessary litigation requirements and ensure a transparent refund system that does not undermine business cash flow through prolonged VAT refund delays.

Gemechis Mekonnen is an Attorney at Law, Legal Consultant, and the Managing Partner of Gemechis Mekonnen & Associates Law Office based in Addis Ababa. With over eight years of professional experience, he specializes in banking, finance, corporate advisory and commercial law. He holds an LL.B. and LL.M. (in Public International Law) from Addis Ababa University and can be reached via info@gemechislaw.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: Million Wegayehu

Education: BA in Journalism and Communication

Company name: Yemisrach Kine-Tibeb

Title: Founder & Event Organizer

Founded in: 2024

What it does: Organize monthly invitational and communal cultural/poetry nights, promote young talents, and create platforms for literature

Hq: Hawassa

Number of Employees: 3



STARTUP CAPITAL

150,000 BIRR

CURRENT CAPITAL

Growing

BIG PICTURE

Reason for starting the Business:

To create a platform for poets and authors

Biggest perk of ownership: The fulfillment of gathering artists and art enthusiasts under one roof

Biggest strength: Communication and media networking skills

Biggest challenge: The soaring rental costs of halls/venues for events

Plan: To expand poetry nights to various major cities across Ethiopia

First career: Freelance Journalist

PERSONAL

Most interested in meeting: Meaza Birru

Most admired person: Alemayehu Gelagay

Stress reducer: Listening to good music and reading books

Favorite pastime: Spending time with people from the cultural and literary community, and writing new poems

Favorite book: Fiqr Eske Meqaber by Hadis Alemayehu

Favorite destination: France

Favorite automobile: None

DAILY EXCHANGE RATE

June. 20, 2026



የኢትዮጵያ ንግድ ባንክ
Commercial Bank of Ethiopia

| CURRENCY | BUYING | SELLING |
|----------------|--------|---------|
| US DOLLAR | 156.01 | 159.14 |
| POUND STERLING | 202.42 | 206.47 |
| EURO | 178.84 | 182.42 |
| SWISS FRANK | 189.65 | 193.44 |
| SWEDISH KRONER | 15.99 | 16.31 |
| CHINESE YUAN | 22.62 | 23.07 |
| UAE DIRHAM | 42.48 | 43.33 |
| JAPANIS YEN | 0.94 | 0.96 |

The PhD Cabinet: Why government cabinets dominated by PhD holders often struggle with leadership?

■ Alazar Kebede

In contemporary governance discourse, the idea of a “PhD Cabinet” has emerged as both an aspiration and a provocation. It refers, loosely, to executive governments composed predominantly of individuals holding doctoral degrees (PhD) often in economics, law, engineering, or the natural sciences. Implicit in this model is a belief that advanced academic training correlates with superior policy design, analytical rigor, and ultimately, leadership performance.

In this regard, Ethiopia is the first in Africa with 10 Cabinet members holding PhD with including the Prime Minister while Kenya has 3 Cabinet ministers with PhD including President William Ruto. Yet the relationship between credentialed expertise and effective governance is neither linear nor guaranteed. A careful examination suggests that while doctoral training can enhance certain dimensions of decision-making, it may also introduce distortions when applied uncritically to the political executive.

At its core, the PhD Cabinet proposition rests on a technocratic ideal in which governance is primarily a problem of information processing and optimal decision-making under constraints. From this perspective, individuals with doctoral training are presumed to possess heightened analytical capacity, methodological discipline, and familiarity with empirical reasoning. These attributes are undoubtedly valuable in policy formation. Complex issues such as fiscal stabilization, climate regulation, or digital infrastructure governance require a level of technical fluency that doctoral training can provide. In this sense, a cabinet populated by PhDs appears, at least superficially, to promise more rational and evidence-informed governance.

However, leadership performance in the executive domain cannot be reduced to analytical competence alone. Political leadership is fundamentally an exercise in managing ambiguity, negotiating competing interests, and mobilising collective legitimacy. These are domains in which doctoral training offers limited preparation. The epistemic orientation of the PhD, typically centred on depth, precision, and disciplinary specialisation, can be in tension with the breadth, compromise, and strategic ambiguity required in governance. The cabinet room is not a seminar room; policy decisions are not peer-reviewed articles.

One of the central tensions in a PhD-heavy executive lies in the distinction between epistemic authority and political authority. A doctoral degree confers credibility within a field of knowledge, but it does not automatically translate into democratic legitimacy or leadership efficacy. Ministers must not only understand problems but also persuade parliaments, communicate with publics, and build coalitions across institutional boundaries. These skills are often cultivated through political apprenticeship rather than academic research. A cabinet composed predominantly of technical experts risks privileging correctness over consensus, potentially undermining the relational foundations of governance.

Moreover, doctoral training can shape cognitive styles in ways that are not always conducive to executive decision-making. The PhD ethos rewards exhaustive analysis, methodological caution, and the careful qualification of claims. While these habits are intellectually virtuous, they may slow decision cycles in environments that demand timely action under uncertainty. Governments routinely face situations where incomplete information is the norm and delayed action carries significant costs. In such contexts, leadership requires judgement rather than optimal solutions derived from extended analysis.

This is not to suggest that PhD holders

are inherently ill-suited to political leadership. On the contrary, many have made significant contributions to public policy, particularly in areas where technical complexity is high. Economists in finance ministries, epidemiologists in health agencies, and engineers in infrastructure portfolios can bring indispensable expertise. The issue arises when credentialism becomes a proxy for leadership capacity more broadly construed. A cabinet that equates academic attainment with governing competence risks narrowing the diversity of cognitive approaches essential for robust executive functioning.

The question of leadership performance also extends to emotional intelligence and interpersonal dynamics. Governance is not merely an intellectual exercise; it is a deeply human one. Ministers must interpret social signals, manage institutional tensions, and respond to crises with both decisiveness and empathy. These capacities are not systematically cultivated in doctoral programmes, which tend to prioritise individual research achievement over collaborative leadership. Indeed, the solitary nature of much doctoral work may underprepare individuals for the relational demands of high office.

There is also a structural risk associated with over-technocratisation.

The depoliticisation of inherently political questions. Many of the most consequential decisions in government, distributional choices, value-laden trade-offs, and constitutional interpretations, cannot be resolved through technical expertise alone. When PhD-level expertise dominates executive decision-making, there is a danger that normative questions are reframed as technical problems, thereby obscuring their democratic dimension. This can lead to a subtle erosion of accountability, as decisions become justified on the basis of “expertise” rather than contestable political judgement.

Yet the critique should not be overstated. The alternative to a PhD Cabinet is not necessarily more effective governance. Cabinets lacking sufficient analytical capacity may struggle to engage with the complexity of modern policy challenges, relying excessively on external consultants or bureaucratic intermediaries. The ideal configuration is therefore not one of exclusion but of balance. Effective cabinets require epistemic diversity: a mix of technical experts, political operators, experienced administrators, and individuals with strong constituency grounding. Such diversity enables the executive to integrate multiple forms of knowledge, from statistical modelling to lived

experience.

Furthermore, it is important to distinguish between the possession of a PhD and the intellectual dispositions it may or may not cultivate. Not all doctoral holders are narrowly technocratic in orientation. Many develop a capacity for critical thinking, intellectual humility, and interdisciplinary engagement. These traits can be highly valuable in governance, particularly when combined with political acumen. The issue is not the degree itself, but the institutional assumption that it serves as a sufficient marker of leadership readiness.

From a governance design perspective, the appeal of a PhD Cabinet reflects a broader societal anxiety about complexity. As policy domains become more technically intricate, spanning artificial intelligence, climate systems, global finance, and epidemiology, there is a temptation to seek refuge in expertise. While this is understandable, it risks conflating knowledge with judgement. Leadership performance ultimately depends on the integration of knowledge with values, strategy, and communication. No academic credential can substitute for this synthesis.

In conclusion, the notion of a PhD Cabinet captures both a genuine

aspiration and a conceptual error. It rightly recognises the increasing importance of specialised knowledge in modern governance. However, it incorrectly assumes that such knowledge is sufficient for effective executive leadership. Doctoral training enhances analytical capacity but does not, by itself, confer the political, relational, and normative competencies required for high office. A government composed exclusively of PhDs may be intellectually formidable yet politically constrained, analytically precise yet strategically brittle.

The challenge for contemporary governance is therefore not to maximise academic credentials, but to optimise cognitive and experiential diversity within the executive. Leadership performance is not a function of qualification alone, but of the ability to translate knowledge into collective action under conditions of uncertainty. In that sense, the most effective cabinet is unlikely to be the most academically homogeneous, but rather the one most capable of integrating expertise with political judgment.

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The imperative of operational reform to end commuter suffering in public transport

■ By Gzachew Wolde

The core problem with Addis Ababa's public transport system is that, even though it has expanded to meet growing demand, most commuters still struggle during peak hours, especially early in the morning when going to work and late at night when returning home.

It is now common to see long queues of passengers waiting for public buses at major road sections, newly built facilities and various terminals. Long lines of commuters at bus stops and terminals have become a daily sight on major roads.

At peak travel times, a trip that should take 30 minutes can stretch to 1.5 to 3 hours because of delays and traffic congestion. The average waiting time is about 15 minutes under normal conditions, but during rush hour it can reach 30 minutes or more for taxis and buses.

Despite the new terminals and parking areas, queues persist. Once passengers finally board, they are often packed beyond the vehicle's normal capacity, and they may face harsh or disrespectful treatment from weyallas (driver assistants or conductors) as they are urged to squeeze in and make room for more travelers, often while standing with little or no space.

In some cases, weyallas collect fares, announce destinations and manage passengers, but during peak hours many resort to aggressive tactics such as shouting, pushing, rushing passengers, overcharging or even refusing service to certain people.

Despite this abuse, there is little or no accountability for weyallas or drivers who mistreat passengers. Because of income pressure, most low- and middle-income residents spend more than two hours a day commuting due to overcrowding, delays and traffic congestion.

Addis Ababa still struggles to provide efficient public transport. Since weyallas earn commissions based on how many passengers they load and how quickly they fill the vehicle, they have a financial incentive to overcrowd vehicles, rush passengers and act aggressively during peak hours. There is no effective oversight, monitoring or complaint-

handling system to address passenger mistreatment.

Mismanaged routes, inconsistent service and competition between drivers create a high-pressure environment in which weyallas prioritize speed over passenger dignity. The city has invested heavily in terminals, shelters, parking lots and corridor development, but without enough vehicles to meet demand and without strict enforcement of passenger capacity limits, these efforts face serious challenges.

Given these persistent problems, infrastructure investment alone cannot restore reliable and dignified service. There is a clear need for operational regulation to streamline the public transport system in urban areas. It is essential to establish clear service standards, enforce capacity limits, oversee weyalla conduct and create a user-centered complaint mechanism.

Weyallas shout, push and rush passengers, and sometimes refuse service to certain individuals. They also stand by windows, calling on passengers to squeeze in more travelers, treating people as numbers rather than human beings. Without reliable scheduling, dedicated bus lanes and oversight of mistreatment, the problem will continue. Overcharging is also common, especially when demand is high.

Addis Ababa urgently needs effective monitoring of weyalla behavior and a functional complaint system for passenger mistreatment. Overloading vehicles beyond capacity is not just uncomfortable; it is a serious safety setback and security risk, exposing travelers to pickpockets.

Minibuses may carry up to 12 passengers nominally, but they are often packed far beyond that. Buses may nominally hold 100 passengers, yet they too are overcrowded. A 2018 World Bank report identified overcrowding, harassment and poor infrastructure as major safety concerns, especially for women. Women are disproportionately affected by verbal and physical abuse, particularly during peak hours.

Despite the obvious safety risks, there is currently no enforcement of passenger capacity limits. Vehicles remain dangerously packed with no consequences for drivers. Most

incidents occur during rush hours, when overcrowding is at its worst.

Without monitoring, accountability and enforcement, the cycle continues: weyallas overcrowd vehicles to maximize commissions, commuters suffer discomfort and pickpocketing, and there is no effective way to report or stop the abuse. Infrastructure investments such as terminals, parking areas and electric buses are important, but they will not solve the problem unless governance and enforcement improve alongside them.

Long queues at bus stops, terminals and along main roads have become a familiar sight in many cities, especially in rapidly urbanizing areas. This reflects several connected problems, including demand that exceeds supply. In many growing cities, public bus systems have not kept pace with population growth and rising transportation needs, pushing more people onto buses without a matching increase in fleet size or frequency.

To be honest, the newly built terminals and facilities are attractive in design and layout. But even in these well-designed systems, service still faces serious challenges during peak hours, such as 7 to 9 a.m. and 5 to 7 p.m., when long queues form. Without real-time dispatching or express services, the long lines become routine.

Route optimization, real-time monitoring, fair fare and commission redesign, dedicated lanes and a formal passenger grievance system can together reduce queuing, prevent dangerous overcrowding and curb abusive weyalla behavior.

For millions of Addis Ababa residents, travel is a daily ordeal that damages dignity, safety and productivity. The built infrastructure is a necessary step, but without governance reforms and accountability for weyallas, people will continue to suffer. Effective measures are urgently needed.

Operational reforms aimed at making public transport safe, reliable and respectful for everyone — especially women and low-income commuters, who bear the greatest burden — are not only essential but urgent.

In general, long queues are more than an inconvenience. They signal wasted time, reduced system attractiveness and

a lack of priority measures to address the problem. Rising transportation demand has pushed the system to its limits, exposing serious weaknesses that undermine the quality and safety of travel. Addis Ababa has made significant investments to expand and modernize its public transport infrastructure, yet many commuters still face persistent difficulties because operational reforms have not kept pace.

Addis Ababa stands at a critical crossroads. The city has shown commendable foresight and commitment by investing heavily in modern terminals, shelters, parking facilities and corridor development. These physical improvements have reshaped the city's landscape and created the potential for a world-class public transport system. However, the daily reality for millions of commuters — endless queues, dangerous overcrowding, abusive conduct by weyallas and commute times that stretch two to three hours longer than necessary — proves that infrastructure alone is not enough.

The core problem is not a lack of buses, terminals or stops. It is a lack of sufficient oversight and operational discipline. The existing incentive structure, in which weyallas earn commissions based on passenger volume and speed, actively rewards overcrowding, aggression and disrespect.

Without enforceable capacity limits, a functional complaints mechanism and real-time monitoring or dedicated bus lanes, the cycle of abuse and inefficiency will continue regardless of how many new terminals are built.

Such harassment of commuters who endure daily indignity is not a minor inconvenience; it is a systemic challenge that damages safety, productivity and human dignity. So let us put in place urgent operational reforms to curb this problem.

The writer can be reached via gzachewolde@gmail.com

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Society

Reclaiming Ethiopia's export sovereignty

Mastering packaging weight standards to supercharge foreign currency earnings

By Mekonnen Solomon

The most recent operational framework governing the export of fruits, vegetables and herbs by air cargo from Ethiopia reveals a significant functional misalignment that undermines efficiency and accuracy. The Ethiopian Customs Commission, lacking its own specialized weighing infrastructure for these exports, is forced to rely on the scales of Ethiopian Cargo for shipment assessments. This reliance creates a critical conflict: while Ethiopian Airlines uses gross or volumetric weight to calculate freight charges, prioritizing its commercial interests, the Customs Commission requires precise net weight to ensure regulatory compliance and revenue collection. Consequently, this arrangement raises concerns about the integrity of the customs verification process, as Ethiopian Airlines operates as a profit-driven entity rather than an impartial customs authority. This misalignment not only jeopardizes regulatory compliance but also poses challenges to transparency and reliability.

Because of this systemic gap, the industry has defaulted to exporter self-declaration, whereby exporters write the net and gross weights directly on their cartons and declarations, and the Commission accepts these figures as the verifiable standard. This reliance on self-declared data is not merely an administrative oversight; it is a significant fiscal vulnerability. Since the repatriation of foreign currency is strictly calculated as the product of net weight and the designated floor price, any inaccuracy in the former directly undermines the accuracy of the latter.

Relying on self-declared weights creates a structural loophole that can skew horticultural export earnings. To safeguard the integrity of foreign currency inflows, Ethiopia must transition from self-declared estimates to an independent, standardized weighing infrastructure that aligns with the requirements of both customs and trade valuation.

Triggered by this concern and the need to address these critical challenges, the Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture introduced standardized packaging weight guidelines for the fruits, vegetables, herbs and seeds sectors transported by air cargo. This represents a significant assertion of national sovereignty in the country's agricultural export framework. Issued on 14 May 2018, the directive established average material utilization ratios for various edible horticultural products. It directly addresses persistent problems related to export weight valuation and foreign currency repatriation for perishable produce transported through Ethiopian Airlines.

These standard weights were developed as part of Ethiopia's effort to enhance horticultural export revenue, which plays a critical role in strengthening comparative advantage, creating employment opportunities and fostering sectoral development. Nevertheless, the initiative has sparked considerable debate among stakeholders. Exporters often emphasize that packaging specifications are primarily driven by international buyers, who prioritize quality, size, safety and premium presentation for highly perishable goods. In contrast, proponents of sectoral interests question the extent to which external parties should determine packaging standards that profoundly influence Ethiopia's terms of trade and its ability to capture economic value domestically.

The connection between packaging, net weight and foreign currency repatriation lies in the fact that the minimum floor price is applied to the net weight of exportable fruits, vegetables, herbs and vegetable seeds. Customs authorities and banks calculate mandatory foreign currency repatriation by multiplying this floor price by the net volume or weight of exported goods. Net weight, in turn, is substantially affected by the weight and volume of packaging materials used. Packaging that is disproportionately bulky or heavy relative to the product content reduces net weight, thereby lowering repatriation amounts and overall export value. By contrast, optimized packaging increases net yield, improves repatriation efficiency, reduces air transport costs and maximizes economic returns.

Today, heterogeneous exporter practices — varying in materials, design and weight depending on produce, market and buyer preferences — make consistent net-to-gross ratios difficult. Historically, customs has depended on self-declared carton

markings, with only limited risk-based verification of approximately 15 percent of shipments. This verification approach can affect product quality and, when time-consuming, may delay freight, offloading and export operations. As a result, airport customs often favor expedited clearance for perishable goods, sometimes under the guise of ensuring safety. While this impulse is understandable and prioritizes the swift movement of exportable products, it may inadvertently weaken Ethiopia's fruits and vegetables export system.

In both developing and advanced countries, there is growing reliance on AI-powered scanners, digital counters and automated classification systems to accurately assess gross and net weights, and to count products such as fruits, berries and vegetables, along with their material types. However, the slow adoption of these technologies by customs authorities continues to perpetuate significant inefficiencies. Despite the Ministry of Agriculture's efforts to propose manual solutions, those measures would not address the underlying challenge in the long term. This situation calls on all relevant stakeholders — particularly the Ethiopian Artificial Intelligence Institute, the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Ethiopian Standards Institute and private innovators — to collaborate in developing sustainable weighing solutions for the horticultural sector.

Critics argue that the dominance of foreign buyers in packaging decisions raises serious concerns about national sovereignty. When producing countries relinquish control over critical elements of their supply chains, especially those that influence economic outcomes, they weaken their ability to capture optimal value from exports. This problem is compounded by the fact that heavy packaging materials are often imported duty-free under various export incentives. The result is a paradox: while these incentives are intended to reduce costs for exporters, they may also limit profit repatriation by inflating the weight of packaging relative to actual product content.

To address these challenges, it is imperative to establish an integrated policy framework that aligns import incentives with national foreign currency objectives. Such a framework should promote the use of sustainable, lightweight packaging solutions and empower local producers to maintain greater control over their supply chains. By doing so, Ethiopia can strengthen economic resilience, safeguard sovereignty and ensure a fairer share of the value created in international trade. This strategic alignment will ultimately benefit both producers and the national economy, fostering a more equitable and sustainable trade environment.

Field surveys and empirical benchmarks provide further guidance. For avocados and grapes in standard cartons, such as 20×22×11 boxes on wooden pallets, material ratios hover around 18 percent. Strawberries range from 29 to 30 percent for 2.5 kg cartons, with bundles reaching up to 31 percent. Herbs show higher ratios of up to 65 to 69 percent in vertical cartons, reflecting protective needs. Vegetables such as lettuce and tomatoes show 13 to 25 percent on pallets, while mixed crates and smaller packs range from 16 to 22 percent.

The current regulatory targets — such as 80:20 for avocados and grapes, 65:35 for blueberries and strawberries, 31:69 for herbs, 67:33 for various vegetables, and 32:68 for seeds — offer rational pathways for reform. These targets highlight opportunities for lightweight, high-strength materials, optimized geometries and standardized designs that preserve product integrity while minimizing weight.

Standardized weights strengthen competitiveness by optimizing logistics and signaling reliability. They counter buyer dominance, strengthen negotiating power and position Ethiopia as a premium supplier in EU, Middle Eastern and Asian markets. However, elevated ratios in delicate segments may pressure margins against competitors in East Africa and Latin America. Sustainability also adds complexity: wooden pallets raise deforestation concerns, while plastic alternatives require strong reuse and waste-management systems.

Duty-free imports of heavy materials amplify inefficiencies. Without recalibrating incentives toward local production of lighter, compliant alternatives, Ethiopia will continue to lose value. Policymakers must examine how incentive schemes

interact with weight optimization and introduce targeted support for domestic manufacturing, research and development in biodegradable options, and supply chain resilience.

To manage the economic impact, Ethiopia should pursue a multifaceted strategy:

- **Data-driven revision:** Conduct comprehensive post-implementation reviews incorporating trade volumes, rejection rates, costs and sourcing data. Prioritize high-intensity categories with innovative materials, while explicitly assessing the impact of imported packaging.

- **Technological modernization:** Deploy AI scanners, digital counters and integrated systems at export hubs to reduce dependence on self-reporting, enhance accuracy and ensure quality.

- **Stakeholder collaboration:** Establish tripartite forums with the Ministry, exporters and importers to refine flexible, tiered standards that reconcile buyer needs with national benchmarks.

- **Domestic capacity building:** Incentivize local packaging production and condition duty-free schemes on lighter, more efficient materials. This would create jobs and strengthen resilience.

- **Economic modeling:** Develop quantitative models projecting repatriation gains. Modest improvements of 5 to 10 percent in material ratios could yield substantial foreign exchange inflows.

Additional measures include AfCFTA harmonization, technology transfer partnerships, pilot programs and benchmarking against leaders such as Kenya, Peru and the Netherlands. Truck exports to neighboring countries also warrant

parallel modernization of weight practices.

Finally, the 2018 packaging standards exemplify Ethiopia's proactive commitment to reclaiming agency within global value chains. By addressing the complexities of imported heavy materials, duty-free import schemes and their direct influence on net weight and repatriation, the country can transform packaging from a potential vulnerability into a strategic asset.

Integrating empirical analysis, technological advancement, stakeholder collaboration and coherent export regulation will enable Ethiopia to align sovereignty imperatives with commercial realities. To balance national sovereignty with market demands, Ethiopia must embrace an approach that combines evidence-based policy, cutting-edge technology, collaborative stakeholder engagement and consistent import rules.

Immediate and focused action is imperative in the export of Ethiopia's abundant fruits and vegetables, 85 percent of which are destined for Djibouti and Somalia. Existing weight measurement practices are antiquated and hinder the sector's growth potential. It is time to modernize Ethiopia's approach and raise standards so the country can maximize export value and better meet the demands of regional partners.

Mekonnen Solomon is an agricultural economist with expertise in the Ministry of Agriculture. He can be reached at ehdaplan@gmail.com.

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EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (Eoi)

External Auditor for July 2025 to 2026 June Organizational Audit

The SIRAD Institute for Research and Development (SIRAD) is a leading civil society organization in Ethiopia dedicated to uniting communities to develop and implement sustainable livelihoods, evidence-based solutions for peace, social cohesion, Capacity building, and empowering women and youth for inclusive development. In addition to its peacebuilding efforts.

Guided by a clear vision, mission, and core values, SIRAD operates with integrity, transparency, and excellence, ensuring that all resources are managed responsibly and in line with national regulations and internationally accepted standards.

In line with its commitment to institutional excellence and financial accountability, SIRAD hereby invites qualified, licensed, and reputable external audit firms to submit an Expression of Interest (Eoi) to conduct the 2025 July to 2026 June Organizational External Audit.

SIRAD for Institute for Research and Development (SIRAD)
Jigjiga Office, **Kebele 10**, Ayedega Road 10014 House,
Jigjiga, Ethiopia: **Submission:** Interested audit firms are invited to submit their

Interested applicants to submit via below emails:
sirdevelopment2022@gmail.com or muhumed9601@gmail.com
OR via P.O. Box: 1B0lCl, Jigjiga, Ethiopia or +251915766620

Submission Deadline: from 14th June 2026 to June 28th 2026

Further Information: Please visit our website: <https://siradinsti-tute.dev>

SIRAD welcomes Expressions of Interest from audit firms that uphold the highest standards of **professionalism, independence, and ethical practice.**



EXCLUSION FROM INVESTMENT CODE IDENTIFIED AS MAIN OBSTACLE TO ETHIOPIA'S CREATIVE INDUSTRY

Stakeholders say the main obstacle facing Ethiopia's cultural and creative industries is not a lack of government funding, but the sector's exclusion from the national investment code.

They argue that although the industry has strong potential to generate foreign exchange and create jobs, the absence of legal recognition within the country's commercial framework has prevented the creative economy from emerging as a standalone driver of growth.

The issue was raised when Selam Ethiopia handed over a five-year study under the continental Connect for Culture Africa project to a government executive body. The study is intended to support the implementation of an African commitment that calls on member states to allocate at least 1 percent of their annual budgets to culture and the arts.

According to the findings, the culture and arts sector is not only a source of entertainment but also an important contributor to national development and employment creation.

Sisay Mengiste, program director of Selam Ethiopia, said the organization has worked with federal and regional stakeholders for 21 years. He said the study would serve as a baseline for Ethiopia's efforts to meet its continental commitment to fund the sector.

Hirut Kassa, head of the Addis Ababa Culture and Arts Bureau, said treating art, film and crafts under the same regulatory system as ordinary commodity trade has slowed the sector's growth. She said the creative industry has its

own operating procedures and commercial realities, and that the main problem is its exclusion from the investment code.

Officials said the government's current role is largely limited to building infrastructure, training and policy formulation. In Addis Ababa, major cultural facilities such as the Adwa Memorial, regional theaters and cinema complexes have been built with public funds.

However, they said relying only on a fixed 1 percent budget allocation is not a sustainable

solution. Instead, they argued that reforming policy to attract private investment should be the priority. The presentation was attended by members of the House of Peoples' Representatives Standing Committee, officials from the Ministry of Finance and the Planning and Development Commission, as well as representatives from universities and professional associations. Organizers said the goal was to help relevant institutions better understand the sector's needs ahead of the Ministry of Culture's

budget discussions.

Nafisa Al-Mahdi, state minister of culture and language development at the Ministry of Culture and Sports, said culture and the arts are not only expressions of national identity but also pillars of the economy.

"When we talk about culture and arts, we are talking about national development," she said. "In the past, the sector was seen only as entertainment, but the government is now giving it due attention, preparing policy frameworks and implementing

them on the ground."

She added that the sector's economic value has not been sufficiently supported by research, particularly in terms of verified data on employment by gender and age. She said the new study helps fill that gap.

Among the eight studies presented were Baseline Study and Actor Mapping for Public Investment in Ethiopia's Culture Sector, Market Survey Report: Music Industry in Addis Ababa, and The Role of Arts and Culture in Peacebuilding in Ethiopia.

"RESILIENCE AND INCLUSION" ART EXHIBITION OPENS FOR WORLD REFUGEE DAY

An art exhibition themed "Resilience and Inclusion" opened today at the Modern Art Museum's Gebrekristos Desta Center in Addis Ababa to mark World Refugee Day 2026.

The group exhibition features works by seven refugee artists — five men and two women — from Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Iraq.

Through paintings and other creative pieces, the artists reflect on life in exile, their hopes for the future and the resilience required to rebuild their lives.

Organizers said the exhibition aims to highlight the importance of refugees' socio-cultural and economic inclusion while also



creating a space for dialogue and mutual understanding. They said the artworks amplify refugee voices and underscore the role refugees play in the community.

The exhibition was jointly organized by several partner organizations working on refugee protection and support. It opened on Friday, June 19, and will remain on public display until June 21, 2026, at the Gebrekristos Desta Center in the compound of Addis Ababa University's College of Business and Economics.

The opening ceremony was attended by art enthusiasts, refugee advocates and representatives of various institutions.



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 - Marketing Office : +251(0) 116-67-77-88 / +251 957-10-10-10/+251 911-21-55-47
- ✉ E-mail: info@steelyrmiplc.com
 - marketing@steelyrmiplc.com
- 🌐 Web Site: www.steelyrmiplc.com P.O.Box: 10742 (A.A Ethiopia)
- 📍 Address: Addis Ababa, Gurd Shola, Century Mall (HO)



Epidemics know no borders



■ By Ambassador JIANG Feng

Recently, a new outbreak of Ebola has occurred in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The World Health Organization (WHO) has designated it a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). The Chinese Government is following the situation closely and promptly provided emergency humanitarian assistance to the DRC. In addition to bilateral assistance, China has also extended support to the African Union Commission and engaged in epidemic prevention and control cooperation, supporting the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) in its efforts to contain the outbreak and strengthen the capacity of African countries to respond to public health emergencies.

China's support for African countries in combating Ebola is an important demonstration of its commitment to the vision of a community with a shared future for mankind proposed by President Xi Jinping, as well as a concrete step in implementing the Ten Partnership Actions announced at the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). On June 16, Chinese Vice Premier Liu Guozhong addressed the High-Level Meeting of African Heads of State and Government and Partners on the Ebola Disease Outbreak. On behalf of China, he conveyed sympathies and support to African countries and peoples, commended the African Union for its active coordination of anti-epidemic efforts, and announced additional emergency humanitarian assistance measures.

Earlier, on June 2, the first group of Chinese medical experts dispatched to assist the DRC arrived in Kinshasa. Bringing together expertise in public health, clinical medicine, traditional Chinese medicine, and epidemic prevention and control, the team has been working closely with Congolese health authorities, medical institutions, disease control agencies and international partners. It has provided support in epidemic assessment, case management, laboratory testing, and professional training. Meanwhile, China's 45 medical teams, comprising more than 900 medical personnel stationed across 44 African countries, continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with the African people on the front lines of epidemic prevention and control. The solidarity and cooperation demonstrated by China and Africa in combating disease vividly embody the essence of the all-weather China-Africa community with a shared future for the new era. From China's full support for three West African countries during the Ebola outbreak in 2015, to the mutual assistance between China and Africa during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, and now to the swift deployment of

Chinese medical experts following the latest Ebola outbreak, China and Africa have consistently shown mutual understanding, support, and assistance. Together, they have contributed to safeguarding global public health security, set an example for international health cooperation, and written a compelling chapter in the continued advancement of China-Africa relations.

No country can tackle global health threats alone. Solidarity and cooperation remain the most powerful weapons against epidemics. At present, Ebola prevention and control efforts in Africa face multiple challenges, including shortages of health personnel, complex security situations in affected areas, weak primary healthcare infrastructure, gaps in disease surveillance systems, and the spread of misinformation and stigmatization. These factors seriously constrain the ability of affected countries to contain the outbreak effectively.

In recent years, one major country has significantly reduced its health aid to Africa and have increasingly

instrumentalized and politicized such assistance. In some cases, aid has been used as leverage to pressure recipient countries into compromising their sovereignty over data and resources, further undermining Africa's already fragile health systems. In addition, the spillover effects of ongoing conflicts, including the confrontation between the United States and Iran, have placed greater fiscal and resource constraints on African countries' efforts to strengthen their public health systems.

Against this backdrop, the international community should uphold the vision of a community with a shared future for mankind, strengthen solidarity and cooperation, and adhere to the principles of public welfare and inclusiveness in health assistance to Africa, without attaching political conditions. Greater collaboration should be fostered with the WHO and relevant United Nations agencies, while platforms such as the Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund should be fully utilized to

support health cooperation projects in Africa. The international community should also support Africa CDC in strengthening public health workforce development and disease prevention and control systems, enhancing Africa's capacity for independent epidemic response and accelerating the establishment of autonomous, sustainable, and resilient healthcare systems across the continent.

China and Africa have always been good brothers who stand together through thick and thin. China will continue to uphold the principles of sincerity, real results, amity, and good faith in developing its relations with Africa, as well as the correct approach to friendship and interests. China remains firmly committed to supporting African countries in enhancing their public health capacities and will continue to deepen cooperation in disease prevention and control, healthcare services, pharmaceutical industries, and medical talent development. These efforts will contribute to the early realization of the goals set out in the Africa

Health Security and Sovereignty Agenda.

China stands ready to work with the international community to uphold the principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits, practice genuine multilateralism, and continue supporting the WHO in playing its leading and coordinating role in global health governance. Together, we can elevate the building of a global community of health for all to a higher level and make new and greater contributions to world peace and development, as well as to the health and well-being of all humanity.

Ambassador JIANG Feng is Head of Mission of China to the AU and Representative of China to the UNECA

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A commercial mindset is what makes an airport last

Most airports are built around capacity. The ones that last are designed around commercial performance from the outset. Africa's recent wave of airport developments is the opportunity to get this right.

■ By Selim Bouri

Africa is investing in airports at a scale not seen in a generation. From Lagos to Bishoftu, Kigali to Cape Town, governments and private sector players across the continent are committing serious money to aviation infrastructure. But long-term success will depend not just on what gets built, but whether these airports are designed from the outset to operate as commercially sustainable businesses.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) projects Africa's aviation market will grow at a rate of 4.1% annually over the next two decades, reaching over 400 million passengers a year by 2044. Eight of the world's ten fastest-growing aviation markets by percentage are on this continent (IATA, 2025).

Building new runways, aprons and terminals is only part of the equation. A new airport is not the same as a commercially sustainable airport. What is impressive on opening day can become a burden on public finances soon after. The airports that prove most commercially sustainable in the long-term are those that see revenue generation as an integral design decision, rather than an operational afterthought.

This was the approach taken at Yaoundé Airport in Cameroon and its recent upgrade to check-in, immigration and baggage handling systems earlier this year. Every blueprint and budget line was designed to make sure the airport could pay for itself, attract airlines, support growing passenger volumes, and deliver the long-term returns and economic benefits underpinning the investment.

Good design is a revenue-driver. The commercial airport model

draws from two primary streams: aeronautical and non-aeronautical. Aeronautical revenue is the money an airport earns from its core business of moving people and cargo on and off planes. This includes passenger service charges, landing fees, aircraft parking charges, and related fees paid by airlines. The goal here is to move as many passengers through the facility as efficiently as possible, charge fairly for the service, and to attract and retain airlines so they add more flights and routes.

Non-aeronautical revenue covers everything else: public parking, retail concessions, hotels, lounges, advertising, and property rentals. Done well, this transforms an airport from a break-even utility into a genuinely profitable enterprise.

Passenger volume alone does not guarantee commercial performance. Airports only unlock the full value of traffic when terminals are designed to move passengers efficiently through commercially active spaces. Design is a core commercial driver, not just an aesthetic one.

Passengers expect more. Commercial advantage goes to the airports that keep up.

Technology has reset what a modern airport experience looks like, and passenger expectations have moved accordingly.

Globally, three in four passengers say they prefer to use biometric identification over paper documents at the airport, while half already do (IATA, 2025). Self-service check-in, automated bag drops and e-gates for border control are becoming standard rather than premium features. Airports value them for their ability to save space, reduce costs and improve efficiency.

Beyond processing, passengers expect the environment to work for them: real-time, accurate digital signage, clear wayfinding, comfortable lounges and waiting areas, reliable high-speed connectivity, and a well-considered mix of retail and food offerings. These elements need to be positioned so that moving through the airport feels intuitive at every step.

These are not nice-to-haves. They directly influence how long passengers dwell, how comfortable they feel, and how likely they are to engage with the commercial offering. Meeting these expectations requires investment; investment that pays back directly through the airport's two core revenue streams.

On the aeronautical side, faster and more reliable passenger processing means higher throughput within the same physical footprint, translating directly into the ability to accommodate more flights and attract more airlines.

On the non-aeronautical side, a passenger who clears check-in, security and passport control in twenty minutes instead of forty-five has more time to eat, shop, and spend.

Three principles for building airports that pay for themselves

First. A commercially grounded master plan defines how many passengers the facility will serve, how much revenue each one needs to generate, and what that means for how the terminal is designed. Every structural decision made without one will cost more to fix than it would have cost to get right. Second. Commercial performance is determined before construction even begins. Airports that integrate passenger flow, retail strategy, dwell zones, wayfinding and

self-service technology into the core design process are far better positioned to unlock revenue, improve passenger experience and attract airline partners over the long term. When these elements are treated as secondary and added later, airports lock themselves into costly inefficiencies that are difficult and expensive to reverse.

Third. Work with people who have done this before. Airports deliver stronger long-term returns when they are planned by teams with experience across aviation, security, immigration, logistics, technology and retail. These environments depend on multiple interconnected systems and stakeholders working together. Bringing in the right expertise early means systems work together rather than in isolation, operations run more efficiently, and commercial returns grow over time.

Across more than 400 global airport projects, including 15 of the world's top 40, CCM, a SITA company, has seen first-hand that the difference between a terminal that delivers on its commercial potential and one that does not most often comes down to when the right expertise entered the project. The earlier it does, the less it costs and the more it returns.

Selim Bouri is SITA's President for Africa and Middle East. SITA is the air transport industry's IT partner, serving airports, airlines, and border management authorities worldwide.

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Nigeria's US\$1 billion AfCFTA credit push tests if Africa's trade finance gap can be eased

By Bonface Orucho, bird story agency

Nigeria is shifting its AfCFTA strategy from trade participation to trade financing, unveiling a US\$1 billion credit facility aimed at expanding the capacity of firms to produce and export across African markets.

The move reflects a broader attempt to address a constraint repeatedly identified by development finance institutions: access to capital remains central to whether African firms can actually trade under the continental free trade framework.

"The AfCFTA remains one of the most significant economic integration projects in our continent's history," Nigeria's minister of industry, trade, and investment, Jumoke Oduwole, said during a meeting of the AfCFTA Central Coordination Committee.

Her comments align with a wider policy concern across the continent that tariff liberalization alone is insufficient to generate trade flows without corresponding improvements in productive capacity and financing. According to Afreximbank, Africa faces an annual trade finance gap exceeding US\$100 billion, limiting firms' ability to access working capital and investment finance required for cross-border trade.

According to the African Development Bank, small and medium-sized enterprises dominate the business landscape but continue to face the most severe constraints in accessing credit for expansion and export readiness. The World Bank similarly identifies access to finance as one of the most binding constraints on private sector growth in Africa.

Taken together, these assessments point to a structural bottleneck in AfCFTA implementation, where policy frameworks have advanced faster than the financial systems needed to operationalize them.

The US\$1 billion facility is part of the AfCFTA Adjustment Fund architecture, established by the AfCFTA Secretariat and Afreximbank in 2022 to support implementation of the continental trade agreement.

According to Afreximbank, the Adjustment Fund is structured around three components. The Base Fund supports tariff-related adjustments and implementation costs. The General Fund provides concessional financing. The credit fund mobilizes commercial financing for both public and private sector actors seeking to participate in AfCFTA-linked opportunities.

Afreximbank estimates that the broader Adjustment Fund requires between US\$8 billion and US\$10 billion over a 5 to 10-year period to support implementation across member states.

Nigeria's facility sits within the Credit Fund component, which is designed to mobilize commercial capital for productive sectors linked to regional trade.

Patience Okala, National Coordinator of the Nigeria AfCFTA Coordination Office, said the facility targets large corporations seeking to expand production, strengthen competitiveness, and scale exports across African markets.

"Under the Adjustment Fund, there is a credit fund scheme of US\$1 billion for large corporates," she said.

She added that eligible firms must demonstrate capacity to absorb at least US\$10 million, meet governance and financial criteria,

and show alignment with AfCFTA objectives, including regional value chain integration, industrialization, and import substitution.

"The facility can be provided as a term loan, working capital, trade finance facility, or project finance to support expansion, modernization, and market-entry initiatives under AfCFTA," she said.

Officials say access will be mediated through the Nigeria AfCFTA Coordination Office and designated fund managers, with a pipeline model used to identify qualifying firms rather than open retail applications. Pilot companies have already been identified, including women-led enterprises, although no public disbursements have been confirmed. Legal and trade experts say the initiative could improve the readiness of Nigerian firms to participate in continental markets, provided firms are able to meet the technical and financial thresholds required.

According to Eunice Iretioluwa Banjo, a trade and corporate governance specialist, the facility signals a more practical phase of AfCFTA implementation focused on enabling businesses to compete across African markets.

"The fund will increase production capacity, improve competitiveness, and accelerate intra-African trade

under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)," she said.

She added that the success of the initiative will depend on whether firms can translate access to finance into export capacity, compliance readiness, and sustained competitiveness in regional markets. Nigeria's implementation record provides context for the financing push.

According to the Nigeria AfCFTA Coordination Office, the country recorded its first shipment under AfCFTA preferential trading terms in January 2025, when synthetic filaments produced by Lucky Fibres Limited arrived at the Port of Mombasa in Kenya. The shipment marked Nigeria's entry into preferential continental trade under the agreement.

Since then, Nigeria has expanded implementation efforts to include export facilitation tools, air cargo corridor development, and coordination between customs, export promotion agencies, and trade regulators.

In March 2026, the federal government also launched a report on cross-border digital payments and identity systems under AfCFTA. According to the government, the initiative is designed to reduce transaction costs and improve access

to continental markets through systems such as the Pan-African Payment and Settlement System.

Despite widespread ratification of AfCFTA, implementation across the continent remains uneven.

So far, only a limited number of African countries have been publicly confirmed as participating in structured goods trade under the AfCFTA's Guided Trade Initiative, the Secretariat's mechanism for testing preferential trade flows. Transactions under this framework began in late 2022 to test customs readiness, rules of origin procedures and tariff application under real trading conditions.

According to AfCFTA implementation updates and Secretariat communications, the initial pilot group included Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, Mauritius, Egypt, Cameroon and Tunisia. These countries were selected based on the approval and publication of their tariff schedules and readiness to test AfCFTA trading documentation and customs procedures.

The goods tested under the initiative have broadly included manufactured and processed products such as coffee, tea, ceramic tiles, processed foods, sugar-based products, textiles and light industrial inputs, reflecting early attempts to validate regional

supply chains under the agreement.

Subsequent participation has expanded as additional countries complete domestic legal incorporation of tariff schedules and rules of origin frameworks. South Africa and Nigeria have been reported among countries engaging in AfCFTA preferential trade flows as implementation deepens, particularly in industrial and value-added product categories.

Notably, before Nigeria's facility announcement, the AfCFTA Adjustment Fund Credit Fund had already begun operationalization through its first disclosed investment. According to Afreximbank, the Credit Fund closed its inaugural transaction in July 2025, committing US\$10 million to Telecel Global Services Ltd. through a senior secured amortizing loan.

The facility is supporting the company's expansion and digital infrastructure development in Ghana and Liberia.

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After Showmax, MTN tests telecom-led distribution as Africa's streaming wars intensify

By Bonface Orucho, bird story agency

The battle for Africa's streaming market is increasingly being fought beyond content libraries and into distribution systems and payment infrastructure.

MTN Group has recently launched MTN One TV, a new entertainment proposition combining live television, local storytelling, international programming, and flexible viewing models across African markets.

"MTN One TV is more than just another streaming platform entering a competitive market," Chomba Victoria Mkasanga, founder of AFRO Magazine, said in an exchange with bird story agency.

It represents a broader shift in how African companies are approaching content ownership, distribution, and digital ecosystems," she added.

She also noted the entry of African telecom operators into streaming reflects a structural change in how content is financed and accessed across the continent.

"For years, African creatives have largely had to fit into the priorities and criteria of global platforms to gain visibility," she said, adding that mobile-first distribution and bundling with connectivity could change how African audiences access content.

MTN's statement said the platform will combine free-to-view, advertising-supported, pay-per-view, and subscription models depending on market conditions. Customers will also be able to pay using airtime and mobile money in selected markets.

"Entertainment is increasingly becoming an important gateway to digital participation," according to Selorm Adadevoh, MTN Group Chief Commercial, Strategy, and Transformation Officer.

He said the company is leveraging its

connectivity and fintech infrastructure to expand access to content while supporting Africa's creative economy. The launch comes shortly after MultiChoice's Showmax exited the standalone streaming market, leaving a structural gap in a sector already under pressure from global and regional competition.

Even with MTN One TV's entry, competition continues to intensify.

Amazon expanded its Prime Video footprint in South Africa in June 2026, bundling entertainment with its broader Prime ecosystem that includes delivery, gaming, and retail perks.

Netflix, meanwhile, is deepening its production footprint rather than only expanding distribution. In June 2026, it named 14 young South Africans for its ScreenCraft Pathways programme, a 12-month industry placement initiative developed with local film commissions and production houses. The programme, now entering a second cohort, highlights a longer-term strategy focused on building production capacity and embedding talent pipelines within South Africa's film industry.

According to Netflix, the initiative is designed to "provide a structured, professional pathway into the industry" through hands-on placements across production and post-production environments. Industry partners describe it as part of strengthening the country's "production pipeline" and linking skills development more directly to employment outcomes in the screen sector.

MTN's scale remains central to its strategy. The company reports more than 307 million subscribers across 16 African markets, giving it a distribution footprint that few entertainment players can match.

The logic behind One TV reflects

a broader shift in streaming economics. Rather than relying solely on subscriptions, platforms are increasingly combining advertising, pay-per-view, and telecom bundling models tied directly to mobile ecosystems.

That shift is closely linked to how Africans actually pay for digital services.

Credit card penetration remains structurally limited across much of the continent, reshaping how subscription models scale.

Data compiled from Onafriq and African payments industry reporting indicates that credit cards account for roughly 3% of transactions in Africa, while debit cards account for about 18%, compared with a global average of around 51%. In more developed markets, card-based payments remain the backbone of digital subscriptions, while in Africa, they remain concentrated in higher-income urban segments.

Mobile money has instead become the dominant transaction rail. The Boston Consulting Group estimates that Africa now accounts for roughly 74% of global mobile money activity, underscoring how digital payments are evolving outside traditional banking infrastructure.

This creates a structural constraint for streaming platforms built around card-based recurring billing. MTN is solving the need for subscription video services to increasingly adapt to mobile money, prepaid systems, and telecom-bundled billing rather than credit-led consumption models.

According to Wunpini Fatimata Mohammed, an assistant professor of communication at Cornell University, global streaming platforms have created opportunities for African stories while also introducing new

questions about who those stories are ultimately being produced for.

In a recent analysis, Mohammed argued that "global cosmopolitan audiences are prioritised over African audiences," warning that market incentives can influence which narratives receive visibility and investment.

That concern has become increasingly relevant as African creators seek greater control over distribution and intellectual property.

In Nigeria, for instance, there is a growing number of filmmakers who are releasing feature-length productions directly on YouTube, bypassing both cinemas and subscription platforms. The model has demonstrated that large-scale audiences can be reached without traditional gatekeepers while simultaneously generating data on demand and audience behavior that can be monetized through advertising and future licensing.

The result is a streaming environment that is fragmenting rather than consolidating.

Across the continent (countries in the Mediterranean excluded), streaming is not displacing pay TV but expanding alongside it. According to 3Vision's Video Markets Tracker, streaming revenue is projected to reach US\$2.2 billion by 2030, while Pay TV remains larger at US\$5.9 billion over the same period.

Pay TV is expected to reach 56.4 million subscribers by 2030 compared to 10.7 million SVOD subscribers, according to the same report.

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The partnership that will shape Ethiopia's future

By Moges Mekonnen

Ethiopia is currently experiencing a moment of change. Its economy has seen real expansion over many years of state investment in major infrastructure projects, including dams, railways and industrial parks. However, this growth has also left the country with significant debt, inefficiencies and continued reliance on foreign assistance for a large part of its economy.

The period of rapid economic growth that followed major public investment in infrastructure has ended, and the country is now transitioning into a new phase of its economic plan. There will be no more experimentation with public-private partnerships; they will now be an integral part of Ethiopia's economic strategy.

The government has already decided to pursue public-private partnerships (PPPs), but the key question is whether Ethiopia has sufficient institutional capacity, a mature enough private sector and the political will to implement a successful program.

Why Ethiopia Turned to Public-Private Partnerships

Ethiopia has turned to public-private partnerships due to severe financial constraints that threaten the country's economic model, pushing it away from its long-standing developmental-state approach. Fiscal pressures include high levels of government debt, inflation and low tax revenues. A recent audit by the Office of the Federal Auditor General identified more than 17 billion birr in the cost of mismanaged road and university construction projects, in addition to an estimated USD 20 billion needed for recovery and reconstruction over the next five years.

As one investment analysis put it, "PPP is still a work in progress. We all understand the challenges. However, there are no viable alternatives that can sustain additional public-sector borrowing."

The developmental state has reached the limits of debt-financed investment. The private sector will now be required to support a larger share of Ethiopia's economy not because the government has abandoned its development mission, but because it has reached the limits of that model.

The Legal Framework

Under Proclamation No. 1076/2018, Ethiopia has established a PPP Board headed by the Minister of Finance and a PPP Directorate-General that serves as the board's secretariat. The framework covers energy, transport, telecoms, healthcare, education and digital infrastructure. Ethiopian Investment Holdings, with USD 47 billion to USD 48 billion in assets under management, will take minority stakes alongside private-sector investors in key areas.

The structure looks good on paper. On the ground, however, it lacks the critical elements of capacity, credibility and confidence. Investors require guarantees on profit repatriation, bankable tariff rates and enforceable contracts, but these elements are not consistently in place. The PPP unit within the Ministry of Finance is not adequately coordinated with the Ministry of Planning. Line ministries develop projects independently, often bypassing central agencies altogether. In most cases, investors do not fund frameworks; they fund projects with clear authority, predictable cash flow and a strong government counterpart capable of delivery.

Projects That Show Promise

Successful projects often build confidence for future ones. For example, the Gad and Dicheto solar projects in the Somali and Afar regional states were procured using a public-private partnership model. This is how PPPs are meant to work: by using private-sector efficiency to

deliver public goods in areas where the government lacks the means or capacity to provide timely, cost-effective services.

A strong example is the Addis Ababa-Adama Expressway project, in which the public and private sectors share project risk and toll revenue provides a transparent and predictable funding stream. Future roads, railways and transit projects in Ethiopia should ideally be developed under similar arrangements.

Sectors That Will Define the Future

Any serious development strategy

should prioritize energy and electrification because they underpin all other sectors. Manufacturing, digital growth, health services and education all depend on reliable electricity to support productivity and expansion.

Agriculture is perhaps the most important area for development and the least served by private business in Ethiopia. The World Bank projects that, with sufficient private support, Ethiopia could move from being a net importer of food to producing a surplus of 20 to 25 percent above

domestic needs. The necessary partnerships would include investment in cold-chain infrastructure, processing facilities and rural financial services to connect smallholder-produced food to commercial markets.

The health sector remains a largely underdeveloped frontier in Ethiopia and one of the missing links in achieving universal health coverage for the country's 130 million citizens without a major increase in public health spending. Significant private investment is needed in hospitals, diagnostic laboratories

and pharmaceutical supply chains to expand access to services for all Ethiopians.

Improving digital infrastructure through broader broadband access would give farmers real-time market information, students access to global knowledge and businesses a better chance to compete internationally. The principle is simple: the government owns the spectrum and sets the regulatory framework, while the private sector brings capital, technology and operational expertise.

The Tests Ahead

The legal framework for institutional capacity is in place, but Ethiopia urgently needs stronger project-preparation capabilities, including bankable feasibility studies, credible risk-management frameworks and enforceable contracts.

Investors remain concerned about ongoing foreign exchange restrictions that discourage investment, and confidence will not be restored through IMF engagement or debt rescheduling alone without visible improvement.

Renegotiation of commercial contracts has been common throughout Ethiopia's history, sending investors the message that contracts are conditional. Yet commercial rule of law is the central pillar on which the PPP model depends.

The domestic private sector is not yet capable of handling billion-dollar deals on its own, so joint ventures, technology transfer and local procurement should be used deliberately to build capacity.

There is also an unresolved tension between an overly controlling government and a private sector that prefers autonomy. For PPPs to succeed, the framework must be embedded deeply in national institutions so it can survive changes in leadership.

Beyond Financing

A true public-private partnership creates a fundamentally different relationship between the state and the market. When the state works with investors or entrepreneurs, it is effectively saying: we trust you to help deliver public goods, in partnership with us and under agreed accountability rules.

At a recent investment forum in Ethiopia, the head of Ethiopian Investment Holdings challenged the private sector directly, saying the government provides capital, land and regulatory support, while investors must provide at least half the solution. That is the right approach. A PPP works when both sides contribute something the other cannot provide alone. It fails when either side tries to dominate the arrangement.

Ethiopia has abundant renewable energy resources, a strategic geographic location, a young population and a large diaspora interested in investing in the country. Now is the time to build the institutional framework needed to turn these assets into partnerships that bring electricity to rural communities, connect farmers to markets, expand healthcare access and create jobs for young people who cannot afford to wait.

A partnership agreement between the government and the private sector is more than a financing tool; it is a contract between the country Ethiopia is today and the one it intends to become.

Moges Mekonnen is Communication Director at Ethiopian Electric Power and can be reached via moges4994@gmail.com

Millimeters to Miles: Finding strength in tiny steps

By Gzachew Wolde

Some days feel heavy, and some nights run long. In times like these, it is natural to wonder how you keep holding on. The weight of uncertainty and the drag of trouble may challenge you. Your heart may race. You may feel tired. But you are still breathing, and you are not finished yet.

You do not need to complete everything at once. Give yourself the gift of rest when you need it. Rest is not a sign of stopping forever; it is a way to return with renewed strength and a fresh mind, ready to pursue your goals vigorously.

Short breaks can prevent burnout and restore emotional energy. When you come back, you are not escaping the task; you are resetting before the final push. Rest is not surrender. It is preparation.

When you return after proper rest, you are not just continuing — you are attacking the task with renewed energy. Allow yourself a moment to recharge so you can face what comes next with clarity and courage. Do not linger too long in doubt; rest briefly, then begin again. Now is the time to turn momentum into progress. Use the pause to recalibrate, then return with intention and purpose. When you start again, you are not just picking up where you left off; you are coming back sharper, more focused and more determined. Keep moving steadily, stay relentless, and remain committed to the goal ahead.

You do not need to be perfect right away. Just keep moving forward, even when it does not feel easy. There is no better choice than forward movement. That is what keeps you going. After all, you have come this far, so do not let despair stop you now.

There is no perfect moment and no magic green light. There is only the next breath, the next small step and the next hour. You do not have to fix everything at once. Instead, keep trying. Choose one tiny, concrete task: write one sentence, send one message, record one note somewhere you will see tomorrow.

Do one thing as well as you can. Stretch for 30 seconds. Send the message you have been holding in your mind to the place you want to reach. These actions may not solve everything, but any movement breaks the stall.

A crooked dish still gets clean if you decide to wash it. A clumsy sentence still becomes something better if you choose to edit it. You do not need to judge today's crooked dish or clumsy sentence as failure. You only need to see them as motion already in progress, already shaping what comes next.

Trust in your own work is a form of steady power. Trust yourself. Keep

moving, even if it is only a little at a time. Every step forward, forged with courage and persistence, is a victory you can be proud of.

Keep the next simple task in sight and complete it. Momentum grows from repetition. Begin the next step before doubt catches up. Gradually, you create a corridor from hesitation to possibility. Walk through it. Do it now without hesitation.

Like a pebble dropped into still water, a single timid act ripples outward. The first ripple does not need to be perfect; it only needs to break the surface. Watch those circles spread and slowly change the shoreline of your days.

Simple action is better than silence. A half-hearted stretch still moves your blood. A simple message can still build a bridge across a communication gap. One small act can begin to change what came before.

One step leads to another, and one completed task changes something. Do not demand a perfect result. Simply notice that you moved. That is already a step toward winning. Then, if you can, do one smaller thing later. You have not lost. You are still here, still moving, still becoming steadier. Pause to acknowledge progress, then let your next breath carry you one more step forward. Rest, regroup if needed, then take the next step. Momentum itself will carry you closer to victory.

This is not about forcing yourself. It is about reminding yourself that your future is yours. Trust that version of yourself. Keep it simple. Keep it moving. Hold on to the next second. The win begins with movement itself, not only with the outcome.

When tomorrow feels heavy again, you will not have to think hard. You will remember this path and know what to do. Keep moving through the challenge with strength, carrying the burden more lightly. As you build small units of progress and make steady choices, each step will shorten the climb ahead and make the next decision easier. Your future self will not have to climb the same mountain from the bottom.

Try not only to survive the struggle, but to shape it into something lasting. Complete one small task without trying to fix everything at once. Do not expect too much from the outcome. Just notice that you moved forward. Help your body catch up to your choice. Let this be the quiet turn. Choose one small step now, notice it, and let your effort and will align with that choice.

Even when no one sees and even when you are on your own, progress can feel slow and difficult. Yet remember that moving by millimeters adds up over time. Small, consistent efforts, often invisible to others, gradually compound into meaningful

transformation.

That is how you reduce the weight on your shoulders. Keep going not because it is easy, but because you already know how. Accept that sometimes you are on your own. Learn to live with that. But do not give up. Every trial is a test that builds strength and resilience, helping you survive and grow. Over time, small adjustments reshape habits, skills and creations into something noticeably better.

Accepting moments of solitude and the hard work they demand does not mean standing still. Rather, it sets the stage for purposeful action. When you lean into small, deliberate changes, every effort becomes part of a steady current carrying you toward what you intend to build.

Patience is not passivity. It is the courage to let small, consistent movements carry you farther than any single leap ever could. Do not judge things by how they look now. Judge them by the direction they are taking. Focus on the effort and the vision it carries. This is where patience becomes action: not waiting for perfection, but trusting that each deliberate move compounds into momentum.

The step beyond wisdom is to commit today to act tomorrow, without judging the present too harshly, but instead focusing on how each movement shapes the time to come. Remember, every forward step brings you closer to your goal. Draw courage from that progress. Judge nothing merely by how it stands, but by the motion and impact it will have in the future.

True progress is not about sudden leaps or immediate results — it is about steady, patient effort. Patience does not mean waiting passively; it means having the courage to trust slow, consistent movements that gradually build momentum and carry you forward. Instead of judging where you are now, look to where you are headed. Pay attention to the direction your efforts take and the vision they support.

Patience, consistency and incremental improvement can create wonders that surprise you and others. So keep moving. Do not mistake small for insignificant. There is incredible power in small steps to bridge great gaps and reach the other side. On the journey of steady growth, tiny steps forge a stronger future.

The writer can be reached via gzachewwolde@gmail.com

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Ethiopia expects birr stability in 2026/27 despite heavy FX pressures

By Muluken Yewondwossen

The Ministry of Finance projects the birr will stabilize in the upcoming 2026/27 fiscal year, despite a 15 percent depreciation against major foreign currencies over the past year. During his federal budget presentation to Parliament last week, Finance Minister Ahmed

Shide forecasted a 9.8 percent overall economic growth for the coming fiscal year. This growth is expected to be driven by a 7.1 percent increase in agriculture, 11.6 percent in industry, and 8.5 percent in the services sector, with the economy maintaining strong momentum despite unforeseen global developments. However, Ahmed acknowledged potential

challenges from the ongoing Middle East conflict, which has been factored into the government's budget planning. Ethiopia is projected to import goods worth USD 25.8 billion in 2026/27, with fuel imports alone accounting for approximately USD 6 billion.

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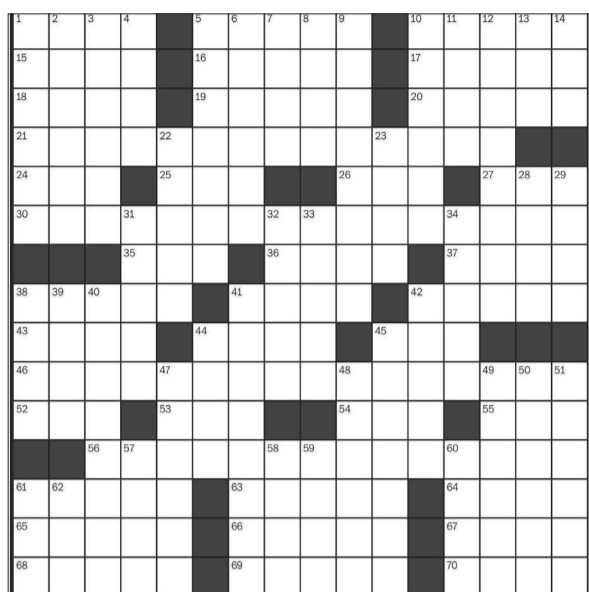
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20. Take part financially
21. Apparel worn between December 22 and January 19?
24. Wine cocktail also called blanc-cassis
25. Mortgage agcy.
26. Pair of
27. Bill fig.
30. Unappreciative of St. Louis's hockey team?
35. Dearie
36. Expressions of discovery
37. Bi- quadrupled
38. "Four Quartets" poet
41. Writer Harte or wrestler Hart

DOWN

42. Lets go
43. SoCal emer. force
44. Puts away
45. French street
46. Starts a top-to-bottom demolition of an old facade?
52. Drink suffix
53. Biblical suffix
54. Private aid gp.
55. Largest U.S. union
56. Shakespearean "Listen up!" or an apt title for this puzzle?
61. Longtime college football coach Nick
63. Vintage violin
64. Smack
65. Scoundrel
66. Almanac info
67. Cover, in a way
68. Alpine song
69. Put away
70. Big Apple resident, for short

DOWN

1. "I'm sorta disappointed"
2. Pompeii art form
3. Experienced sort
4. Locker contents
5. Try to access, as the back of a closet
6. Borrowed
7. Hebrew month after Shevat
8. Curse
9. "Enough!"
10. Rub shoulders (with)
11. Be next to
12. Kikkoman condiment
13. Louvre Pyramid architect
14. Protected fig.
22. "Alternatively ... "
23. Causes to gasp, perhaps
28. Ration (out)
29. General __ chicken
31. Friend of TV's Mary Richards
32. Brooks of country music
33. "Lord, what fools __ mortals be!"
34. Cinema icon born in Rome
38. Site of Napoleon's exile
39. Tallow kin

40. Guilty expression
41. Traction providers
42. Hullabaloo
44. Cornerstone abbr.
45. Appealingly unconventional
47. Place to keep toys?
48. Benjamins
49. "Not exactly, but close"
50. "Developed With Dermatologists" lotion brand
51. Spring holiday
57. Icicle spot
58. Give out
59. Nonsense word similar to "blah"
60. Jessica Mendoza's network
61. Cloud's place
62. "That's __ -brainer!"

Solution: see below



GARFIELD



WEEKLY HOROSCOPES



Aries

You're likely to start the week feeling upbeat. Women can be especially helpful. It's a good time to ask for advice from people you respect. It is a busy time. Some things may take longer than you expect. Work that offers a great deal of variety is best. This can be a very stable and productive week. Focus on excellent customer service. You can shine making people feel comfortable and welcome.



Cancer

You do best in situations where you feel appreciated. If you're in a demanding position where you don't feel you have much control, it may be time to think about making a change. If you're appreciated, be sure you're being the best sort of team player. Expect to be very busy. This is a positive time for renewing contacts with people who support you or your job's interests. You may be feeling rather lazy this weekend - it's OK.



Libra

If you're thinking about your career or you supervise people, it's important to tailor work to the person's temperament and abilities. A good match in these areas makes for the best use of resources and the happiest workers. Midweek brings energy to analyze work habits and job descriptions. Don't promise too much. You may be sidetracked by calls, texts, and unexpected assignments. Week's end offers the possibility of bringing people together around a common purpose.



Capricorn

Look for any source of pressure at work that could be creating long-term stress. You have an opportunity to identify those pressures that could begin to negatively affect you. Be smart and act before an irritation gets you down. It would be good to carry a notebook to write down all your brilliant ideas. People can be moody or critical. Remain positive, assertive, and respectful. Remember that people sometimes need to learn different behaviors.



Taurus

Some people may be watching you more closely this week. Do your best to stick to established procedures. Be especially patient with critical or demanding people. It may be impossible to settle down. Your best path is to be upbeat and busy. Don't chat so much that you get nothing done. You may be able to help a co-worker who's going through tough times. If possible, this is a good time for a long weekend.



Leo

This is a very happy time. Your usual friendly, helpful, sensible self will be appreciated. This week can bring you to a crossroads. Consider changing jobs if you're facing some sort of daily stress. Your first step should be to talk to the people above you. You can be a big hit if you bring in something tasty to share with co-workers. This is also a good time to reorganize your workspace.



Scorpio

Be especially patient this week. The simpler and less hurried you are the better. Your best results will come through sticking with established routines. If managing or making suggestions, remember that people are happiest when some part of their work includes independent decision making. There's more stress and lower morale when people feel disempowered. Have the courage to speak up. This is a good time to make points using food to bring people together.



Aquarius

Look for any source of pressure at work that could be creating long-term stress. You have an opportunity to identify those pressures that could begin to negatively affect you. Be smart and act before an irritation gets you down. It would be good to carry a notebook to write down all your brilliant ideas. People can be moody or critical. Remain positive, assertive, and respectful. Remember that people sometimes need to learn different behaviors.



Gemini

This should be a happy week. Family interests may be very distracting and take extra time and attention. This is especially true if you're planning a holiday. It's a great time for a short getaway. If you must stay on the job, look for ways to help people have fun. Even if you aren't in a position of authority, look for small ways to tell people something positive about their work. On-the-job friendships make the days pleasant.



Virgo

You may be feeling frustrated this week. Problems on the job could lead you to begin a search for something better. This is no time for impulsive action. Be careful about what you say or how you let your feelings show. Do your best to finish all you can. Friends at work will be a source of inspiration and fun. Do your best to put a positive spin on any problem you face.



Sagittarius

This week should be smooth sailing. You'll be happiest sticking with regular routines. If you're having a problem with a co-worker or customer, it can help to document specifically what you see as the issue with their behavior. Unspoken resentments can be an unnecessary source of stress. Listen to the opinions of others and be willing to compromise. This is also a good time to take a break with the family.



Pisces

Do your best this week. Your natural desire to take the lead could be frustrated. Patience and a carefully detailed review of past work may be necessary. Work friends can lighten the mood. It's a positive time to catch up on paperwork and share information with co-workers. The end of the week can be an emotionally stressful time. Big changes out of your control can be a cause for worry. Practice maintaining a calm and hopeful mindset.



Sudoku

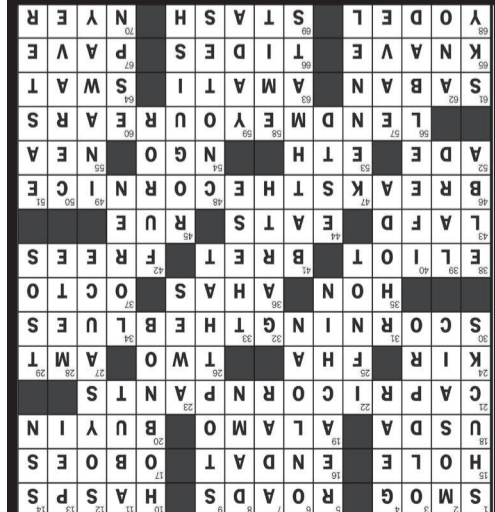
The game is easy, the rules are simple. All you have to do is make sure you fill every 3x3 box every row and every column, without repetition, using the number 1-9.

Word search



- POTTER
- WIZARDRY
- HUFFLEPUFF
- SCAR
- QUIDDITCH
- VOLDMORT
- RONALD
- ALBUS
- DUMBLEDORE
- GRYFFINDOR
- HERMIONE
- WEASLEY
- HARRY
- RAVENCLAW
- HAGRID
- DARK ARTS
- HOGWARTS
- GRANGER
- SIRIUS BLACK

Crossword Solution



Capital SPORT

DR Congo shocks Portugal with a 1-1 draw in its first World Cup appearance since 1974

Just two days after Cape Verde was able to tie Spain 0-0, another African side scored a surprising point against a European power.

DR Congo, making its first World Cup appearance since the nation was Zaire in 1974, scored its first World Cup goal in a 1-1 draw with Portugal in Houston on Wednesday. Yoane Wissa scored the game-tying goal with the last play of the first half off a DR Congo corner.

It was a well-deserved point for DR Congo as Portugal dominated possession but struggled to convert its time with the ball into meaningful goal opportunities after João Neves' early header.

Both Cristiano Ronaldo and Bruno Fernandes were quiet for Portugal. Ronaldo's best chances came in the second half, but a shot inside the box went wide before another was blocked. On Wednesday, the 41-year-old Ronaldo joined Lionel Messi as the only men to play in six World Cups.

Portugal added a second striker to accompany Ronaldo in the 83rd minute when Gonçalo Ramos came on for his PSG teammate Vitinha. However, coach Roberto Martínez's tactical change didn't net a winning goal. Portugal's best chance late in the game came on a 90th-minute shot from Fernandes that went about a



foot wide of the right post.

Before Wednesday's game, DR Congo was most known for one of the worst World Cup losses ever. In 1974, Zaire lost 9-0 to Yugoslavia, a game that is still tied for the biggest margin of victory in tournament history. Now, the country has a legitimate chance of making it to the Round of 32 in a group that also includes Colombia and Uzbekistan.

DR Congo got one of the final spots in the World Cup earlier in the spring when it won the African qualifying playoffs with wins over Cameroon and Nigeria. After those wins, DR

Congo needed extra time to beat Jamaica in the Inter-confederation playoff.

Portugal, meanwhile, is still the favorite to win Group K. But it's an inauspicious start for a team that is looking to progress past the quarterfinals for just the second time in Ronaldo's career. In 2006, when Ronaldo was 21, Portugal finished fourth in the World Cup.

Since then, Portugal has just one quarterfinal appearance over the last four tournaments and Ronaldo is still looking for his first goal or assist outside of the group stage.

AFCON 2027 – One year to kick-off: How East Africa's biggest football rivals will partner as one for Africa's greatest showpiece

As the countdown to the CAF Africa Cup of Nations PAMOJA 2027 (AFCON 2027) reaches one year to go, East Africa is preparing for something never seen before – three nations coming together to host the continent's flagship competition.

And after the successful staging of the TotalEnergies CAF African Nations Championship (CHAN), there is a growing feeling that something special is taking shape in the region.

While football rivalries between the three countries remain as fierce as ever, the TotalEnergies CAF AFCON 2027 represents something bigger. It is a chance for Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda to welcome the continent as one.

Packed stadiums, heated derbies and generations of supporters have created some of East Africa's most memorable football moments.

The highly successful hosting of the recent CHAN tournament offered a glimpse of what is possible. Supporters crossed borders, host cities embraced visitors and East Africa showed its ability to stage major football events. The atmosphere, organisation and warmth of the people left many convinced that the region is ready

for an even bigger occasion.

With stadium upgrades progressing and preparations gathering pace, excitement is steadily building across all three countries.

The host nations: Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda

Kenya's football culture and vibrant cities, Tanzania's rapidly growing game and Uganda's passionate supporters all combine to create a tournament that promises different experiences while maintaining one common spirit.

Fans will travel from one country to another, discovering new cities, new traditions and new friendships along the way – It will feel like one East African celebration.

Long after the final whistle blows, the memories of AFCON PAMOJA 2027 will remain.

New infrastructure, increased tourism and opportunities for young people across the region are all part of the tournament's legacy.

Having already demonstrated their ability to host major continental football events, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda now turn their attention to the TotalEnergies CAF AFCON PAMOJA 2027, where they will seek to deliver a tournament that leaves a lasting legacy for the continent.

Far from the World Cup, a girls team tries to revive soccer dreams for war-ravaged Sudan

Their red jerseys stood out against the green pitch. Most were teenage girls. Some had fled war. Others had never played in an organized soccer league or set foot in a major stadium before.

Yet when they took the field at Larbi Zaouli Stadium in Casablanca, Morocco, they marked Sudan's first appearance in international women's soccer since a civil war erupted in a country where women's participation in sports has long been controversial.

"My goal is to lift up soccer in my country," Nura Mohamed, the 17-year-old team captain, told The Associated Press.

"It's a beautiful, unique feeling because, at the end of the day, I just love playing."

With the men's World Cup unfolding on the other side of the planet, Sudan's under-17 women's national team traveled to Morocco last week for qualifying matches on the road to the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

The inexperienced squad suffered heavy defeats against Comoros, conceding 30 goals in two matches. Many of the players broke down in tears after the final whistle in front of a dozen cheering fans.

They faced an older, fitter, and more experienced opponent. Unable to assemble a senior women's squad in time, Sudan's soccer federation entered a younger team to avoid forfeiting its place in the qualifiers. They only started

training weeks ago.

"The difference between us and the others is huge. We cannot yet compete at the highest level," Burhan Tia, a veteran Sudanese soccer coach who oversees all of Sudan's women's national teams, said after the first match, a 17-0 defeat.

"Comoros has many players competing in Europe, our team is mainly made up of schoolgirls."

This team represents hope for Sudan's future

Sudan's women's soccer collapsed when civil war erupted in 2023. For federation officials, debuting this young squad in Casablanca after years of conflict marks an important step in keeping women's soccer alive in Sudan. "Some traveled long distances just to attend training. Many are separated from their families, yet they continue to work hard and pursue their dream," Manal Ali Bushra, a businesswoman who heads the women's soccer committee, told the AP.

To support that vision, Ali Bushra said the federation is working on infrastructure projects, including a planned sports city and the renovation of key stadiums in safer parts of the country. She declined to answer questions about the women's program budget and funds.

Tia knew the magnitude of the challenge when he accepted the job of rebuilding a shattered team.

"First, I had to find girls who played soccer. Then, once I found girls who played, I had to make sure they were the right age," he said. "Then I needed to convince their parents to let them miss classes for training."

With the league suspended, his scouting trips took him to schools across Sudan and to neighboring Egypt, where many families had fled the war. He recruited 10 players from teams and academies in Cairo, with the rest drawn from Sudanese cities.

Tia would have liked to recruit from conflict-hit areas like Darfur or Kordofan, a region known for producing Sudan's top athletes. But many girls had lost their identification documents, making it impossible to verify their ages under international regulations. The war has also shattered transportation, turning journeys between cities that once took hours into perilous trips lasting days.

On the field, the players' lack of experience was evident. Several struggled with basic positioning, failing to hold the offside line or maintain tactical discipline. Throughout the matches, they repeatedly looked to the sidelines for instructions from the coach and his assistant.

Facing war, fatwas and conservatism The United Nations has described the war in Sudan as the world's worst humanitarian crisis. It began in 2023 when a power struggle between the

military and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces erupted into fighting marked by mass killings, rape and ethnic violence. More than 40,000 people have been killed, according to U.N. figures, and over 14 million have been displaced, with famine and disease spreading across parts of the country.

The war halted every sports activity, including the women's soccer league, which was officially established after the 2019 progressive revolution that ousted President Omar al-Bashir. His three-decade Islamist rule was marked by Public Order Laws that rights groups said restricted women's freedoms. Even after the revolution, prominent Sudanese preacher Abdulhay Yousif said the establishment of a women's football league was aimed at undermining religion.

"The idea of women running, jumping, sweating, and even something as simple as their bodies being visible in motion, was seen by Bashir's Islamist regime as producing fitna, which in a Sudanese context was understood as sexual or moral chaos," Liv Tønnessen, a political scientist researching gender politics in Sudan, told the AP. "So when women step onto a soccer pitch, they are directly confronting that entire logic. They are not just present in a male-dominated sports arena, they are moving freely in it, on their own terms," Tønnessen, a former guest researcher in a women-only university

in Sudan, added.

Beyond institutional hurdles, players also faced a wave of sexist abuse online. On the national team's social media accounts, many commenters mocked them for big defeats. Others posted the phrase "go back to the kitchen," in multiple languages.

A team caught in politics While Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan's military government has allowed international soccer trips for teenage girls, the U.N. has documented sexual and gender-based violence by the Sudanese Armed Forces, which he commands.

Tønnessen sees the state backing as a calculated effort by the military to project legitimacy. By sponsoring the team, she said, the army attempts to signal that the state is functioning normally and to align itself with the spirit of the 2019 revolution.

Hala Al-Karib, a prominent Sudanese women's rights activist, dismissed critics who say the team is being used to portray a more progressive image on women's rights.

"The main challenge for me is a reform of the federation," she told the AP, citing a lack of investment in and support for women's soccer in Sudan. Back on the field in Casablanca, the politics, war and debate faded away, leaving only a group of teenagers chasing a ball.



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P.O.BOX 2117 – Djibouti -Republique de Djibouti

Tel: +253 21 31 91 92 Hotline: +253 21 31 90 00

Email: customercare@dmp.dj

ADDIS ABABA Representative Office

Tel: (+251) 11 55 33 744

Fax: (+251) 11 55 34 659

Email: port.office.addis@gmail.com

