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OLA-TotalEnergies deal faces regulatory scrutiny over competition concerns

By Eyasu Zekarias

The planned acquisition of TotalEnergies Marketing Ethiopia by OLA Energy has run into a regulatory hurdle in Ethiopia, with authorities raising concerns that the transaction could reshape the fuel retail market and concentrate too much power in one company's hands.

The two international energy companies reached an agreement in Paris at the end of June 2026, under which OLA Energy, a pan-African fuel retailer backed by Libyan state investment institutions, would acquire TotalEnergies' assets in Ethiopia. The financial terms of the deal were not disclosed.

Sources familiar with the matter told Capital that the transaction has not been treated as a routine business transfer by Ethiopian authorities. The Ethiopian Trade Competition and Consumer Protection Authority, which reviews mergers and acquisitions that may affect competition, has temporarily halted the approval process amid concerns that OLA Energy's combined market share could approach half of Ethiopia's fuel retail market.

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Ethiopia should expand the tax base, not squeeze the same taxpayers harder

Ethiopia's fiscal debate has become dangerously familiar: whenever revenue falls short, the easiest answer is to ask the same formal businesses and salaried workers to pay more. That approach may deliver a short-term boost, but it is not a strategy for a growing economy. If Ethiopia wants a fairer and more durable tax system, it must broaden the tax base rather than keep squeezing the few taxpayers already in the system.

The problem is not that Ethiopians do not pay taxes. The problem is that too few people and firms are actually in the net. A small formal sector carries a burden that should be shared more widely across the economy. Registered companies, payroll employees, importers and compliant professionals are relatively easy to monitor, so they become the default source of revenue. Meanwhile, a huge informal economy, under-declared income, weak property taxation and limited enforcement allow large parts of economic activity to remain untaxed or lightly taxed.

That imbalance is not just unfair. It is economically harmful. When the same taxpayers are repeatedly targeted, compliance becomes harder, investment slows and trust in the system erodes. Businesses begin to feel that honesty is punished and informality is rewarded. Over time, the state risks creating a tax culture based on resentment rather than citizenship.

The first step toward reform is to accept a simple truth: revenue growth must come from inclusion, not only from higher rates. Ethiopia has room to bring more people and activities into the tax system. The informal sector is large. Urban property remains under-taxed. Digital commerce is expanding faster than the tax administration can track it. Agriculture, where many households generate income, is still poorly integrated into the tax net. These are not minor gaps; they are the heart of the problem.

Expanding the tax base does not mean punishing the poor or taxing subsistence livelihoods into distress. It means identifying where genuine commercial activity is happening and designing sensible, phased taxation that is practical to collect. Small traders, transport operators, professionals, service providers, landlords, and growing enterprises should gradually be drawn into the formal system through simpler rules, lower entry barriers, and better administration. The goal should be to make tax participation normal, not extraordinary.

One of the most effective ways to broaden the base is through formalization. When businesses register, they become visible. When they use digital payments, they leave a trail. When they access credit, public procurement or licenses, compliance can be linked to those benefits. Ethiopia should use this leverage more intelligently. Rather than relying only on penalties, the government should connect tax registration to concrete advantages: easier access to finance, faster licensing, better legal protection and eligibility for public contracts.

Property taxation is another major opportunity. Cities are growing, land values are rising, and urban expansion is creating wealth that often escapes effective taxation. A serious property tax system would be far more sustainable than repeatedly increasing pressure on the same payroll taxpayers. It would also help local governments fund services more fairly, especially in rapidly urbanizing areas.

The digital economy also needs to be brought into the fold. As more transactions move online, tax authorities should improve data matching and electronic invoicing. This is not about surveillance for its own sake. It is about making tax collection match the way the economy actually works. If businesses can sell digitally, they can report digitally. If payments are traceable, taxes should be too.

At the same time, Ethiopia must simplify its tax system. A complex tax code often helps only the well-resourced, who can hire experts to navigate it, while discouraging small firms from entering the formal economy. A simpler structure with clear thresholds, predictable obligations and fewer loopholes would improve compliance. Tax policy should be understandable to the ordinary entrepreneur, not only to accountants and lawyers.

Equally important is trust. Many citizens and businesses resist taxes not only because of cost, but because they doubt the value they receive in return. If taxpayers see visible improvements in roads, electricity, security, schools and public services, compliance becomes easier to justify. The state must therefore pair tax reform with better service delivery and greater transparency on how revenue is spent.

Enforcement still matters, of course. A broadened tax base cannot rely on goodwill alone. High-earning individuals, large informal businesses and those hiding income should face real consequences. But enforcement should be targeted and intelligent, not blunt and politically easy. It is far more productive to catch big evaders than to keep revisiting the same formal taxpayers with new levies.

Ethiopia's economic future depends on moving from a narrow tax culture to a broad fiscal compact. That means more taxpayers, not just heavier taxes. It means fairness, not fatigue. It means treating tax reform as a nation-building project rather than an emergency revenue raid.

If the government keeps squeezing the existing base, it will eventually weaken the very sector it depends on for growth. But if it expands the base, formalizes more of the economy and builds trust in the system, it can create a stronger state and a healthier private sector at the same time.

The choice is clear: Ethiopia should tax more people a little, not the same people to death.

By Brian Judge — COMMENT

The AI Threat to Financial Stability

US Federal Reserve Chair Kevin Warsh recently announced a new task force that will "survey the pace, the reach, [and] the economic impact of new general-purpose technologies, including AI, and explore the implications for the Fed" as it pursues its "employment and inflation mandates." Notably absent from Warsh's statement was any mention of the impact of AI on financial stability, the Fed's de facto third mandate.

The Fed has shown some awareness of the risks AI poses for financial stability. In April, Warsh's predecessor Jerome Powell, together with US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, convened a meeting to assess how advanced AI models could affect cybersecurity in the banking system. But even this approach was far too narrow.

In the United States, both the financial system and asset markets have become a one-way bet on AI. If current trends persist, outstanding AI data-center debt will surpass mortgage debt by the end of this decade. The Fed should now be asking whether the revenues from these data centers will generate enough cash to repay creditors on time.

That question is often conflated with two others: whether AI is a bubble and whether it is a transformative technology. One might be tempted to position this as a dichotomy—AI is either a bubble or a transformative technology—but this would be a mistake. The US railroad boom of the 19th century ended in the Panic of 1873, and the telecom and dot-com boom of the 1990s culminated in a stock-market crash. In both cases, the technology was genuinely transformative, but creditors and shareholders were wiped out anyway, because investment outpaced any plausible near-term return.

Likewise, when it comes to AI, technological success will not guarantee financial success. The revenues AI will generate remain uncertain, but borrowers' repayment schedules are fixed. AI tools can be widely adopted, and a data center can be heavily used, without producing enough cash to service their owners' debts. The financial-stability concern arises from the mismatch between speculative future revenues and present contractual obligations.

The arithmetic is daunting. David Cahn of the venture capital firm Sequoia estimates that this year's roughly $750 billion in hyperscaler AI capital expenditure will need to generate about $1.5 trillion in end-customer revenue over the life of the equipment to pay for itself. By his calculation, the entire AI buildout since the 2022 launch of ChatGPT now carries a cumulative payback minimum of some $3 trillion. Anthropic is rumored to have annualized revenues of around $60 billion.

The consulting firm Bain & Company calculates that funding the compute needed to meet anticipated AI demand by 2030 will require some $2 trillion in new annual AI revenue. Given that a bubble is what happens when an asset's price far exceeds the cash flows it generates, such projections seem to support warnings that AI is indeed a bubble.

Already, funding for the AI buildout has shifted decisively from the tech giants' cash flows to capital markets. Circular financing arrangements abound: chipmakers invest in AI labs, which use the money to buy chips, and cloud providers fund the startups that rent their servers. The result is a positive feedback loop between rising valuations and capital expenditures.

Chip giant Nvidia has emerged as a backstop for the "neoclouds," allowing thinly capitalized cloud providers to raise private financing on attractive terms. Tech giants accumulate massive off-balance-sheet liabilities through joint ventures and leasing structures. And a growing share of the capital comes from private credit funds, which often lend to projects affiliated with their own sponsors.

Unlike the railroads or fiber-optic cables produced by earlier manias, this investment does not leave behind durable assets. Chips comprise roughly half the cost of an AI data center, and they are effectively unusable after 3–5 years. The collateral might lose value faster than the debt is repaid.

Moreover, the broad-based productivity gains and labor-market effects that AI is widely expected to deliver are not yet visible in the data. A recent Fed staff note concludes that this is because AI remains in its "buildout" phase. But a productivity surge will also require businesses to make immense internal investments to reengineer their processes. Nevertheless, markets are already pricing in robust earnings growth, driven in part by AI-driven productivity gains, raising concerns about an "earnings bubble."

Most discussions of the downside risk of the ongoing AI boom have focused on the stock market. But the bigger risk is to credit markets. We now have a "market-based" financial system, in which credit is intermediated less by banks than by bond markets, securitization vehicles, and nonbank lenders. The danger is not a 1930s-style run on bank deposits, but a 2007-style run on the shadow banking system: doubts about credit quality trigger a contraction in short-term funding, and borrowers must sell into a falling market, leading to further price declines.

With short-term funding markets seizing up, the Fed would come under enormous pressure to backstop nonbank lenders and data-center debt, just as it backstopped money-market funds in 2020, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. But AI is even less popular today than Wall Street was in 2007. A bailout of both would likely destroy what remains of Fed independence.

There is a chance that massive AI capital spending will be vindicated, generating the revenues required to service trillions of dollars in debt. In that case, however, the implied labor-market dislocation would be without historical precedent. It is the coin-flip of nightmares: heads is financial instability, and tails is a biblical employment shock.

In any case, financial stability must be central to the Fed's AI agenda. Even if this time proves to be different technologically, it might not be different financially.

Brian Judge is Research Director of the Program on Finance and Democracy at the University of California, Berkeley.

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ESL pushes ahead with fleet expansion as record profit fuels 200 billion birr capital plan

By Muluken Yewondwossen

Ethiopian Shipping and Logistics (ESL) is forging ahead with an ambitious expansion plan to acquire six new vessels and increase its capital tenfold to 200 billion birr. This move is buoyed by record profits, despite a year marked by regional conflict, higher operating costs, and disruptions to global shipping.

The state-owned logistics company is boosting its capital from 20 billion birr to 200 billion birr while simultaneously advancing a procurement program designed to strengthen Ethiopia's maritime transport capacity.

During the company's annual performance briefing on Thursday, CEO Abdulber Shemsu stated that both the capital increase and vessel acquisition are progressing concurrently, although the procurement process has taken longer than initially anticipated.

"Vessel procurement follows public procurement procedures, so it has its own timeline," Abdulber explained. "There have been some delays, but the process is progressing."

The decision to significantly increase the company's capital stems from Ethiopia's shift to a market-based foreign exchange system, which substantially boosted the birr value of ESL's foreign currency assets. Industry experts informed Capital that the sharp depreciation of the birr over the past year significantly expanded the company's balance sheet, prompting management to revise its initial capital plan.

This foreign exchange reform has also yielded substantial accounting gains. ESL earned approximately 14 billion birr in non-operating income from its foreign currency assets during the first year of the reform in 2024/25. In the fiscal year that concluded earlier this month, the company generated an additional 2.7 billion birr from similar foreign exchange-related gains.

Concurrently, the company is accelerating its fleet expansion plans. Earlier this month, a technical delegation led by Abdulber traveled to China to negotiate the purchase of second-hand vessels and contracts for newly built ships.

"The discussions covered both used vessels and the construction of new ones," he told Capital.

ESL currently operates 10 ocean-going vessels, including nine multipurpose Supramax ships. Under its expansion strategy, the fleet is projected to grow to 16 vessels by 2030.

The procurement plan includes one second-hand container ship with a capacity of 3,000 to 5,000 TEUs, three second-hand Ultramax bulk carriers with carrying capacities of 60,000 to 65,000 deadweight tons, and two newly built heavy-lift Ultramax multipurpose vessels of similar capacity. While the second-hand vessels are expected to join the fleet once suitable ships are identified, the newly built vessels are likely to take at least two years to complete after contracts are signed.

The expansion follows one of ESL's strongest financial performances in company history.

According to its unaudited annual report, ESL generated 157.2 billion birr in revenue during the 2025/26 fiscal year, transporting over seven million metric tons of cargo and exceeding its annual target by eight percent.

Net profit reached 25.4 billion birr, a 33.7 percent increase over the company's target and approximately 45 percent higher than the previous fiscal year. Foreign currency earnings also rose to USD 551 million, roughly USD 50 million more than the previous year.

Abdulber attributed the improved performance to a strategic shift, with the company prioritizing higher-value cargo over simply increasing cargo volumes.

"We are giving priority to high-value cargo such as construction equipment and industrial machinery," he stated.

These results were achieved despite one of the most challenging operating environments the company has faced recently.

One ESL vessel was stranded in the United Arab Emirates for over four months due to disruptions linked to tensions around the Strait of Hormuz. Fuel shortages, volatile fuel prices, rising insurance costs, and severe congestion at Djibouti's ports further strained operations as more ships diverted from Gulf ports due to regional instability.

Consequently, the company's operating expenses climbed to 124 billion birr, nearly 10 percent higher than the 113 billion birr originally budgeted for the year.

ESL is also closely monitoring the deteriorating security situation in the Red Sea and wider Middle East, where attacks on commercial vessels continue to pose risks to international shipping.

Abdulber noted that the company is evaluating whether to introduce feeder services in the region or reroute vessels on longer voyages, depending on the evolving security situation.

"Our priority is to ensure Ethiopian cargo continues moving without interruption," he emphasized.

He added that Ethiopian-flagged vessels have continued operations even during previous periods of heightened regional tension, including regular calls at Khor Fakkan Port in the United Arab Emirates.

Looking ahead, ESL has set ambitious targets for 2030, planning to generate 350 billion birr in annual revenue and USD 2 billion in foreign currency earnings, while increasing annual cargo throughput to 18.4 million metric tons. The strategy also includes expanding its container fleet to 100,000 units, reinforcing the company's role as Ethiopia's main maritime gateway.

International lenders to finalize Bishoftu Airport funding by March 2027

By Eyasu Zekarias

Ethiopian Airlines is pressing ahead with plans to build its new mega-airport in Bishoftu, with international lenders expected to finalize multi-billion-dollar financing approvals by March 2027, according to the airline.

The carrier said land-clearing work and the rehabilitation of displaced farmers have largely been completed, clearing the way for the project to move into the contractor selection phase.

Ethiopian Airlines Group Chief Executive Officer Mesfin Tasew outlined the latest milestones and timeline changes during the group’s 2025/26 budget year report last week.

The first phase of the project was launched in January with a groundbreaking ceremony attended by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and senior government officials. The airport, which is expected to cost more than $10 billion, is being developed as Africa’s largest airport and Ethiopian Airlines’ new global hub.

Designed to handle up to 60 million passengers, the Bishoftu Airport is intended to help position Ethiopia among the world’s top 20 aviation hubs by 2035. The project is located about 40 kilometers southeast of Addis Ababa.

Mesfin said the airport has attracted more than $8 billion in financing demand and that the African Development Bank is serving as lead arranger. He said the bank has indicated a willingness to provide $500 million once board approval is secured.

Other institutions that have shown interest in financing the project include the US International Development Finance Corporation, the US Export-Import Bank, JPMorgan Chase and other foreign lenders.

The airline said the financing approvals are expected to be completed by March 2027.

Mesfin also said construction companies had asked for more time to prepare bids and carry out the necessary studies, consult with lenders and organize subcontractors.

As a result, the deadline for selecting construction contractors has been pushed from August to January next year. Mesfin said the revision will not change the project’s final completion date or alter its overall execution plan.

The pre-qualification process for engineering, procurement and construction-financing across four major work packages was completed in April, and several major international companies have been shortlisted. Among them are China Communications Construction Company, Webuild, Vinci Construction Grands Projets, Samsung C&T and Beijing Urban Construction Group.

Ethiopian Airlines said the project remains aligned with its long-term schedule. The land grading and clearing work that began in January is expected to be completed by January 2027.

The airline also said it has completed rehabilitation work for farmers displaced by the project and is working with affected communities to support new sources of income and jobs. Mesfin said only a small part of the transition work remains and will be finalized in the coming months.

The airport will include an “Airport City” with hotels, business parks and entertainment areas, along with a 38-kilometer high-speed railway and a 12-lane highway connecting the site to Addis Ababa.


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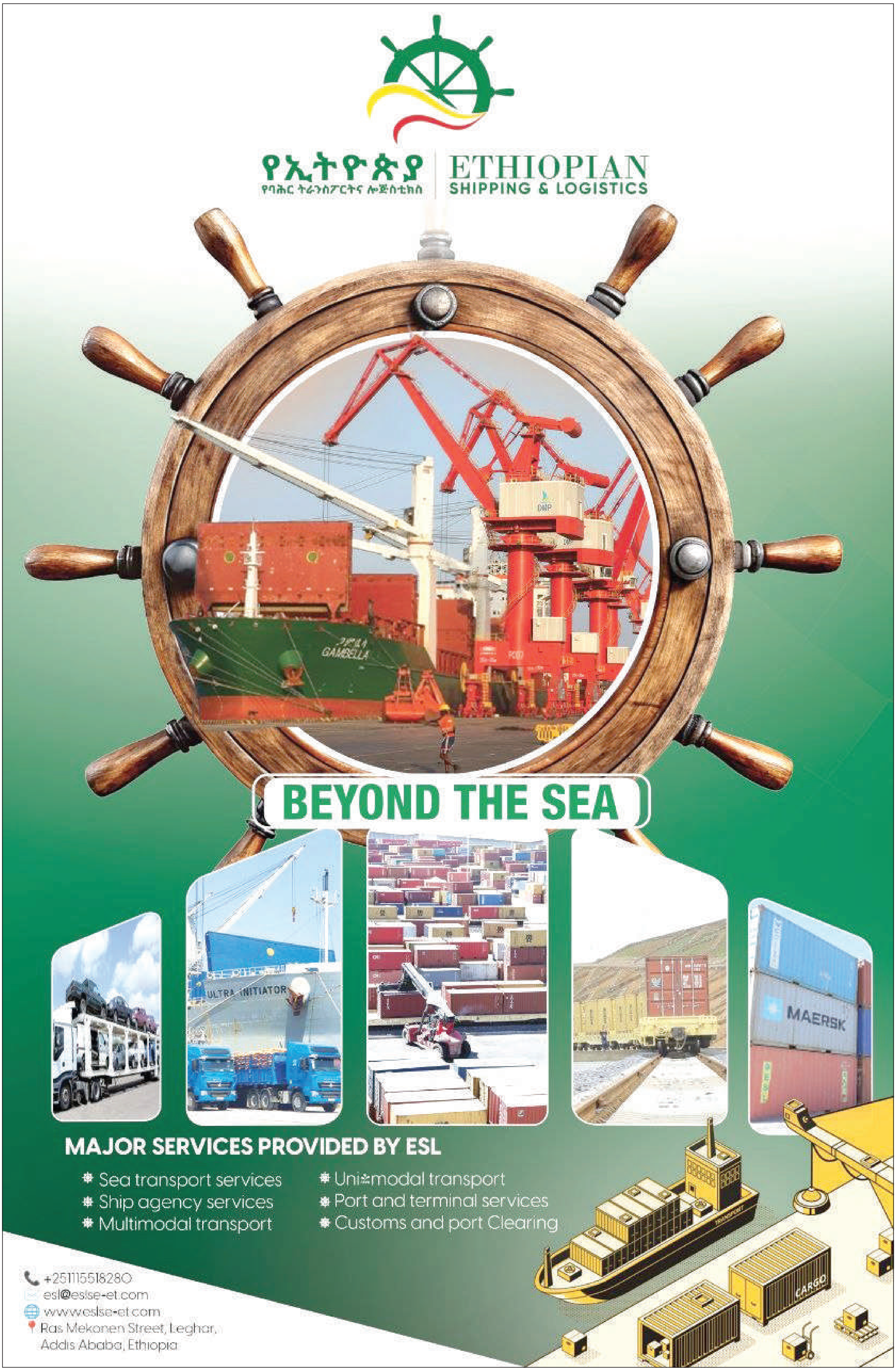
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OLA-TotalEnergies deal . . .

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Regulators are particularly worried that the acquisition could create a dominant market position and increase the risk of fuel supply disruptions if the company later scaled back or withdrew operations, the sources said.

The suspension was confirmed by sources at the Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration, which oversees the authority. They said the move falls within the legal mandate of the regulator to assess competition risks in mergers and acquisitions.

OLA Energy and TotalEnergies are already among the major players in Ethiopia's downstream petroleum market. If approved, the merged operation would reportedly become larger than the National Oil Company, which currently holds a significant share of the market.

Officials and sources said the concern is that one company controlling such a large portion of the fuel market could create vulnerabilities in distribution and potentially influence prices. Any future operational problems or exit by a dominant player, they said, could have wider implications for fuel availability across the country.

The deal would transfer TotalEnergies Marketing Ethiopia's downstream assets to OLA Energy, including more than 120 fuel stations in major

cities, a 13,000-cubic-meter storage terminal in Dukem, other storage facilities, aviation fuel operations at Bole International Airport, lubricant businesses, digital payment systems and logistics infrastructure.

The transaction would also mark the end of TotalEnergies' more than seven decades in Ethiopia. The French company has operated in the country since 1950, and its exit is part of a broader strategy to adjust its portfolio in some African fuel distribution markets.

The Ethiopian Petroleum and Energy Authority, the sector regulator, said it has not yet received an official submission on the merger.

Bekelech Kuma, communication director at the authority, told Capital that such deals require detailed review before completion.

"The business transfer and merger process between OLA Energy and TotalEnergies cannot be completed in a short period. It requires a detailed assessment. The Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration has its own legal framework to evaluate whether the merger creates monopoly concerns or affects market competition," she said.

Under Ethiopia's competition law, mergers and acquisitions that exceed certain financial thresholds must be notified to and approved by the Trade Competition and Consumer Protection Authority before completion. The authority assesses market share, supplier concentration, barriers to entry and possible impacts on consumers.

The review is carried out under Trade Competition and Consumer Protection Proclamation No. 813/2013 and Merger Guideline No. 1/2016, which are designed to prevent transactions that could significantly restrict competition.

Ethiopia's fuel market has come under heavy pressure in recent years because of rising import costs, foreign currency shortages, fuel price adjustments and government efforts to strengthen control over fuel distribution and payment systems.

OLA Energy, formerly known as Tamoil before its 2018 rebranding, is managed under the Libyan Africa Investment Portfolio, Libya's sovereign investment vehicle focused on Africa. The company reported a net profit of €34.5 million in 2024 and operates more than 1,350 service stations across 17 African countries.

The company has expanded its footprint through acquisitions, including fuel assets previously owned by global energy companies such as Shell and ExxonMobil.

After the agreement was signed, OLA Energy Chairman Abozid Swalem said the transaction reflected the company's confidence in Ethiopia's energy market.

"This agreement demonstrates our confidence in the future growth potential of the energy markets in Ethiopia and Africa," he said.

The company has also said it plans to ensure a smooth transition after the deal is completed, while maintaining service standards, operational stability and commercial continuity.

For now, however, the transaction remains under regulatory review, with no timeline yet announced for a final decision.

WHO introduces safer, shorter treatment regimens for leishmaniasis

By our staff reporter

The World Health Organization (WHO) has announced major updates to its treatment guidelines for leishmaniasis, introducing safer, shorter and more effective regimens for visceral leishmaniasis (VL), commonly known as kala-azar, and post-kala-azar dermal leishmaniasis (PKDL).

The new recommendations are expected to improve patient care and support disease elimination efforts across eastern Africa and South Asia.

The updated guidelines, released on July 29, replace long, painful injection-based treatments with more patient-friendly combinations that include oral medicines. The changes mark a significant milestone in the global fight against one of the world's most neglected tropical diseases.

In eastern Africa, WHO now recommends a combination of oral miltefosine (MF) and injectable paromomycin (PM) for the treatment of visceral leishmaniasis. Clinical trials conducted in Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda demonstrated that the regimen is more than 90 percent effective.

The new treatment reduces the number of injections from 34 over 17 days to just 14 injections administered over 14 days alongside oral medication. It also lowers the risk of developing PKDL, a skin condition that can occur after successful treatment of kala-azar.

For patients with PKDL in eastern Africa, the new MF-PM combination significantly shortens hospitalization from the current 60–90 days to just 14 days, after which patients complete an additional 28 days of oral treatment at home. The shorter hospital stay is expected to ease the burden on patients, families and healthcare systems.

Highlighting the significance of the updated guidelines for Ethiopia, Dr. Eleni Ayele of the Leishmaniasis Research and Treatment Centre at the University of Gondar said many Ethiopian patients seek treatment only after the disease has advanced, with some also living with HIV.

"In Ethiopia, many of our patients with visceral leishmaniasis are adults who arrive late and already very ill, some also presenting with HIV co-infection. Shorter, less toxic treatments are critical, not only to improve outcomes, but also to ensure patients can complete treatment and return safely to their livelihoods," she said.

WHO noted that because miltefosine may pose risks during pregnancy, women of childbearing age will require a negative pregnancy test and appropriate contraception before receiving the treatment. Those who cannot meet these conditions will continue to receive the existing standard treatment.

Commenting on the new recommendations, WHO Director of Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases, Dr. Daniel Ngamije Madandi, said the revised guidelines represent a turning point in the fight against leishmaniasis.

"For too long, patients suffering from leishmaniasis have endured treatments nearly as punishing as the disease itself. By recommending safer, shorter and more patient-friendly regimens, we are improving care while accelerating efforts to eliminate this devastating disease," he said.

Visceral leishmaniasis, transmitted through the bite of infected sandflies, is one of the world's deadliest parasitic diseases after malaria. It causes prolonged fever, weight loss, anaemia, enlargement of the spleen and liver, and can be fatal if left untreated. The disease is endemic in about 80 countries, with an estimated 50,000 to 90,000 new cases occurring annually, although less than half are reported to WHO.

Eastern Africa currently bears the highest global burden of the disease, accounting for nearly 79 percent of reported cases in 2024, with children under the age of 15 representing approximately half of those affected. Ethiopia remains among the countries where visceral leishmaniasis continues to pose a significant public health challenge.

The new treatment regimens were developed by the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi) in collaboration with international research partners. DNDi is also working with Novartis on the development of LXE408, a promising oral treatment candidate that could further reduce the need for injectable therapies in the future.

Countries affected by visceral leishmaniasis and PKDL, including Ethiopia, are expected to review and update their national treatment protocols in line with the new WHO recommendations, paving the way for improved patient care and strengthened disease elimination efforts across endemic regions.

Africa tops China's Belt and Road engagement as Ethiopia draws major green energy investment

By our staff reporter

Africa remained the leading destination for Chinese Belt and Road Initiative engagement in the first half of 2026, with Chinese investment in the region almost tripling from the same period a year earlier, according to a new report by Christoph Nedopil of the University of Queensland and the Green Finance Development Center.

The report says Chinese BRI engagement across the region reached $33.5 billion in investment announcements in the first half of the year, making Africa the top regional recipient and marking the strongest first-half performance ever recorded for Chinese BRI investment in the continent. It adds that Ethiopia was the largest African recipient of Chinese energy engagement, driven by a major green energy development agreement worth $14.8 billion.

Overall, the report found that total Chinese BRI engagement — combining investments and construction contracts — hit a first-half record of $126.4 billion across about 186 deals, including $49.8 billion in investment and $76.5 billion in construction. It said 2026 H1 was the highest first six months for BRI engagement since the initiative began in 2013.

Energy remained the dominant sector, with China's energy-related engagement reaching $36.3 billion in the half-year period. More than half of that energy engagement was classified as green, including wind, solar, waste-to-energy and hydropower projects, which the report said was a new record in both absolute and relative terms. The report also noted that more than 20 gigawatts of green electricity projects were confirmed through investment and construction, exceeding the total for all of 2025.

Ethiopia featured prominently in that shift. The report says a green energy agreement between the Ethiopian Investment Commission and Mingyang Smart Energy Group was initially announced at $10 billion and later expanded and licensed in May 2026 to $14.17 billion, including green ammonia production facilities. The first phase alone allocates $7.47 billion to physical generation assets and is one of the largest private foreign direct investments in Ethiopia's history.

The report also highlights a resurgence in metals and mining, which reached a record $21.8 billion in the first half of 2026. Egypt led that category with a $10 billion steel mill, while Kazakhstan and Indonesia also attracted major Chinese processing investments. The report said the emphasis was increasingly on processing facilities rather than raw mining.

In transport, Chinese engagement rose for the first time since 2020, reaching $18.2 billion, all through construction contracts. Major projects included rail and port infrastructure in the Middle East and Asia, while the report said transportation-related engagement again underscored the BRI's focus on connectivity and trade routes.

The report also points to a growing role for private Chinese companies, whose share of total BRI engagement climbed from 12.5 percent in 2020 to 47.7 percent in the first half of 2026. While state-owned enterprises still dominate construction, private firms are taking a larger role in investment, especially in technology and energy-related sectors.

Christoph Nedopil said in the report's outlook that continued global trade frictions and fossil fuel volatility could further push Chinese engagement toward green energy, minerals processing and manufacturing localization in BRI countries. He said Africa's strong performance may reflect both new industrial opportunities and shifting tariff dynamics in global trade.

For Africa, the findings suggest that Chinese capital remains a major source of investment, especially in energy, mining and infrastructure. Ethiopia's outsized role in the latest data also shows how the continent is positioning itself at the center of the transition to green industrial projects.

UNFPA survey finds young people want partnerships, children and stability, but say conditions stand in the way

By our staff reporter

Young people across the world still want relationships, families and a positive future, but many say economic insecurity, housing costs and weak support systems are making those goals harder to reach, according to a new UNFPA survey.

The Demographic Futures Survey 2026, titled Lives, Choices and Futures, found that economic security and good health are the top life goals for young adults, while family life remains important for a large share of respondents. It also found that two thirds of respondents feel somewhat or very positive about the future, even as they worry about conflict, inequality and economic pressure.

The survey covered 108,926 Internet-connected young adults aged 18 to 39 across 73 countries and territories. UNFPA said the findings show that many young people continue to aspire to partnerships, marriage and parenthood, but that those aspirations are shaped by financial security, stable employment, housing affordability and broader social conditions.

Economic worries were prominent across the sample. More than three quarters of respondents said conflict and security risks, as well as economic insecurity and inequality, were somewhat or very worrying, while artificial intelligence ranked as the least worrying of the issues tested. At the same time, the report found that optimism remains strong in many lower-income settings, especially in West and Central Africa and East and Southern Africa.

The survey also found that family aspirations remain common. More than two thirds of respondents said their ideal relationship pathway includes marriage, either before or after cohabitation, while 16 percent said they ideally want to remain single. Among respondents aged 25 to 39 who ideally want to marry or live with a partner, around one quarter are currently single and not dating, with the share higher among men than women.

Financial security emerged as the strongest factor in partnership formation, with 81 percent of respondents rating it as important. Economic and housing constraints were the most commonly cited barriers to partnership, and respondents also placed high value on emotional well-being, independence from parents and having children.

When it came to parenthood, two children was the most commonly reported ideal family size in most regions. The survey found that financial security, stable employment and emotional readiness were the leading preconditions for feeling ready to have children, while economic and housing constraints were the most frequently cited barriers to parenthood.

UNFPA said the findings point to a gap between aspiration and reality, and suggest that many young people want families but need stronger economic and social support to make those choices possible. The report also notes that attitudes toward family life, work and caregiving continue to be shaped by gender norms, with women generally rating the preconditions and barriers to parenthood as more important than men.

The survey adds that young people's views on opportunity and inequality vary sharply by region and income level, but perceptions of inequality remain widespread across the board. It also shows that social media and online platforms are deeply embedded in young people's daily lives, with entertainment, work, news and keeping in touch with family and friends among the most common uses.

UNFPA said the survey is meant to inform policy discussions on employment, housing, reproductive health, childcare and gender equality. The agency argued that creating the right conditions would help young people build the lives they want, have the children they want and choose the timing that works for them.


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Africa's youth are more hopeful, but demand jobs and accountability

By our staff reporter

Young Africans are more optimistic about their future than at any point since the Covid-19 pandemic, but they are also making clear that hope alone is not enough. A new continental survey shows a generation that believes in Africa's potential while demanding jobs, cleaner government, safer communities and a political system that reflects African realities.

The 2026 African Youth Survey, released on 29 July in Johannesburg, found that 47 percent of young Africans now say their country is moving in the right direction, up from 30 percent in 2024. Confidence in national economies has also improved sharply, with 45 percent saying their economy is on the right path, compared with 26 percent two years ago. Across the countries tracked in every wave of the survey, 43 percent now say Africa is moving in the right direction, up from 37 percent in 2024.

The survey, commissioned by the Ichikowitz Family Foundation and conducted by PSB Insights, interviewed 4,901 people aged 18 to 24 across 16 African countries in March 2026. It is the largest edition of the survey since it was launched in 2020 to capture the views of Africa's younger generation.

Despite the improved mood, the cost of living remains the biggest concern. Respondents said rising living costs have had the greatest impact on Africa over the past five years, ahead of political instability, deaths from infectious disease and the technological revolution. When asked what Africa most needs to move forward, 27 percent said the priority is creating well-paying jobs, while 25 percent pointed to reducing corruption in government.

The survey also found that young Africans are still strongly attached to democracy, but they want a version that works in African conditions. Seventy-three percent said democracy is always preferable to any other form of government. At the same time, 56 percent said Western-style democracy is not suitable for Africa and that a new African model is needed.

The report showed a similar pragmatism in foreign policy attitudes. Seventy percent of young Africans said the world is becoming more divided and dangerous, and 55 percent said their countries should prioritize partnerships with countries that can deliver practical benefits such as trade and investment, regardless of political system. By contrast, 42 percent favored alliances based on shared values, even if those partners are less effective.

Ivor Ichikowitz, founder and commissioner of the survey, said the improved outlook should not be mistaken for satisfaction. He said young Africans still believe in the continent, but are no longer willing to accept endless speeches without delivery. He said they want jobs, clean government, safety, business opportunities and a real voice in power.

The findings suggest that youth are not rejecting democracy, but are demanding a more effective version of it. Among the priorities they identified for such a model were national unity and stability, regular free and fair elections, leaders who deliver jobs and services, and greater community participation in decision-making.

The report also found that young Africans see economic and social conditions as central to security. While 70 percent said they feel safe in their country today, unemployment and poverty were identified as the biggest threats to safety in local communities. Asked what governments should do to improve security, 56 percent chose youth job creation, ahead of military spending and anti-corruption measures.

The continental picture, however, remains uneven. Rwanda recorded the strongest confidence in national direction, with 91 percent saying the country is moving the right way. Somalia also emerged as a notable positive case, with 82 percent saying the country is on the right track and 79 percent saying the economy is moving in the right direction.

Ghana, Ethiopia and Zambia showed the largest rebounds in confidence since 2024. In Ethiopia, concern about employment fell sharply and positive sentiment about the country's direction rose significantly. By contrast, youth in Kenya, South Africa, Mozambique, Chad and Nigeria were among the most pessimistic about national direction, the economy and the wider global outlook.

The survey also showed that young Africans are paying close attention to global power shifts. The United States and China remain the two most influential external powers in their eyes, but China is viewed more positively by those who see its influence. Young respondents also said they would prefer leaders who can work with major powers to deliver tangible gains, while remaining wary of external partners that do not respect Africa's interests.

The results point to a generation that is hopeful, but impatient. It wants economic progress, clean governance and a more authentic democratic model. Above all, it wants leaders who can turn optimism into action.

African airlines urge governments to align passenger data systems with global standards

By our staff reporter

Africa's airlines are calling on governments to implement passenger data systems in line with international standards, warning that poor design could raise travel costs and weaken the benefits of aviation for trade and tourism.

The African Airlines Association, the Airlines Association of Southern Africa and the International Air Transport Association said governments should roll out Advance Passenger Information and Passenger Name Record systems according to International Civil Aviation Organization standards and global best practices.

The groups said the systems can help authorities improve border security, support law enforcement and identify risks before passengers travel. But they stressed that the programs must be backed by clear legal and operational frameworks and should be used only for legitimate security and border-control purposes.

The associations said the legal framework should clearly define the data required, designate one responsible authority and align with relevant bilateral or regional agreements. They also said governments should limit the collection of passenger information to what is strictly necessary, retain data for a defined period and include safeguards against discrimination.

They further called for secure data storage and transfer using harmonized global formats to reduce errors and ensure consistency across borders.

The industry groups also warned governments against financing the programs through charges imposed on airlines or passengers. They said border security is a government responsibility and should be funded by states, not by the aviation industry or travelers.

According to the organizations, adding passenger-data fees would increase the cost of travel, reduce connectivity and undermine aviation's wider economic contribution to tourism, trade and investment.

Abdérahmane Berthé, secretary general of AFRAA, Aaron Munetsi, chief executive officer of AASA, and Kamil Alawadhi, IATA's regional vice president for Africa and the Middle East, said in a joint statement that they support the use of passenger data to keep borders secure. However, they said the systems must be aligned with internationally recognized standards and funded correctly.

They said a coordinated approach between governments and the aviation industry would improve security, make travel smoother, protect personal data and avoid unnecessary costs and complexity.

The three organizations said they remain ready to work with governments, regional institutions and international partners to support passenger-data programs that strengthen security while keeping air transport safe, efficient and affordable

Ethiopia, Djibouti unlock 25-year logistics bottleneck with Mojo land transfer

By our staff reporter

The Ethiopian government has handed over land in Mojo town to Djibouti for the construction of a dedicated heavy-vehicle parking terminal, clearing the way for a long-delayed logistics project that had stalled for nearly 25 years.

The handover marks a significant step in efforts by the two countries to modernize the Ethio-Djibouti transport corridor, which carries the bulk of Ethiopia's international trade. Officials say the terminal is expected to ease congestion, improve freight movement and reduce delays along one of the region's most critical trade routes.

The land transfer ceremony, held last week, brought together Ethiopia's Minister of Transport and Logistics, Alemu Sime, Djibouti's Minister of Infrastructure and Equipment, Said Nouh Hassan, the mayor of Mojo and other senior officials from both countries.

Alemu said the project reflects the "strong historical, economic and strategic relations" between Ethiopia and Djibouti. He said it would improve trade efficiency and service delivery while delivering mutual benefits to citizens of both countries.

The minister also credited Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed for helping resolve the long-running delay. He said the project had remained unresolved for 25 years, but progress was made following discussions during the prime minister's previous visit to Djibouti.

For landlocked Ethiopia, the Djibouti corridor remains a vital economic lifeline. Mojo Dry Port handles much of the country's trade volume and serves as a key entry point for imports and a major hub for exports.

But the corridor has long faced pressure from congestion, slow turnaround times and higher logistics costs for businesses. Industry observers have repeatedly warned that delays in freight movement increase the final cost of goods paid by consumers.

By creating a dedicated parking space for Djiboutian freight trucks, the new terminal is expected to streamline vehicle movement, reduce waiting times and improve the reliability of the transport system.

The project is part of a broader push to strengthen the Ethio-Djibouti transport corridor. The 752-kilometre electrified railway, built with Chinese investment, remains another central pillar of that strategy and has become an important freight artery since it began operations.

Plans are also under way to raise the railway's annual freight capacity from two million tonnes to 6.2 million tonnes by 2027.

Officials say the Mojo terminal will do more than ease congestion. They describe it as a practical step toward deeper regional integration and shared prosperity between the two neighbors.

Alemu said the project would contribute to "boosting regional economic integration and shared prosperity."

Ethiopia and Djibouti have described their relationship as exemplary, with recent high-level meetings focusing on joint projects and the efficiency of major infrastructure, including the Doraleh Multipurpose Port and the railway system.

The Mojo land handover now gives fresh momentum to a project seen as essential to improving logistics, supporting trade and strengthening one of East Africa's most important cross-border economic partnerships.


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Spotlight

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

PHOTO: Anteneh Aklilu

Global HIV response falters as reemergence looms

A special report released by UNAIDS for the 26th International AIDS Conference taking place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from 27 to 31 July, shows that reductions to international funding and cuts to HIV prevention and community services are likely to lead to a resurgence of the epidemic.

Although new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths are at their lowest levels in more than 30 years, the current HIV response is extremely fragile. Efforts to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030 are at risk unless global solidarity is restored and inequalities are addressed.

In 2025, 1.2 million people acquired HIV, but progress is uneven. New HIV infections rose in three regions and 21 countries in 2025. Around 9 million of the 41 million people living with HIV were not on treatment and almost half of all children living with HIV did not have access to antiretroviral therapy in 2025. More than half a million people (570 000) died of AIDS-related illnesses in 2025.

Positively seven countries achieved an almost 80% reduction in new infections since 2010 and 11 countries achieved the 95-95-95 treatment targets showing that progress is possible.

From Pan-Africanism to Meta-Africanism

The African School of Governance (ASG) has announced the inaugural Africa Mindset Reset Forum, an Africa-led convening on the leadership mindsets, institutions and a results-culture of execution needed for Africa to realise its sovereign development ambitions.

The Forum will take place on 25–26 August 2026 at the Kigali Convention Centre, bringing together leaders from across Africa and beyond, with 80 percent of participants comprising young and emerging leaders. It is conceived not as another conference about Africa's challenges, but as a platform to spotlight the critical role of Leadership & Mindsets, what is already working, connect the people and institutions driving change, and move from dialogue to delivery.

The Forum comes at a defining moment for the continent, as global geopolitics shift, superpower competition intensifies, development finance tightens, artificial intelligence transforms economies and demographic change accelerates.

This context requires that African countries increasingly address own problems through African leadership and home-grown solutions. Yet no single African country is large enough, or strong enough to make it alone, the destiny of the continent is to work together, as one. This requires a new leadership mindset that promotes effective African integration.

Failing to tackle inequality puts countries in pandemic danger, new research shows

Analysis in the New England Journal of Medicine – co-authored by experts including Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz, leading epidemiologist Professor Sir Michael Marmot, and Chairperson of the One Economy Foundation and former First Lady of Namibia Monica Geingos – finds economic inequality, not conventional preparedness, has been the clearest predictor of how countries fared against pandemics, upending traditional assumptions about what actions governments need to take for health security. The new research from the Global Council on Inequality, AIDS and Pandemics finds that while technical capacity remains necessary, it is not sufficient. To respond to and prepare for pandemics effectively, governments need to include efforts to address inequality.

Call for "Inequality-Informed Pandemic Preparedness and Response"

Conventional understandings of what countries need to do to be ready to face pandemics are incomplete and need to be re-thought, the research shows. Many of the countries that score highest on standard measures of pandemic preparedness—based on technical abilities like laboratory, supply chain, or emergency response capabilities—have seen some of the highest rates of infection and death during both the COVID-19 and AIDS pandemics. Countries like the United States or United Kingdom have topped official preparedness lists, but the research findings show no association between these traditional understandings of preparedness and success in the real world. Policies that only ensure technical capability are not enough.

BREAK TIME

BELTS AND CABLES

TAXI QUOTES

Jazeera Airways expands its network in Africa with direct flights to Addis Ababa

Jazeera Airways, Kuwait's leading low-cost carrier, today announced the launch of direct flights between Kuwait and one of East Africa's fastest-growing economies - Ethiopia. The new service to Addis Ababa will operate three times a week starting 7 September, further expanding the airline's growing network, and offering increased connectivity to Africa.

With more than 70,000 Ethiopian nationals living in Kuwait, the new route offers the community a direct option to fly back home and reunite with family and friends.

At the launch event, Sied Muhumed Jibril, the Ambassador of Ethiopia to Kuwait said

"The launch of direct flights between Kuwait and Addis Ababa marks an important milestone in strengthening the longstanding ties between Ethiopia and Kuwait. This new connection will bring our people closer together, facilitate trade and investment, and encourage greater tourism and cultural exchange. We welcome Jazeera Airways to Ethiopia and look forward to the many opportunities this route will create for both our countries."

African Ambassadors briefed on Eastern Africa's economic outlook amid strong growth and global uncertainty

The UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Office for Eastern Africa, in collaboration with the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office in Rwanda, convened African Ambassadors, High Commissioners, and officials from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning to discuss the subregion's economic performance. The dialogue focused on the findings of ECA's 2026 Macroeconomic and Social Overview report, titled "Eastern Africa's Balancing Act: High Growth, Tight Budgets, and Rising Uncertainty."

Opening the meeting, Fatmata Lovetta Sesay, United Nations Resident Coordinator a.i. in Rwanda noted that the region continues to demonstrate strong economic fundamentals despite a complex global environment.

"The report we discuss today highlights a region that is demonstrating remarkable resilience. Economic growth has generally remained robust, inflation has moderated in many countries, and foreign direct investment has shown encouraging signs of strength," she said.

Expert says space technology can help Africa tackle food security

From predicting droughts and floods to helping farmers plan planting seasons, space-based technologies are becoming practical tools for addressing some of Africa's development challenges, according to a North-West University (NWU) space scientist.

Prof. Amare Abebe, director of the Centre for Space Research (CSR) at the NWU, and president of the African Astronomical Society, says the continent already has access to satellite technologies that can improve agriculture, disaster management, climate adaptation and connectivity. The next step, he says, is ensuring that African countries develop the skills and institutions needed to turn satellite data into decisions that improve people's lives.

His comments come as African countries increase investment in space science and strengthen collaboration between governments, researchers and industry. This trend was reflected at the second African Space Solutions Market, held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, from 7 to 9 July, where African stakeholders discussed the use of space technologies to support economic development, food security, disaster management and climate resilience.

Capital NEWS IN BRIEF

Retreating RSF Troops Launch Reprisal Attacks on Civilians in North Kordofan

A large contingent of Rapid Support Forces retreating from Um Sayala, Jabrat al-Sheikh, and Bara launched retaliatory attacks against civilians in North Kordofan, local sources told Sudan Tribune on Wednesday. The raids targeted the towns and villages of Um Badr, Sodari, Abu Zaima, Hamrat al-Sheikh, and El Mazroub. Retreating fighters looted local markets completely, raided residential homes, and arrested scores of residents under accusations of sharing coordinates with the Sudanese military, sources said. The reprisal attacks coincided with a series of drone strikes, presumed to belong to the Sudanese army, targeting RSF convoys in Sodari, Um Badr, and El Mazroub. ... Sodari serves as a vital strategic corridor that the RSF previously used to transport military supplies and fighters between Darfur and Khartoum. ... The escalation follows the army and its allies regaining control of about five strategic areas in North Kordofan, including the critical export road linking Khartoum to Kordofan and Darfur.

(Sudan Tribune)

Five Kenyan Security Officers Killed in Suspected Al Shabaab Attack near Somalia Border

Five Kenyan security officers were killed in a clash with suspected al Shabaab militants in the county of Mandera near the Somali border, police said. The militant group has been battling for years to overthrow Somalia's central government and establish its rule in the Horn of Africa country, based on its own strict interpretation of Islamic sharia law. ... Police are pursuing the militants, they added, after a reinforcement team sent to the area was hit by an improvised explosive device, which destroyed an armoured vehicle, though no casualties were reported. Al Shabaab's frequent attacks in the region frequently targets both military and civilians, with police saying in January the militants had killed a local chief and a teacher in the nearby county of Garissa.

(Reuters)

Ugandan Opposition Leader Besigye Is Unconscious in Hospital after Collapsing in Court, Wife Says

Ugandan opposition leader Kizza Besigye has been hospitalized and is unconscious after he collapsed during a courtroom session of his treason trial, according to his wife and others who are urging authorities to set him free after repeated bail denials. Besigye fell in the dock on Wednesday while protesting his trial without lawyers of his own choosing, after authorities detained his main attorney, Erias Lukwago, and charged him with alleged failure to report acts of treason. Besigye's wife, UNAIDS Executive Director Winnie Byanyima, said in a post on X that Besigye is unconscious in an intensive care unit at a public hospital in the Ugandan capital of Kampala. “Before he collapsed, he cried out that he was being injured,” she said. ... Besigye once was a trusted ally of Museveni in the guerrilla war that propelled him to power in 1986, and even served as Museveni's personal doctor and military assistant. He later became a fierce critic of the president, condemning what he saw as a descent into authoritarianism that betrayed the democratic promise of Museveni's early years. Term and age limits on the presidency have since been scrapped.

(AP)

Saudi Arabia Executes 5 Ethiopians over Drug-related Charges, Rights Group Says

Five Ethiopians were executed in Saudi Arabia this week on drug-related charges following a trial that allegedly did not follow due process and lasted a few minutes without a translator, according to Human Rights Watch. The rights organization said Tuesday at least 79 other Ethiopians remain at imminent risk of execution on similar charges. It cited the European Saudi Organization for Human Rights, which said at least 116 people have been executed this year. Human Rights Watch said the five were charged with possessing hashish, a type of cannabis. ... Last week, Ethiopia's Foreign Ministry said it remained “closely engaged” with Saudi authorities on matters affecting Ethiopians. The ministry said it was looking into individuals facing legal proceedings and judicial measures but did not specify whether they included people sentenced to death for drug offences. In May, the patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church appealed to Saudi authorities to halt the execution of Ethiopian nationals.

(AP)

Term of the Day

BUSINESS ETHICS

Definition

Business ethics refers to the standards of conduct that guide how companies and their employees make decisions and interact with customers, stakeholders, and society.

Educated but humble: Reimagining the purpose of intellectual formation

By Gezahegn Anbelu

It seems that, for many people, intellectualism and humility are often viewed as opposites—qualities that rarely appear together. If a person is considered an intellectual, he or she is often expected to demonstrate confidence, authority, and mastery rather than acknowledge uncertainty or limitations. The Amharic term "mehur" carries the implied meaning that a person possesses knowledge and understanding. The proverb "Yetemare yegedelegn," loosely translated as "If I have to die, let the educated person kill me," reflects the high regard society gives to educated individuals and their wisdom and judgment.

However, this social elevation of intellectuals can unintentionally reinforce a human tendency toward pride. When educated people are treated as individuals who possess special insight beyond ordinary people, they may find it difficult to acknowledge their limitations. The danger is not knowledge itself, but the assumption that knowledge gives a person complete understanding and immunity from error.

The consequences of such an attitude might remain personal if they are limited to individual behavior. However, intellectuals often occupy positions of influence in universities, governments, organizations, and communities. Their ideas and decisions can shape the lives of others. Therefore, the character of those who possess knowledge becomes as important as the knowledge itself.

The true measure of knowledge is not only how much one knows but also the awareness of how much remains unknown. Perhaps this is why Socrates stated, "I know that I do not know." His statement was not an admission of ignorance but an expression of intellectual humility—the recognition that wisdom begins with awareness of one's limitations. However, cultivating intellectual humility faces several challenges.

One challenge comes from cultural expectations. In many societies, education is closely associated with authority and social status. The assumption that an educated person should have answers to every question creates unrealistic expectations. A university degree or professional position does not mean that an individual possesses complete knowledge. Rather, education should cultivate the ability to think critically, continue learning, and recognize the complexity of reality.

Academic institutions therefore have a responsibility not only to produce knowledgeable graduates but also to cultivate individuals who understand the limits of their knowledge. The purpose of education should not be to create people who merely display confidence in what they know, but people who possess the humility to learn, adapt, and engage with different perspectives. A truly educated person is not someone who believes he or she has reached the final destination of knowledge, but someone who remains curious, reflective, and willing to grow throughout life.

Another challenge comes from institutional culture. Many organizations unintentionally reward the appearance of certainty rather than the willingness to learn. From recruitment interviews to professional advancement, people are often evaluated based on what they already know rather than their ability to adapt and develop. Admitting limitations can be interpreted as weakness instead of an opportunity for growth.

This creates pressure for individuals to present themselves as more knowledgeable than they are. Such behavior may produce short-term impressions of competence but can create long-term problems for institutions. Organizations that encourage mentorship, continuous learning, and capacity building allow individuals to develop their abilities while creating a culture where acknowledging limitations becomes a strength rather than a weakness.

This issue is closely connected to the concept of learning organizations, where success depends on openness, reflection, and the ability to correct mistakes. Institutions that assume they are always right and discourage internal criticism create dangerous blind spots. Confidence is necessary for effective leadership, but confidence without humility can become arrogance. The problem is not believing in one's ability; the problem is believing that one's ability is beyond correction.

The Challenger Space Shuttle disaster provides an important example. During the height of the Space Race, NASA scheduled the Challenger launch for January 28, 1986. Several engineers warned against proceeding because of concerns about the shuttle's components, particularly the effect of cold temperatures on the O-rings. Despite these warnings, the launch proceeded, and 73 seconds after liftoff, the Space Shuttle Challenger broke apart, killing all seven crew members.

The disaster cannot be explained simply as a failure of individual pride. It involved complex technical, organizational, and communication failures. However, it demonstrated what sociologist Diane Vaughan called the normalization of deviance—the process by which unusual risks gradually become accepted because previous incidents did not result in disaster. Challenger serves as a reminder that even highly respected institutions require humility, openness to criticism, and the willingness to question established assumptions.

Another important dimension of intellectual humility is spirituality. Many religious traditions emphasize human dependence on a higher reality and encourage humility by recognizing human limitations. The awareness that human beings are not the ultimate source of truth creates a sense of responsibility and restraint.

At the same time, intellectual humility is not limited only to religious belief. Philosophy and science themselves provide powerful reasons for humility. Scientific knowledge advances because researchers recognize that current explanations may be incomplete and remain open to revision. Philosophical reflection also reminds us that many fundamental questions about existence, meaning, and morality remain complex and difficult.

The danger arises when human beings elevate their own knowledge into absolute certainty and become unwilling to recognize the limits of their understanding. Whether this comes from scientific, political, ideological, or personal confidence, the result can be the same: resistance to correction and unwillingness to learn.

True intellectual humility does not mean rejecting expertise, minimizing achievement, or lacking confidence. A humble scholar can be highly knowledgeable; a humble leader can be highly decisive. Humility does not weaken excellence—it protects excellence from becoming arrogance.

Ultimately, intellectual humility is the foundation that allows knowledge to serve humanity. The greatest intellectuals are not those who claim to possess all answers, but those who understand the vastness of what remains unknown and continue the lifelong pursuit of truth, wisdom, and improvement.

The writer can be reached via gezuanbelu@gmail.com

Entrepreneur PROFILE:

RESUME

Name: Teha Dedefo

Education: Degree in General Mechanic

Company name: Yetebaberut Auto Spare Parts

Title: Partner

Founded in: 2021

What it does: Supplying spare parts for heavy and light duty vehicles

Hq: Adama

Number of Employees: 5

STARTUP CAPITAL

250,000 BIRR

CURRENT CAPITAL

Growing

BIG PICTURE

Reason for starting the Business: High demand for quality spare parts in the transport sector

Biggest perk of ownership: Financial freedom

Biggest strength: Integrity

Biggest challenge: Supply chain delays

Plan: To expand distribution centers across the city

First career: Auto Mechanic

Most interested in meeting: Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed

PERSONAL

Most admired person: Aliko Dangote

Stress reducer: Listening to music

Favorite pastime: Watching movies

Favorite book: None

Favorite destination: USA

Favorite automobile: Mercedes-Benz G-Class

DAILY EXCHANGE RATE

Aug. 1, 2026

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Commercial Bank of Ethiopia

CURRENCY	BUYING	SELLING
US DOLLAR	159.03	162.21
POUND STERLING	208.22	212.38
EURO	182.10	185.74
SWISS FRANK	191.37	195.20
SWEDISH KRONER	16.15	16.47
CHINESE YUAN	23.08	23.54
UAE DIRHAM	43.30	44.17
JAPANIS YEN	0.95	0.97

INTERVIEW

ART, HERITAGE AND UNITY

Following the World Public Summit Africa in Addis Ababa (July 29-30, 2026), Capital sat down with Yanina Dubeykovskaya—communications strategist, founder of WCFDavos and the Women Influence Forum, and Head of the WPS Africa Organizational Committee. In this candid conversation, Dubeykovskaya discusses the power of the summit's "Unity" contemporary African art exhibition, shares insights from the groundbreaking study "The Zambezi River: Economy, Society, Soul," and explains why soft power and shared heritage are central to the continent's diplomatic agenda. Excerpts;

Photo By: Anteneh Akililu

Capital: With 16 African nations and the Afro-Brazilian diaspora represented, how does your work challenge the idea of a single 'African narrative' while still capturing a sense of unity?

Yanina Dubeykovskaya: Our curatorial approach intentionally avoids creating a generalized image of Africa or seeking a universal visual language, as this would reduce the complexity of the continent's artistic landscape to a false uniformity. A primary goal of the exhibition is to showcase the full diversity of contemporary African art. Therefore, it brings together artists from various countries, working across diverse media and exploring themes shaped by distinct cultural, historical, and social contexts.

Within this framework, unity is not based on identifying similarities; instead, it emerges from a deep respect for differences. Each artist articulates, in their unique way, the relationship between the individual and society, and between culture, inner integrity, and responsibility. This curatorial logic preserves the distinctiveness of each artistic voice while demonstrating that questions of memory, identity, human connection, and a shared future can create genuine dialogue across diverse cultural backgrounds.

Capital: The exhibition will move to Moscow after concluding in Ethiopia. What message or feeling do you hope audiences in Russia take away from contemporary African art?

Yanina: For several years, our Gallery of Contemporary African Art "I-A" has consistently introduced Russian audiences to contemporary African art. The "Unity" exhibition continues this tradition but on a considerably larger international scale, bringing together artists from sixteen African countries alongside an artist representing Afro-Brazilian culture. This offers Russian audiences a fuller encounter with the diversity and richness of the continent's contemporary art.

Art remains one of the most effective tools for cultural dialogue, forging direct connections between countries, communities, and professional circles. We hope Russian audiences will leave not just with an impression of individual artworks, but with a broader panorama of contemporary African art: dynamic, conceptually rich, deeply rooted in local cultures, and an integral part of the global art scene.

We believe that exhibitions of this kind become meeting points for professional communities, cultural institutions, and audiences alike, generating new opportunities for cultural exchange and lasting cooperation between Russia and the countries of Africa.

Capital: How does a cultural centerpiece like 'Unity' change the tone of high-level diplomatic discussions at the summit?

Yanina: The summit is focused on global unity and what connects countries and people despite their differences. While economics, business, and international cooperation are naturally important agenda items, every lasting partnership is built on trust, and trust cannot be established at the negotiating table alone. It develops as people come to understand one another more fully. This is precisely why culture and art are so crucial at international gatherings of this scale.

One can speak at length about unity, mutual respect, and a shared future, but art allows people not just to hear these ideas but to experience them directly, fostering an emotional connection to universal values regardless of country of origin or cultural background. The "Unity" exhibition thus becomes a space where the summit's guiding ideas take visual form, a reminder that education, culture, youth initiatives, and art are not peripheral concerns but essential foundations upon which trust, cooperation, and international partnership are built over time.

Capital: How does this event practically differ from traditional international summits?

Yanina: This summit's primary distinction lies in its focus on launching concrete joint initiatives rather than merely discussing global challenges. Over 700 participants from government, business, science, civil society, and culture will convene to establish a foundation for cooperation that extends far beyond the event itself.

One key initiative is "The Zambezi River: Economy, Society, Soul," an international interdisciplinary study bringing together experts from multiple countries.

The summit also expects leaders of non-governmental organizations to exchange proven practices and initiate new regional and cross-border projects. This will be supported by the development of an expert knowledge base on African NGOs, designed to foster continued cooperation across the continent.

Many African communities articulate their worldview through the principle of

INTERVIEW


Photo By: Anteneh Aklilu

Ubuntu: "I am because we are," reflecting the understanding that individuals cannot exist apart from their community. This emphasis on what connects people, rather than what divides them, is central to the summit's philosophy.

Capital: The study titled 'The Zambezi River: Economy, Society, Soul' blends socioeconomic research with cultural identity. Why was it crucial to include the 'soul' aspect alongside economic development?

Yanina: Development cannot be measured solely by economic indicators. Any territory is fundamentally defined by its people—their way of life, values, traditions, and relationship with their environment. This is why "soul" is placed alongside economy and society in the study's title.

For millions, the Zambezi River is more than just a natural resource or transport route; it shapes livelihoods, unites communities, informs cultural traditions, and contributes to a people's sense of belonging to their land. Therefore, a meaningful account of long-term, sustainable development in the region requires understanding not only a territory's economic potential but also what makes it significant and unique to its inhabitants.

Capital: With over 700 cross-sector leaders attending, what role do young African innovators and contemporary artists play in driving the summit's vision forward?

Yanina: While political and business leaders help shape strategic decisions, young innovators and cultural representatives are crucial in defining how these ideas will evolve. The new generation is creating innovative development approaches by integrating technology, entrepreneurship, social initiatives, and cultural projects. They are finding novel solutions to current challenges, demonstrating that progress is achievable through cross-sector collaboration.

Contemporary artists are also vital to this process. They address central societal issues such as identity, memory, ecology, urban development, and the future of communities and generations. Through their work, artists not only reflect on social transformations but also create spaces for dialogue among people from diverse countries and cultural backgrounds. When innovation, social initiatives, and art converge, they lay the groundwork for new partnerships.

Capital: Precious, Selamawit, and Khalifa—your works touch on collective memory, natural symbolism, and future generations. How did the theme of 'Unity' specifically influence the pieces you brought to Addis Ababa?

Yanina: In developing the exhibition, it was essential to demonstrate that unity is a concept each artist interprets through their unique personal experience, cultural background, and creative method. This explains the plurality of interpretations presented in the exhibition.

Selamawit Gebretsadik: For Selamawit, unity is expressed through the image of a leaf, a universal natural form symbolizing the interconnectedness of all living things.

Precious Longret Samuel: Precious approaches culture as a repository of memory that binds generations and preserves collective identity.

Khalifa Mané: Khalifa's work posits that unity is inextricably linked to the concept of a shared future, achievable only through collective responsibility and cooperation. These three artists, along with the broader group of participants, offer diverse interpretations of unity, drawing from personal histories, social experiences, cultural traditions, and the pursuit of inner harmony.

Capital: What was the first piece of African art that personally moved you, and how did it shape your perspective as a curator?

Yanina: The first piece of African art I encountered was Mulenga Mubanga's rendering of the Last Supper, which I saw at an art fair in Lusaka, the capital of Zambia. What struck me was:

African artists embrace classical subjects.

They courageously interpret these subjects in a visually unconventional, vivid, and distinctly African manner.

Meeting Mulenga himself. He remains one of the key artists we work with, and I consider him a genius who will gain global recognition within the next five to seven years.

When working with African art, it's essential to support artists who are not trying to emulate established Western artists. An artist's unique personal story and style are their most valuable assets. I believe over 90% of African artists employ entirely different techniques, often combining them through mixed media that incorporates newspapers, restaurant menus, found objects, or textiles. For me, curating this art is an expression of freedom.

Capital: Was there a lighthearted or unexpected moment behind the scenes while bringing works from 16 different nations together?

Yanina: One unexpected and genuinely joyful moment occurred while we were assembling works from sixteen countries. I pay close attention to opportunities for women in art, and it was a real delight to discover, as we reviewed the pieces selected from our Open Call, how many were by women artists. From Madagascar alone, for instance, we ended up with two wonderful artists, both of whom are women. It's a small detail, but one I was genuinely happy to share.

Capital: If you could share a casual cup of coffee with any of the featured artists, which piece of theirs would you ask about first?

Yanina: Let me highlight an artist I consider truly exceptional: Selamawit Gebretsadik, who recently had a very successful solo exhibition in Moscow. Whenever I sit with Selamawit over a cup of Ethiopian coffee in her studio, I always ask her about her newest work. Now that she's back from Russia, the question I'd want to start with is simply: What has changed in her approach, her style, and her understanding of her own craft after being immersed in so much of the world's art? I plan on asking her exactly that myself, today.

Society

Navigating the micro-valley

Seductive flower market strategies that stand the test of time

By Mekonnen Solomon

In July 2026, the Ethiopian Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration, in strategic partnership with the UK Embassy, convened a high-level consultative forum at the Ethiopian Standards Institute (Quality Village). Featuring the virtual participation of His Excellency Biruk Mekonnen, Ambassador of Ethiopia to the United Kingdom, the dialogue focused on supercharging Ethiopian export performance within the UK market and scaling the competitive edge of the cut flower sector. A central highlight of the session was the Developing Countries Trading Scheme (DCTS). As the UK's post-Brexit successor to the European Union's Everything But Arms (EBA) framework, the DCTS offers a streamlined preferential trading structure designed to boost developing-nation trade while preserving unilateral duty-free privileges for East African cut flowers.

The workshop operationalized this framework, outlining core compliance requirements, utilization strategies, and long-term commercial benefits. Although the DCTS mirrors the EU's EBA initiative by providing tariff-free and quota-free market access, this structural alignment is secondary.

The vital strategic priority for Ethiopia's floriculture industry lies not solely in leveraging trade preferences, but in actively repositioning itself to capture premium, high-value market segments globally.

The global floriculture trade has long been tethered to a handful of colossal volume peaks, notably Valentine's Day, Christmas, and Mother's Day. While these mega-holidays generate massive revenue surges, they expose export-oriented economies like Ethiopia to severe systemic vulnerabilities. Exporters relying solely on these peak dates face immense market gluts, steep price volatility, and catastrophic spot-market price crashes if minor logistical bottlenecks or transit delays occur within a narrow forty-eight-hour window. Every commercial flower farm deals with grades of production and biological volume peaks that rarely align perfectly with global mega-holidays. Secondary stem lengths, mixed-variety bunches, and specific colour palettes that fail premium grading standards frequently face disposal or dumping onto saturated spot markets at a complete loss, or are sold locally. To insulate Ethiopian flower farms from systemic shocks, the former Horticultural Development Agency of Ethiopia, in strategic partnership with the Royal Netherlands Embassy, formulated the foundational Market Destinations Flower Days Map.

Serving as a tactical navigation tool, the map identified strategic international hubs, promotional windows, and peak consumer periods across Western and Eastern Europe, the Russian Federation, Australia, and the Middle East. By delivering data-driven insights into seasonal demand fluctuations, the initiative empowered farms to reduce market search costs and optimize harvesting schedules, minimize cargo waste and streamline freight logistics amid volatile transport costs, and strengthen global positioning by reinforcing Ethiopia's reputation as a reliable, structured supplier while securing long-term contracts with European wholesalers and retailers. The Market Destinations Flower Days Map tracks international holidays and special celebratory days month by month to help flower exporters and logistics planners anticipate peak market demands. Spanning the entire year from January through December, it provides a comprehensive reference matrix for tracking global market dynamics and shipping requirements. This granular calendar maps specific cultural, national, and religious holidays across primary and secondary European, Middle Eastern, and regional export destinations. By leveraging secondary and niche holidays, Ethiopian growers have transformed operational challenges such as natural volume peaks and secondary grades of production into highly profitable, diversified revenue streams.

Secondary and niche holidays create essential micro-valleys in the international floral calendar. These act as localized events that absorb surplus production which would otherwise go to waste, composite sales, or local distribution. Furthermore, different destination markets maintain distinct cultural preferences regarding stem lengths, packaging weight, and colour symbolism. Knowing that a destination market is celebrating a localized event allows farms to pre-sort stems according to regional preferences rather than forcing standardized bunches onto unwilling buyers. Armed with a destination calendar, Ethiopian exporters can approach European and Middle Eastern importers weeks in advance with pre-packaged, destination-specific proposals. This diverts surplus volume into structured micro-valley orders, prevents price cannibalization on spot exchanges, and ensures a higher net realization per stem across the annual harvest cycle.

A rigorous examination of the destination calendar reveals a rich tapestry of civic, religious, and academic milestones across target export markets that offer strategic intervention points for Ethiopian growers. During the winter and early spring months from January through March, January 21–22 marks Great Mother's Day and Great Father's Day in Poland, offering an immediate post-Christmas outlet for mixed bunches and secondary rose grades. February 23 marks Men's Day, or Defender of the Fatherland Day, in Russia through Turkey, representing a massive market for structured, masculine colour palettes like deep reds, blues, and structural greens. March 8 brings International Women's Day, a massive continental event particularly dominant in Eastern Europe and Russia that acts as a secondary mega-holiday matching or exceeding Valentine's volume for specific varieties such as mimosas and tulips. Shortly after, March 19 brings Father's Day in Italy, providing an early spring market entry for potted plants and structured cut flowers.

As spring transitions into April through June, the calendar features a mix of civic liberation days, professional recognition events, and family milestones. April 19 marks Secretary's Day across France, Belgium, and Northern Ireland, serving as a classic corporate gifting holiday ideal for mid-grade bouquet placements in professional office settings. May features Mother's Day across various European clusters, such as France on June 3, Poland on May 26, and a synchronized Mother's Day across Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Northern Ireland, and Switzerland on May 13. This staggered timing allows farms to pivot shipments across borders sequentially. Father's Day is similarly staggered across nations during June, occurring on June 10 in Belgium, June 17 in France and the Netherlands, and June 23 in Poland—a temporal dispersion that effectively prevents supply chain logjams. Additionally, June 30 marks the end of the school year in Belgium, presenting a vital academic milestone where teachers receive floral tokens of appreciation, driving demand for cheerful, mixed-variety bunches.

Autumn brings a shift away from romantic gifting toward institutional and gratitude-based milestones. September 1 marks the first day of school in Russia and Poland, where academically driven floral demand behaves entirely differently than romantic holidays, absorbing vast quantities of standard-grade stems that command stable price premiums. September 22 marks the Day of the Customer in Belgium, where retailers utilize floral gifts to reward client loyalty, creating commercial demand for bulk corporate arrangements. September 27 marks Thank You Day in Germany, a micro-valley tailored for expressions of gratitude suited for mixed pastel bunches. In October, extended educator peaks unfold in the Russian Federation through Teachers' Days on October 7 and 14, alongside Great Parents' Days on October 7 and 28. As the calendar closes in November and December, regional gift-giving traditions provide final volume absorption before Christmas, highlighted by Great Parents' Day in Belgium on November 18, Russian Mother's Day on November 25, and Sint Nicolaas on December 5 in the Netherlands and December 6 in Belgium a major regional gift-giving festival where floral elements complement traditional confections.

The global floriculture market is not static; comparative advantages fluctuate due to shifting energy costs in heated European greenhouses, freight rate volatilities, currency fluctuations such as euro-to-birr dynamics, and evolving trade agreements. Relying on fixed, legacy export routes is an existential risk for Ethiopian flower farms. Market diversification driven by the Flower Days Map allows producers to dynamically reallocate export volumes to regions experiencing favourable economic conditions or localized supply deficits. Because different holidays command distinct price premiums and elasticities, moving away from high price spikes and severe delivery penalties toward the stable, predictable demand curves of academic milestones and civic gratitude days helps financial modelers accurately predict net realizations per stem. By pairing specific holiday price elasticities with production grading forecasts, farm managers can optimize greenhouse climate controls and pinching schedules weeks in advance to target high-yield micro-valleys while smoothing cash flow volatility.

The strategic significance of the Market Destinations Flower Days Map has been elevated by recent Ethiopian legislation. Current government regulations expressly permit both domestic and foreign investors to purchase flowers from domestic producers and export them in the capacity of traders. This liberalized framework transforms the Map from a useful planning tool for growers alone into an indispensable commercial instrument for an entire class of trading enterprises. Traders can now source secondary grades and surplus volumes directly from farms, match those volumes with precision to the micro-valleys identified on the calendar, and ship pre-sorted, destination-specific consignments without the necessity of owning production assets.

Ethiopia's horticultural triumphs were never accidental; they were architected through deliberate, Institutional-backed ecosystem engineering spearheaded by the former Ethiopian Horticultural Development Agency (EHDA). Yet, despite generating vital foreign exchange and transforming the nation into a premier African floral powerhouse, the agency was suddenly abolished.

The future of Ethiopia's floriculture sector hangs in the balance, as the possibility of reviving an independent entity akin to the original EHDA remains uncertain. As the agricultural landscape undergoes significant transformations, its trajectory will depend heavily on the strength of its institutional framework. Policymakers must grasp a crucial truth: to maintain Ethiopia's status as a leader in floriculture, it requires the same level of intentional and leading-edge support that initially fostered its growth. Whether that comes from a revitalized specialized body or a modernized approach.

Mekonnen Solomon, an Agricultural Economist at the Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture. He can be reached at ehdaplan@gmail.com.

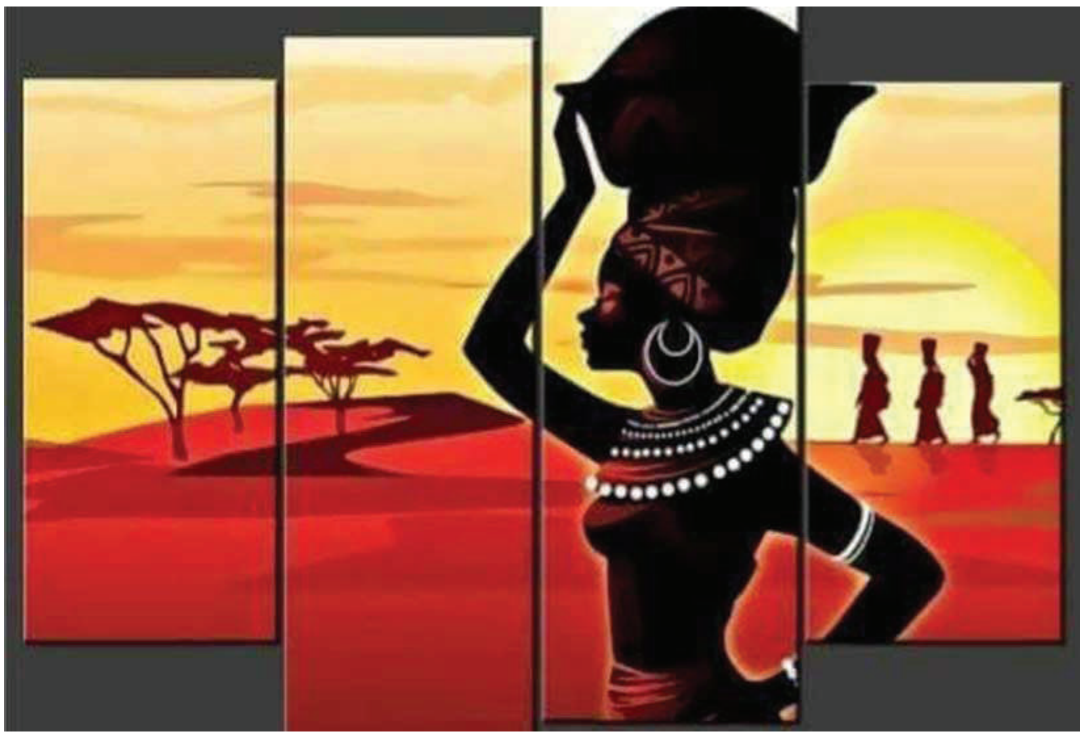
Young artists showcasing Africa's contemporary culture in Ethiopia

Some of Africa's most accomplished contemporary artists will converge in Addis Ababa on July 29 for one of the continent's largest international cultural showcases, as the "Unity" exhibition opens alongside the inaugural World Public Summit Africa on July 29–30, 2026.

Featuring artists from 16 African countries, the exhibition forms the cultural centerpiece of the summit and showcases the richness, diversity, and growing global influence of contemporary African art through paintings, sculpture, collage, digital art, and mixed-media installations.

The exhibition brings together acclaimed artists from Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, alongside an Afro-Brazilian artist whose work reflects Africa's enduring cultural connections across the diaspora.

Curated around the theme "Unity," the exhibition explores shared identity, cultural memory, hope, and the future through diverse artistic voices. Rather than presenting Africa as a single narrative, it celebrates the continent's remarkable cultural diversity while highlighting the common values that connect its peoples.



The exhibition forms part of the World Public Summit Africa, which is being held under the theme "A New World: Africa in Shaping a Shared Future."

The summit will bring together over 700 government leaders, diplomats, business executives, academics, innovators, civil society organizations, and cultural leaders to explore new opportunities for international cooperation and sustainable development.

Among the featured artists are Nigeria's Precious Longret Samuel, whose work examines culture as a living repository of collective memory, Ethiopia's Selamawit Gebretsadik, who explores unity through natural symbolism, and Senegal's Khalifa Mané, whose work reflects on the responsibility of building a shared future for generations to come.

Secretary-General of the World Peoples Assembly, Andrey Belyaninov, said the exhibition demonstrates the growing role of culture in strengthening dialogue between nations.

"Art is one of humanity's most universal languages and one of the most effective instruments of public diplomacy. It brings people together where words alone may fail, helping us discover what unites us despite our differences. Holding the World Public Summit in Addis Ababa is a recognition of Africa's role as one of the centers shaping a new world.

"Today, we understand more clearly than ever: the future cannot be built alone. It is born in dialogue, in trust, in the ability to listen to one another and to act together."

Tsegaye Chama, General Secretary of the Global Black Center, promised that "The Summit will be delivered with exceptional distinction, reflecting the magnitude and spirit of the World Peoples Assembly." It embodies a unity that is not transactional but purposeful and conscious, a unity that shapes new contours for a world that works for all peoples of the world."

One of the summit's other significant initiatives is an international, interdisciplinary scientific study examining the socioeconomic impact of the Zambezi River on the development of six African nations: Angola, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia, Botswana, and Mozambique.

Titled "The Zambezi River: Economy, Society, Soul," the initiative reflects the summit's broader vision of exploring Africa's development through interconnected perspectives—economic opportunity, social progress, and cultural identity.

With delegates expected from across Africa and around the world, expectations are high that the inaugural World Public Summit Africa will establish a lasting platform for dialogue, inspire new partnerships, strengthen regional and global cooperation, and reinforce Africa's growing voice in shaping the future of global development. It is symbolic that after the summit concludes, the exhibition will continue its journey in Moscow. It will inspire new cultural initiatives and help strengthen friendship among nations.

HOT MUSIC TABLE

JULY 23, 2026 - JULY 29, 2026

HOTTEST ARTISTS

RANK	ARTIST	RADIO	TV	TOTAL PLAY
1	Dawit Tsige	62	12	74
2	Neway Debebe	64	4	68
3	Aster Aweke	44	8	52
4	Dawit Mellesse	45	3	48
5	Betelhem Sherefedin	40	5	45
6	Abdu Kiar	42	2	44
6	Hana Girma	23	21	44
7	Michael Belayneh	41	1	42
8	Rahel Getu	28	13	41
9	Mastewal Eyayu	31	4	35
9	Tsegaye Eshetu	33	2	35
10	Ahmed Teshome (Dinbi)	26	8	34

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

BROUGHT TO YOU BY - OMNIMEDIA ETHIOPIA

HOTTEST TRACKS

RANK	TRACK	ARTIST	RADIO	TV	TOTAL PLAY
1	Nana	Rahel Getu	14	12	26
1	Kome Limerkish	Tilahun Gessese	10	16	26
2	Yirefdal	Ahmed Teshome (Dinbi)	15	0	15
3	Hayyee	Hana Girma	9	4	13
4	Gojamoch Zenetu	Seyumekal Gebre	8	4	12
5	Tamralech	Shewandagne Hailu	7	3	10
6	Bayew Bayew	Dawit Tsige	8	1	9
7	Jegna	Helen Berhe	4	4	8
8	Postegnaw	YEMa	5	2	7
9	Yamelalsegnal	Henok Abebe	5	1	6
10	Tegene	Betelhem Sherefedin	5	0	5
10	Mognulibe	Madingo Afewerk	5	0	5
10	Dejazmach	Kuku Sebsebe	4	1	5

INVITATION TO BID

Sale of Unserviceable Printers, Scrap Carpets and Scrap Metals

REF. PRO32-3-PMU/26-5-1

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) invites interested bidders to participate in a closed bid exercise for the Sale of unserviceable Printers, Scrap Carpets and Scrap Metals.

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

For any queries regarding this bid, please contact the Bid Officer, Tel. 0115445779 extension (35779).

For physical inspection purposes, please contact the Inventory Control Unit of ECA in person or by telephone at 0115-443115, extension 33115.

Physical inspections will be conducted on **July 31, August 3,5,7,10,12,14,17 and 19 between 9:00 AM and 12:30 PM.**

Interested bidders may collect the bid document from the Procurement Unit, in Room no. NG.4S.03 of its Secretariat Building (Niger) 4th floor in the ECA compound at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, during working hours, starting from 30 Julu 2026 – 19 August 2026 from Monday to Thursday morning time between 9:00 AM to 12:30 PM afternoon time 15:00 PM to 17:00 PM and on Friday 9:00 AM to 13:00 PM on UN working hours and days only.

The closing date of the bid submission will be **19 August 2026 at 16:00 PM, and the opening will be on 20 August 2026 at 10:00AM. No Proposal shall be received after this deadline.**

Please deposit Birr 200 in United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) account No. 1000090977858 and collect bid document from Supply Chain Management Section Procurement unit 4th floor Room No. NG.4S.03.

Bidders will be expected to submit a bid bond of 10% of the total bid amount in the form of CPO as a guarantee to participate in closed bid exercise. The 10% Bid bond will not be returned to the awarded bidder who failed to collect his/her award. Submission of bid on the basis of another bid is strictly prohibited.

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

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Hibret Bank

Bid No. HB/008/2026

Call for Local and International Tender

Hibret Bank would like to invite interested & eligible **Local and International Bidders** to bid for the Installation, Integration, Supporting and Maintenance of **ATM Monitoring Tool.**

Interested bidders shall submit their proposals as per the following conditions.

1. A Complete set of Bidding documents can be purchased by interested bidders upon payment (depositing) of non-refundable fee of Birr 230.00 (Two hundred Thirty) in Account Number IN0403007, in any branch of Hibret Bank; nearest and convenient to you.
2. Bidders can obtain the bid document from Procurement Division which is located at Lideta sub city, Woreda 08, Ras Abebe Aregay Street, in front of Addis Abeba University School Of Commerce, Hibir Tower, 19th floor.
3. Interested bidders are advised to review the bid document carefully before preparing & submitting their bids.
4. Bids must be submitted on **August 19, 2026** until 2:00 PM at Hibret Bank Head Office, Procurement Division Hiber Tower 19th floor.
5. Each bid must be presented in a sealed envelope and strictly in accordance with the instruction to bidders indicated in the bid document.
6. The bid will be opened at Hibret Bank Head Office located at Lideta sub city, Woreda 08, Ras Abebe Aregay street, Hibir Tower, 4th floor at presence of bidders or their representative who choose to attend in the bid opening on **August 19, 2026** at 2:30 P.M
7. Failure to observe the instructions & conditions provided in the bid document will constitute grounds for rejection of the bidder from competition.
8. The Bank reserves the right to accept or reject the bid partly or totally.

For additional information bidders can contact by the following address.

Tel. 011 465 5222 ext. 212 and 211 or 011 470 6541

Hibret Bank

Africa's Jobs Challenge: Moving from Dialogue to Delivery

By Veronica Masubo

Africa stands at a defining moment in its development journey. Home to the world's youngest and fastest-growing population, the continent has an unprecedented opportunity to harness its demographic dividend. Yet this opportunity is accompanied by one of the greatest policy challenges of our time: creating enough productive, decent jobs to absorb millions of young people entering the labour market each year.

A Continent Rich in Potential, Constrained by Delivery

Every year, between 12 and 15 million young Africans enter the labour market, yet only around 3 million formal jobs are created annually, leaving millions either unemployed or working in low-productivity informal employment (Mastercard Foundation, 2026).

By 2030, approximately 375 million additional young people are expected to join Sub-Saharan Africa's labour force, making Africa home to the largest youth workforce in the world (ILO, 2016). By 2050, Africa will have around 850 million young people, representing one of the greatest reservoirs of human capital globally (WEF, 2026).

If countries create productive employment opportunities, Africa could experience one of history's largest demographic dividends. If not, unemployment, underemployment, inequality and social instability could become increasingly significant constraints to sustainable development.

Africa does not suffer from a shortage of ideas and evidence, but the gap between these ideas and implementation. And with a challenge at this scale, Africa needs to find a way to scale these ideas and solutions at an unprecedented speed.

Africa Has No Shortage of Solutions

Across the continent, governments, researchers, entrepreneurs, and development partners have generated an impressive portfolio of evidence on what creates jobs.

We know that competitive industries create sustainable employment; youth enterprises need ecosystems, not isolated financing and regional markets under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) can unlock new value chains. In addition, we also know that digital technologies and Artificial Intelligence can create new economic opportunities and green industrialization offers significant employment potential.

For example, recent analysis estimates that Africa's green economy alone could generate 3.3 million new jobs by 2030, particularly in renewable energy, manufacturing and climate-smart industries, provided investments in skills and workforce development keep pace (FSD Africa, 2024).

Similarly, Africa's creative economy already contributes an estimated US$60 billion annually yet captures less than one percent of global creative exports (UNCTAD, 2024), illustrating the untapped potential of sectors beyond traditional manufacturing.

The opportunity that we see is how we can implement and scaled these identify solutions.

From Evidence to Implementation

Too often, we have seen in Africa that promising pilot projects remain isolated. Research findings are published but not translated into policy, and those that do make it to policy are announced but lack follow-through. Furthermore, successful innovations and best practice tend to remain local and in the same context, without opportunity to scale to other regions and continental.

This implementation gap has become one of the defining barriers to accelerating structural transformation and job creation across Africa. Recognizing this challenge, the Africa Development Impact Forum (ADIF) 2026, convened by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), deliberately adopted a different approach. Rather than creating another conference centred on discussion alone, ADIF was designed around a simple question:

How do we move from ideas to implementation?

The Forum brought together governments, development finance institutions, private sector leaders, researchers, youth innovators and development partners under the theme "Best Practices and Innovative Solutions for Job Creation in Africa." Participants explored practical solutions across entrepreneurship, artificial intelligence, industrialization, regional value chains, skills development, green growth and the creative economy, while placing implementation- not diagnosis—at the centre of every discussion.

Why ADIF Is Different

What distinguished ADIF was its recognition that solving Africa's jobs challenge requires more than producing recommendations. It requires institutions that can sustain momentum after the conference ends. Throughout the Forum, participants consistently emphasized four priorities, (a) maintaining dialogue between stakeholders, (b) creating accountability for commitments, (c) fostering strategic partnerships; and (d) providing practical implementation support.

This recognition led to one of ADIF's most significant outcomes: the proposed ADIF Implementation Clock.

The ADIF Implementation Clock

The Implementation Clock is designed as an implementation platform rather than a monitoring exercise. Its purpose is to support Member States and partners in translating Forum commitments into measurable action. Instead of waiting until the next conference to assess progress, the Implementation Clock creates a continuous mechanism for collaboration, adaptive learning and problem-solving.

Turning Africa's Demographic Dividend into a Development Dividend

Africa's demographic transition is often described as the continent's greatest opportunity. Whether it becomes a demographic dividend will depend less on the quality of policy ideas than on the quality of implementation. The continent already possesses the talent, entrepreneurial energy, research capacity and policy experience needed to create jobs at scale. The next challenge is ensuring that these assets work together.

ADIF demonstrates that implementation is not simply about executing projects, it is about building partnerships, strengthening institutions, creating accountability and sustaining collaboration over time.

If Africa succeeds in moving from isolated initiatives to coordinated implementation, it will not only create more jobs, it will build stronger institutions, more competitive industries and more resilient economies.

That is the ambition behind the Africa Development Impact Forum.

Veronica Masubo is an Economist and ADIF Coordinator

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.

Bale Mountains National Park deserves stronger protection before it's too late

By Zelalem Legese Hailemariam

Every Ethiopian has a responsibility to protect the natural heritage that defines our nation. Among our greatest treasures is Bale Mountains National Park, one of Africa's most extraordinary ecosystems and a sanctuary for wildlife found nowhere else on Earth. More than a tourist destination, the park is a living symbol of Ethiopia's rich biodiversity, ecological heritage, and our shared responsibility to preserve it for future generations.

Recent publicly shared footage has raised important questions about how tourism activities are being managed in parts of Bale Mountains National Park. Although these observations may not represent every visitor's experience or the park's overall management, they highlight practices that deserve careful review to ensure that tourism remains consistent with the long-term conservation of the park's unique wildlife and ecosystems.

One video showed tourists approaching an Ethiopian wolf at an uncomfortably close distance, potentially disturbing its natural behavior. Another depicted visitors camping inside the park for extended periods, raising concerns about the cumulative impacts of prolonged human presence in ecologically sensitive areas. The most troubling footage, however, showed monkeys waiting along the roadside as buses passed, seemingly expecting food from passengers. If such interactions are becoming common, they suggest that some wildlife may be gradually becoming habituated to humans.

Wildlife should never associate roads or vehicles with food. When animals begin waiting beside roads for passing vehicles, the risk of vehicle collisions increases, natural movement and foraging patterns are disrupted, and dependence on human-provided food may gradually develop. Roads through protected areas should provide safe access for visitors and not become feeding grounds that alter the behavior and survival of the wildlife they are meant to protect.

This is not just about visitor manners; it is a real conservation problem.

Wild animals have adapted over thousands of years to live in their natural homes. They know how to find food, avoid danger, and keep their environment balanced. When people feed wildlife, even if they mean well, it changes these natural behaviors. Animals might start relying on people, gather near roads instead of searching for food, face more risk from cars, spread diseases more easily, and lose their fear of humans. These changes can harm not just single animals, but whole populations over time.

Protected areas around the world have learned this lesson. National parks in the United States, Canada, Kenya, South Africa, and Australia all ban feeding wildlife because it causes real harm. Ethiopia should keep building on these conservation practices to protect its unique plants and animals.

Bale Mountains National Park is known worldwide for its ecological value. It has the largest group of endangered Ethiopian wolves, one of the rarest canids on earth. The park also protects mountain nyala, Bale monkeys, giant mole-rats, many unique birds, and rare plants. These animals are not just symbols of Ethiopia's rich wildlife; they are key parts of healthy ecosystems.

Tourism is important. It creates jobs, helps local businesses, brings in money for conservation, and shows the world Ethiopia's amazing landscapes. But tourism must be sustainable. Visitors should leave with great memories, not with impacts that change animal behavior or harm delicate ecosystems.

Responsible tourism and effective conservation can coexist. Achieving this balance: Responsible tourism and effective conservation can go hand in hand. Achieving this balance requires commitment from government agencies, tour operators, researchers, local communities, and visitors alike. In National Park:

- Enforce a strict prohibition on feeding wildlife, supported by consistent penalties.
- Install multilingual educational signs explaining why feeding animals is harmful.
- Require conservation briefings for all visitors before entering the park.
- Restrict camping to designated areas away from ecologically sensitive habitats.
- Limit visitor numbers in fragile areas during peak seasons.
- Increase the number of trained park rangers to monitor tourism activities.
- Establish and enforce minimum viewing distances between visitors and wildlife.
- Apply speed limits and wildlife crossing protections on roads within the park.
- Strengthen partnerships with universities and conservation organizations to monitor the impacts of wildlife and tourism.
- Expand environmental education programs for local communities, schools, and visitors to encourage responsible stewardship.

Protecting Bale Mountains National Park is not just up to the government. Every visitor, tour operator, photographer, researcher, and citizen has a part to play. Respecting wildlife means watching animals without bothering them, keeping a safe distance, never feeding them, throwing away trash properly, and leaving the park as you found it.

Conservation does not mean stopping people from enjoying nature. It means making sure everyone can experience nature without taking away from future generations.

Visitor Can Help Protect Bale Mountains National Park

- Never feed wildlife.
- Keep a safe distance from animals.
- Stay on designated roads and trails.
- Respect quiet zones.
- Dispose of waste properly.
- Camp only in authorized areas.
- Never leave food behind.
- Support licensed local guides.

Ethiopia's biodiversity is one of our nation's greatest treasures. Once ecosystems are degraded or species disappear, recovery is often slow, difficult, or even impossible. The choices we make today will determine whether future generations inherit thriving wildlife and healthy ecosystems or only memories and photographs of what once existed.

Bale Mountains National Park is far more than a destination for visitors it is a priceless national legacy and a living sanctuary that reflects Ethiopia's unique natural heritage. The true measure of our love for Ethiopia is not only in celebrating its history and culture but also in protecting the landscapes and wildlife that make our country extraordinary. Let us safeguard Bale Mountains National Park with scientific stewardship, responsible tourism, and a shared commitment to conservation, ensuring that it remains a vibrant sanctuary for generations to come.

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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.

Social media and the culture of instant success

Alazar Kebede

In today's hyperconnected world, success no longer appears to be a destination reached through years of perseverance; instead, it is often portrayed as something achieved overnight. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and X have transformed how society defines achievement, influencing perceptions of wealth, beauty, career progression, and personal fulfilment. While these platforms have democratised opportunities for creativity and entrepreneurship, they have also cultivated a culture of instant success that prioritises visibility over substance and speed over sustained effort. This trend has significant implications for mental health, education, work ethics, and societal values.

The phrase "overnight success" has become a defining narrative on social media. Viral videos, influencer lifestyles, and stories of young entrepreneurs earning millions are presented as evidence that extraordinary achievements are readily accessible to anyone with internet access. However, these narratives frequently omit years of preparation, repeated failures, financial backing, or professional support that contributed to such achievements. As a result, audiences particularly young people develop unrealistic expectations regarding career development and personal growth.

Social media algorithms reinforce this perception by rewarding content that attracts immediate attention. Platforms prioritise posts with high engagement, making sensational, emotionally charged, or visually appealing content more likely to be promoted. Consequently, users become conditioned to associate popularity with success. Metrics such as follower counts, likes, shares, and views increasingly function as indicators of personal value rather than merely measures of online engagement. This environment encourages individuals to seek external validation rather than intrinsic satisfaction.

The culture of instant success is especially influential among younger generations. Adolescents and young adults spend substantial portions of their daily lives online, where they are continuously exposed to carefully curated representations of success. Luxury lifestyles, exotic travel, expensive possessions, and apparently effortless achievements dominate their feeds. Rarely are financial struggles, emotional setbacks, or professional failures displayed with equal prominence. This selective presentation creates what psychologists describe as "social comparison," where individuals evaluate themselves against idealised versions of others.

The consequences of these comparisons can be severe. Research consistently associates excessive social media use with increased levels of anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and feelings of inadequacy. Young people may conclude that they are falling behind because they have not achieved similar milestones at the same age. Such perceptions ignore the reality that social media presents highlights rather than complete life stories. Success becomes measured by visibility instead of meaningful personal or professional accomplishment.

Furthermore, the desire for rapid recognition influences educational and career choices. Instead of pursuing professions requiring years of specialised training, some young people aspire to become influencers, content creators, or online celebrities because these careers appear to offer immediate financial rewards and public recognition. While digital entrepreneurship represents a legitimate career path, the probability of achieving lasting success remains relatively low. Many aspiring creators invest considerable time and resources without obtaining sustainable incomes. Nevertheless, social media disproportionately highlights exceptional cases while obscuring the experiences of the majority.

The workplace has not remained immune to these changing expectations. Employees increasingly seek rapid promotions, entrepreneurial breakthroughs, or immediate financial success. Traditional career models based on gradual skill development, mentorship, and long-term commitment appear less attractive compared to stories of viral success. This shift may reduce resilience when individuals encounter inevitable setbacks. Professional growth typically involves continuous learning, constructive criticism, and incremental improvement in which qualities that social media's culture of immediacy often undervalues.

Businesses also contribute to this phenomenon by marketing products that promise instant transformation. Online advertisements promote quick wealth, rapid fitness results, accelerated learning, and immediate self-improvement. Courses claiming to generate six-figure incomes within months or investment schemes promising extraordinary returns exploit the psychological appeal of effortless success. Consumers, influenced by constant exposure to success narratives, may become more vulnerable to unrealistic promises and financial scams.

However, social media should not be portrayed solely as a negative force. These platforms have created unprecedented opportunities for education, activism, networking, and entrepreneurship. Small businesses can reach global audiences without substantial advertising budgets. Artists, educators, and professionals can share expertise and establish careers independently of traditional gatekeepers. Social movements have gained international visibility through social media campaigns, demonstrating the platforms' capacity to promote meaningful social change. The issue therefore lies not in the technology itself but in how success is represented and interpreted.

Digital literacy plays a crucial role in addressing these challenges. Educational institutions should equip students with critical thinking skills that enable them to recognise curated online content, algorithmic bias, and commercial motivations behind influencer marketing. Understanding that algorithms prioritise engagement rather than accuracy or authenticity can reduce the tendency to compare oneself with unrealistic online portrayals. Media literacy programmes should encourage users to question the narratives presented on social platforms instead of accepting them at face value.

Parents and educators also bear responsibility for fostering healthier attitudes towards achievement. Young people should be encouraged to value perseverance, continuous learning, and personal growth rather than immediate recognition. Celebrating effort alongside outcomes helps reinforce the understanding that meaningful success usually develops gradually. Equally important is promoting offline experiences that build confidence through genuine competence rather than digital approval.

Ultimately, society must reconsider how success is defined. Genuine achievement encompasses resilience, integrity, lifelong learning, meaningful relationships, and positive contributions to communities. These qualities cannot be adequately captured through follower counts or viral content. While digital platforms can amplify accomplishments, they should not determine their value.

In conclusion, social media has fundamentally transformed contemporary understandings of success. By promoting carefully curated images of rapid achievement, it has fostered unrealistic expectations that affect mental health, education, career aspirations, and social values. Although these platforms offer significant opportunities for innovation and self-expression, they also encourage comparisons that overlook the persistence and dedication underlying genuine accomplishment. Building a healthier digital culture requires greater media literacy, responsible platform governance, and a renewed appreciation for long-term effort. Success should be measured not by how quickly it is achieved or how widely it is displayed but by its authenticity, sustainability, and positive impact on individuals and society.

The Core Paradox of AI Discourse

By Gzachew Wolde

A balanced position is often the hardest one to hold in public debate. Most discussions about artificial intelligence are pulled toward two extreme poles: the hype-driven optimists who exaggerate AI's promise, and the doomsday pessimists who amplify its dangers beyond reason. Both positions are loud, emotionally satisfying, and easy to perform. Both are also incomplete.

The optimist imagines AI as a near-magical force that will transform everything for the better. In this view, AI is a solution to productivity, creativity, medicine, education, and even governance. The pessimist, by contrast, sees AI as a destabilizing threat: a technology that will destroy jobs, concentrate power, flood society with misinformation, and perhaps even endanger humanity itself. Neither position is entirely wrong. The problem is that both are usually pushed to the point of distortion.

What makes this especially difficult is that the two extremes are not merely arguments. They are identities. They are performances. They are emotional shelters. The optimist and the pessimist often need each other, because each side's exaggeration helps validate the other's. The future-tech evangelist needs the warning voice in order to appear visionary. The alarmist needs the hype machine in order to appear sober and prophetic. Together they create a kind of public theatre in which nuance is the first casualty.

This is the real paradox of AI discourse. The technology is new, powerful, and still unfolding. Yet our reaction to it follows familiar human habits. We are drawn to certainty, even when certainty is not justified. We prefer dramatic conclusions to careful uncertainty. We reward the people who sound most confident, not necessarily the people who are most correct. As a result, AI becomes less a subject of rational analysis and more a stage for competing psychological needs.

The persistence of the extremes is not simply a matter of ignorance. It is also a function of human cognition. We are wired to overreact to threats and to overestimate opportunities. Negativity bias makes us focus on what could go wrong. Novelty bias makes us overvalue what seems revolutionary. AI activates both at the same time. It looks like a promise and a warning simultaneously, which is exactly why so many people talk past one another when they discuss it.

The pessimist treats AI like a fire alarm. Once the alarm sounds, the only instinct is to run, shout, and panic before checking whether there is actually a fire. The optimist treats AI like a finished sculpture: polished, complete, and ready to be admired from a distance. But AI is neither an alarm nor a sculpture. It is more like wet clay. It can be shaped, bent, misused, improved, hardened, or broken. It is unfinished. That means our response should also be unfinished, adaptive, and grounded in evidence.

This is where pragmatism enters. Pragmatism is not a weak compromise between two strong positions. It is not a lukewarm middle that tries to keep everyone happy. It is a disciplined way of thinking that asks what actually works under specific conditions. It judges claims by results, not by emotional intensity. It accepts that a technology can be useful and dangerous at the same time. It resists the temptation to make AI into either salvation or catastrophe.

Holding that middle ground is difficult because it offers less emotional reward. The optimist gets the rush of prophecy. The pessimist gets the satisfaction of warning others before disaster strikes. Both positions can make a person feel intellectually superior. Both allow someone to say, "I see what others do not." Pragmatism is less glamorous. It does not promise applause. It requires patience, humility, and the willingness to change your mind as evidence changes. That is exactly why it is valuable.

The hard-won middle is also the only position that treats AI as a real system rather than a symbol. A pragmatic view asks: what task is AI doing? Under what conditions does it help? Under what conditions does it fail? What safeguards are in place? Who benefits? Who is harmed? What feedback loops exist? What governance mechanisms are missing? These are not exciting questions, but they are the correct ones.

A useful way to think about AI is through the metaphor of a knife. A knife can perform surgery or cause injury. The tool itself is not the moral answer. The answer lies in who holds it, for what purpose, in what setting, and with what oversight. AI is similar. It is not automatically good or bad. Its effects depend on context, restraint, monitoring, and institutional design. A conditional approach is therefore more honest than a categorical one. It says, "AI can be beneficial if X safeguards exist, and dangerous if Y protections are absent."

The same logic applies to the broader public debate. The optimist and the pessimist are not really fighting over facts. They are fighting over which possibility to animate. The optimist points to a gleaming demo and sees a future of abundance. The pessimist points to a plausible disaster and sees a future of collapse. Both are describing potential futures, not settled realities. The question is not whether possibility exists. The question is which possibility we prepare for, and how.

This is why the sculpture and the clay matter as metaphors. The optimist sees the sculpture and forgets the clay beneath it, the labor, the mess, the revisions, the unfinished work. The pessimist sees the clay and assumes it will never become anything useful. Pragmatism sees both. It recognizes that the sculpture was once clay, and that clay only becomes meaningful through patient shaping. AI is in that stage now. It is not finished, and it is not formless. It is a material in motion.

This also helps explain why the debate so often feels theatrical. The optimist performs as the visionary prophet. The pessimist performs as the lone truth-teller. Each role is seductive because it offers a clear moral identity. One gets to be the bearer of hope; the other gets to be the bearer of warning. But both roles depend on exaggeration. Both are energized by contrast. And both are weakened by the arrival of a third voice that says, in effect, "Let's examine the evidence first."

That third voice is the pragmatist. The pragmatist does not deny AI's promise, and does not dismiss its threat. Instead, the pragmatist asks what institutional, technical, and ethical structures must exist for AI to be used well. This includes regulation, auditing, transparency, accountability, and continuous revision. It also includes the recognition that governance is not static. As the technology evolves, so must the oversight around it.

History gives us many examples of technologies that carried both promise and peril. The printing press democratized knowledge, but it also destabilized authority and helped fuel religious conflict. Electricity transformed industry and daily life, but it also caused early accidents and required entirely new safety systems. The Haber-Bosch process helped feed billions by enabling fertilizer production, but it also contributed to the manufacture of explosives. In each case, the technology was not simply a blessing or a curse. It was a double-edged breakthrough.

AI fits this pattern. It can improve diagnosis in medicine, streamline research, expand access to education, and support productivity across sectors. It can also displace workers, intensify surveillance, reproduce bias, and flood public discourse with synthetic content. The fact that these two outcomes coexist is not a contradiction. It is the nature of powerful tools. The real question is whether society can shape institutions quickly enough to maximize the gains while limiting the harms.

This is why the "middle" is not a place of indecision. It is a place of responsibility. It requires more work than either extreme. It asks people to resist the emotional pull of easy answers. It demands that policymakers, engineers, business leaders, and citizens stay with the uncomfortable truth that AI is not one thing. It will not be uniformly liberating or uniformly destructive. It will be what we allow it to become.

That means the future of AI will not be decided by slogans. It will be decided by governance. It will depend on whether institutions can enforce standards, whether companies can be held accountable, whether workers can adapt, whether education systems can respond, and whether the public can remain informed enough to judge claims critically. In other words, the real issue is not whether AI is inherently good or evil. The real issue is whether we can build the right structures around it.

We should be suspicious of anyone who speaks about AI only in absolutes. The true believer wants to sell inevitability. The doom speaker wants to sell fear. Both simplify a complicated reality into a message that is easier to repeat. But the world is rarely that simple. If we want AI to serve human purposes, we need less performance and more calibration. Less rhetoric and more evidence. Less prophecy and more practical design.

Pragmatism is not glamorous. It will not always go viral. It does not produce the satisfying certainty that extreme positions offer. But it is the only approach that keeps us close to reality. And reality is where good decisions are made.

AI is not a miracle and it is not a monster. It is a powerful, unfinished tool. Whether it becomes broadly beneficial or deeply harmful will depend less on its existence than on the systems we build around it. That is the core paradox of our time, and the reason the middle ground matters.

The hard task is not choosing between blind faith and blind fear. The hard task is learning how to shape the clay.

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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 Contractors / Suppliers to participate in the following tender:

#	Tender Subject	Closing Date
1	**REQUEST FOR QUOTATION REF. NO.: UNHCR RFQ 3328** **FOR GENERATOR SHADE CONSTRUCTION AT UNHCR MELKADIDA SUB OFFICE COMPOUND**	**7th August 2026 17:00 Hrs. EAT**

Tender Document Request Instructions

Interested suppliers must request the tender documents for by email only.

Please send your request to ethmksms@unhcr.org clearly stating the respective Reference Number in the email subject line.

Submission of bids must also be made through ethmksms@unhcr.org

Tender documents will be available for collection from **Monday , 3rd August 2026**, during the following working hours:

- **Monday to Thursday: 09:00 -12:00 and 14:00-16:00**
- **Friday: 09:00 - 14:00**

All tender submissions must comply with the requirements stated in the tender documents and must be **typewritten, computer-generated, or in PDF format**. **Submissions received after the deadline (07 August 2026) will not be accepted.**

SUPPLY MANAGEMENT SERVICES,
MELKADIDA, ETHIOPIA

Save the Children

INVITATION TO TENDER

For the Water Trucking Service

Tender Reference - SCI-ET-2026-026

Save the Children International (SCI) invites qualified and experienced suppliers to submit sealed bids to participate on the water trucking operation planned to be affected to fulfil the demands of returnee communities of four kebele at selected locations found in Sawena, & Rayitu Woredas of East Bale Zone.

Mandatory Requirements:

- Be legally registered and have a valid business license, TIN and VAT for the sector
- Provide proof of experience in supplying similar services
- Submit at least two recommendation letters or work certificates from government or international NGOs.

The detailed criteria are included in the bid document. Thus, interested companies are invited to get the tender document from save the children Addis Ababa, ethiopia office

Tender document

- Potential bidders may obtain tender documents against payment of a non-refundable amount of ETB 200 from SCI offices in Addis Ababa Country office starting from August 03, 2026, up to August 17, 2026, during working hours.

Address

- Save the children Ethiopia Country Office, close to Meskel Square, near the Hyatt Regency Hotel

Bid Submission

- Tenders must be submitted in Separate sealed envelopes with official company seal, and clearly marked by the "bidders' name, address, and the tender reference
- The tender must be submitted in the bid box prepared for the purpose at SCI offices in Addis Ababa Country office on or before August 17, 2026, 3:00 PM.

SCI reserves the right to accept or reject this bid, in partial, or in its entirety

A Lesson Before the Argument

From Winter Olympics to winter of war: What Sarajevo's ashes should teach Addis Ababa's builders

By Tesfatsion Dominiko (PhD)

There are cities that seem, for a brief moment in history, to embody the future. In February 1984, Sarajevo was one of them. For two weeks, the capital of socialist Yugoslavia became the center of the world, as television cameras followed skiers down the slopes of Igman, watched bobsleds thunder through the curves of Trebević, and lingered over a skyline where Ottoman minarets stood beside Austro-Hungarian facades and socialist apartment blocks overlooked medieval streets. Cafés filled with Muslims, Serbs, Croats, and Jews suggested that diversity could be lived, not merely proclaimed. The Winter Olympics announced Sarajevo as a confident, modern capital.

Less than a decade later, those same venues had acquired entirely different meanings. The bobsled track became a military position. The stadium hosted funerals instead of competitions. Apartment blocks that had symbolized urban progress were reduced to shells by artillery fire, during nearly four years of the longest siege of a capital city in modern history. The obvious explanation is war. It is also an incomplete one. Wars destroy cities every year, yet some recover quickly while others lose not only their buildings but the social fabric that gave those buildings meaning. Sarajevo's tragedy was not simply that its infrastructure was damaged. It was that the political and civic foundations capable of protecting that infrastructure had already fractured, in the relationships between citizens, institutions, and the state, long before the first shell landed on an Olympic venue. Concrete was merely the final casualty.

That distinction matters because cities are usually judged by what can be photographed. Governments inaugurate highways, parks, and boulevards because these are visible expressions of ambition; far less visible are the investments that determine whether those achievements still matter thirty years later — schools that cultivate skilled workers, institutions that command public trust, jobs that give young people reasons to remain, and political systems that persuade competing communities they hold an equal stake in the future. These unfold slowly and produce no ceremonies, yet history suggests they are what every successful city ultimately depends on. I do not raise Sarajevo to suggest Ethiopia is destined to repeat Bosnia's tragedy — the two countries differ too profoundly in history, institutions, and conflict for that comparison to hold. I raise it because it proves something more useful than any direct comparison could: cities are built twice — first with concrete and steel, then with educated, economically secure, and socially invested citizens. Without the second construction, the first remains vulnerable no matter how impressive it looks on the day the ribbon is cut. If infrastructure is the visible face of development, the social contract between citizens and the state is its invisible foundation, and no amount of cement can substitute for it.

That is the argument of this article, stated plainly: infrastructure is a necessary condition for national development, but human development, the education, employment, trust, and inclusion that allow a society to sustain what it builds, is the sufficient condition for making that development last. Everything that follows is evidence for that single proposition, not a list of separate complaints.

That lesson feels unexpectedly relevant today, in another capital undergoing a remarkable physical reinvention. Few visitors returning to Addis Ababa after a decade away fail to notice how profoundly the city has changed. Roads once permanently congested have been widened, public squares redesigned, parks planted where neglected spaces once stood, and historic districts restored under the Prosperity Party's corridor development program, Sheger Park, Friendship Square, the renewal of Piassa, the reconstruction of Churchill Road. Whether one supports the government or opposes it, intellectual honesty requires acknowledging the scale of this transformation is extraordinary. International conferences increasingly use the city as their venue; tourists and investors now encounter a capital eager to present itself as one of the continent's emerging metropolitan destinations, and after decades in which Ethiopia abroad was often synonymous with famine, conflict, or crisis, there is understandable pride in seeing the capital recognized for something more hopeful. None of that should be dismissed. Better roads reduce the cost of moving goods and people; attractive cities encourage tourism and investment. Physical infrastructure is not an indulgence, it is one foundation of economic development, and countries that neglect it rarely prosper.

What Concrete Cannot Do

Acknowledging that truth, however, should allow us to ask a harder question: what ultimately determines whether such investments keep generating prosperity long after the construction crews leave? The answer has surprisingly little to do with concrete. Concrete has no memory. Every generation must decide whether it will inherit a city or merely occupy it. Bridges do not inspect themselves. Parks do not generate the tax revenue required for their upkeep. Every physical achievement ultimately depends on something less visible: the capabilities of the people who inherit it. For the sake of precision, I mean something specific by human development, productive employment, quality education, civic trust, political inclusion, and social mobility. Every example that follows in this article is a failure or success in one of those five categories, not a free-floating grievance. Education determines who designs tomorrow's cities. Employment determines who can afford to sustain them. Trust determines whether citizens treat public property as a shared inheritance or someone else's possession. Political inclusion determines whether development is experienced as a common project or as one group's achievement at another's expense. History repeatedly demonstrates that infrastructure is a necessary condition for prosperity. It is rarely the sufficient one.

Perhaps the most underestimated cost of infrastructure is not construction but maintenance. Every bridge, park, public square, and transport corridor eventually demands engineers, technicians, municipal managers, tax revenue, and institutions capable of keeping it functional. Countries do not become wealthy simply because they build infrastructure. They become wealthy because they build societies capable of maintaining it.

That distinction may sound abstract until one asks a simpler question: what keeps a city alive once the cranes disappear? Construction is an event. Development is a process. A government can widen a highway in three years; it cannot educate an engineer in three years. A bridge may open with a ribbon-cutting ceremony, but the institutions that inspect its safety, collect the taxes that finance its upkeep, and train whoever repairs it are built over decades. Sociologists working in the institutional tradition would call this complementarity: infrastructure and human capital multiply each other's value rather than substituting for it. A road connects a farmer to a market only if that farmer has the capital, literacy, and trust to use it productively; a corridor without a skilled workforce simply moves goods more efficiently toward a market that still cannot absorb them. Infrastructure creates opportunity. Whether societies convert that opportunity into prosperity depends on the capabilities of the people who inherit it, an insight that, more than any engineering blueprint, explains why some countries grow richer generation after generation while others merely accumulate physical assets. A road expands what is possible; education determines who can seize it.

One reason post-war Germany, Japan, and South Korea are remembered as development success stories is not simply because they rebuilt quickly, but because they rebuilt people as deliberately as they rebuilt cities. Their roads accelerated prosperity because millions of educated, economically secure people knew how to use them productively, infrastructure did not replace human development, it amplified it. History is full of cities whose infrastructure outlived the political and economic systems that gave it purpose. Buildings rarely become obsolete before the societies supporting them do. Infrastructure seldom fails first. Societies do. A state that has proven, in record time, that it can build roads has not thereby proven it can build the institutions those roads depend on, universities, professional civil services, and independent courts take decades to build and can be undone far faster than they were created, because trust is not something a corridor project can manufacture on a construction schedule.

Where the Foundation Is Being Tested

If this sounds theoretical, Ethiopia already offers several practical tests of the argument. The National Dialogue Commission, established in 2022 to build national consensus after years of conflict and polarization, has been assessed by independent analysts, including researchers at the Clingendael Institute and the Institute for Security Studies, as undermined by its own exclusions, with armed groups and significant opposition figures remaining outside the process, a gap the Commission's own chief commissioner has publicly acknowledged. A nation cannot ask citizens to invest emotionally in a shared future if parts of that society remain uncertain the conversation includes them; reconciliation is part of the social infrastructure every other development project depends on. A related question runs through the continuing dispute over Addis Ababa's constitutional status. It is often framed as a legal argument over Article 49, which names Addis Ababa the federal capital while granting Oromia a "special interest" in the city, language two sides now read in irreconcilable ways, with Oromo activists and officials insisting the city's land will not be negotiated away, and many other Ethiopians, including figures inside the Prosperity Party's own ranks, regarding Addis Ababa as shared national ground belonging to no single group. Beneath that constitutional argument lies a deeper question of belonging: who sees Addis Ababa as their city, and can a capital undergoing unprecedented transformation become a place its people experience as a common home rather than a prize in a political contest? Even the frustrations surrounding condominium housing reveal something larger than administrative inefficiency. Thousands of Ethiopians who spent years, in some documented cases close to two decades, contributing to government housing schemes have found themselves bypassed, delayed, or caught in disputed lottery draws later annulled for credibility concerns; in one case, more than seven thousand completed units sat unoccupied for years because promised infrastructure was never finished, prompting Ethiopia's own Ombudsman to formally intervene. For those citizens, the issue is not simply a delayed apartment; it is whether patience and participation in public institutions are rewarded, and when citizens doubt that, the damage extends well beyond housing policy. These three threads are not identical and should not be forced into one political narrative, but together they illuminate a question that receives far less attention than the next redevelopment announcement: is Ethiopia investing as deliberately in the relationships that bind citizens to one another and the state as it is investing in the roads and buildings reshaping its capital? Because if development ultimately rests on a social contract, then every investment in concrete should be matched by an equally serious investment in trust.

People protect what they believe belongs to them, a simple idea, easy to underestimate. Development becomes durable when citizens experience it as something they are building together, and fragile when they experience it as something being done to them. The strongest foundation beneath any city, in the end, is not concrete but ownership. Reports of displacement connected to corridor development have generated real public concern, and whether every individual account proves accurate matters less than the underlying principle: a city beautified over the resentment of the people displaced to build it has not solved its underlying problem, only postponed it. This is felt most acutely by Ethiopia's young people. A beautifully designed city cannot substitute for the expectation of a future. Boulevards do not remove the anxiety of unemployment; restored public squares do not replace confidence that education will lead to opportunity. Societies remain stable not because every citizen is equally prosperous, but because most believe tomorrow offers more possibility than yesterday. Hope may be the most important infrastructure a country possesses, because people rarely abandon roads they believe lead somewhere.

I am not an urban planner, and I do not claim the standing to evaluate traffic modeling or drainage engineering; what I bring instead is more than a decade in youth development and civic engagement, and from that vantage point I would add only this, young people do not stay in a city because its sidewalks are attractive. They stay because they can imagine a future in it.

The question, in any case, is larger than Addis Ababa. A nation of Ethiopia's size and diversity cannot build its future through one capital alone. South Africa's economy is not carried by Johannesburg alone but by Cape Town and Durban as well; China's rise was not built on Beijing and Shanghai in isolation but on a network of cities each developing its own comparative advantage. Ethiopia has its own version of this potential. A genuinely resilient strategy would treat Addis Ababa as one part of a broader network of thriving regional cities, an economic imperative and a political one, since societies stay cohesive when citizens believe the future belongs to them wherever they live, and grow fragile when prosperity appears concentrated in places that feel distant from their own lives.

None of this is an argument for slowing Ethiopia's development; it is an argument for making that development more durable. Public debate often imagines a false choice between infrastructure and people, as though every kilometer of road comes at the expense of a classroom. History suggests the opposite. Great cities are rarely remembered for their buildings alone, Paris did not become Paris simply because boulevards were constructed under Haussmann, and Seoul is not admired merely for its highways. In each case, physical investment unfolded alongside sustained commitment to education and expanding opportunity, until the skyline became a symbol of a development the society had already begun to earn.

Which brings this back, one final time, to Sarajevo. When the world watched the Winter Olympics in 1984, it saw a beautiful city. What it could not see were the fractures already forming beneath the surface. Buildings can conceal division for a time; boulevards can create the appearance of confidence. None of that substitutes for a society in which citizens genuinely believe they share a future. That is Sarajevo's enduring lesson, not that beautiful cities inevitably fall, and not that Ethiopia is destined to repeat another country's tragedy, because history is never that deterministic. The lesson is simpler and more demanding: cities are not ultimately sustained by concrete. They are sustained by the relationships that concrete is meant to serve. As Ethiopia builds a capital worthy of the twenty-first century, the real question is whether it is building a society capable of sustaining it through the twenty-second, whether today's investments are cultivating educated citizens, trusted institutions, and a political community broad enough that Ethiopians from every background see themselves reflected in the country's future. Those are not alternatives to infrastructure. They are the conditions that allow infrastructure to endure.

Fifty years from now, few will remember how many kilometers of corridor were completed; what future generations will remember is whether this was the moment Ethiopia transformed the appearance of its capital, or transformed the capabilities of its people with equal determination. One day the cranes now dominating Addis Ababa's skyline will disappear. That is what cranes do. The more enduring question is what will remain after they are gone. If Ethiopia succeeds in building not only boulevards but also educated citizens, trusted institutions, and a shared national future, then today's construction boom will be remembered as the beginning of something far larger than urban renewal. If it does not, history suggests that even the most impressive skylines cannot carry a society farther than the people prepared to sustain them. Cities are first imagined by architects. They endure because generations of citizens choose to keep imagining them together.

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China's "excess capacity" debate is really a fight over the rules of global trade

By our staff reporter

The renewed debate over China's so-called excess capacity is about far more than industrial overproduction. It is, in essence, a contest over who gets to define fairness in a global economy that is increasingly shaped by geopolitics, protectionism and anxiety about shifting power. Beijing's latest position paper on the issue argues that accusations against China are distorted, selective and often driven by political motives rather than economic logic. Whether one fully accepts that argument or not, the document exposes a deeper and more uncomfortable truth: the industrial order that once produced global growth is now under strain, and the language of "excess capacity" is becoming a weapon in that struggle.

At first glance, the term sounds technical and neutral. But in practice, it is highly political. When industrial powers complain that China is flooding world markets with cheap steel, electric vehicles, solar panels or batteries, they are not only describing trade flows. They are also defending domestic industries, protecting strategic sectors and trying to slow down a competitor that has become too successful for comfort. China's response is predictable: it says its industrial rise is the product of innovation, large-scale production and deep integration into global supply chains, not artificial state support alone.

This is where the debate becomes complicated. Beijing is not wrong to point out that global manufacturing has never been static. Production has moved from Britain to the United States, from the West to Japan, then to East Asia and China, and now partly onward to Southeast Asia and other regions. That movement is a feature of globalization, not a defect. Industrial change always creates winners and losers, and every major wave of technological transformation has generated complaints about too much capacity in one place and too little in another. What feels like overcapacity from one capital often looks like competitiveness from another.

The problem is that the current controversy is not occurring in an era of trust. It is unfolding in a period of tariff wars, subsidy races and strategic decoupling. Western governments increasingly promote industrial policy when it suits their own needs while condemning similar behavior elsewhere. They subsidize green industries, semiconductor production and advanced manufacturing at home, yet accuse China of distorting markets when its firms do what global firms have always done: scale up, cut costs and capture market share. That double standard weakens the moral authority of the criticism.

Still, China's defense should not be accepted uncritically. The fact that industrial competition is normal does not mean all market distortions are imaginary. Large subsidies, opaque support systems and state-backed expansion can affect prices, investment decisions and trade balances. For countries trying to rebuild industry after years of deindustrialization, the arrival of cheaper imports can feel less like competition and more like suffocation. That concern is especially acute in the developing world, where industrial policy space is limited and local firms often cannot survive prolonged exposure to subsidized global giants. The challenge, then, is not to deny excess capacity debates outright, but to place them within a fairer and more transparent framework.

China's argument that trade surpluses do not automatically mean excess capacity is also economically reasonable. A country can run a surplus because of savings patterns, exchange rates, industrial specialization or global demand for its products. Surplus alone is not evidence of wrongdoing. Germany and Japan have long been trade surpluses economies, and no serious analyst would describe every export success as proof of systemic imbalance. The same logic should apply to China.

If its exports of electric vehicles, batteries and solar panels are booming, that may reflect global demand for affordable green technology as much as any domestic policy.

Yet Beijing's own language reveals the strategic stakes. The document repeatedly frames China not as a threat but as "China opportunity 2.0," presenting its industrial rise as a benefit to the world. That is a smart political move, because it shifts the conversation away from confrontation and toward shared gains. There is some truth in it. Chinese manufacturing has lowered the cost of goods, accelerated the spread of clean energy technologies and helped many developing countries access industrial equipment they could not otherwise afford. For Africa, Asia and Latin America, this has often been a practical advantage, not a theoretical one.

But opportunity does not erase dependence. A world economy that relies too heavily on one industrial powerhouse is vulnerable to shocks, policy shifts and supply disruptions. That is why the answer to China's rise should not be simple resistance or blind acceptance. It should be diversification, stronger domestic production capacity and smarter regional cooperation. African countries, in particular, should read this debate carefully. The question is not whether China is too strong; it is whether African economies are building enough industrial depth to engage China on better terms. If not, the continent risks remaining a passive consumer of finished goods rather than an active participant in the next phase of manufacturing.

This matters for trade policy in the Horn of Africa and beyond. Countries in the region need investment in energy, logistics, transport and industrial parks that can turn trade into transformation. If Chinese capital helps build roads, factories and power networks, that is welcome. But if imports simply crowd out local production without building local capability, then the long-term gains will be limited. The same debate over "capacity" should therefore be used by African policymakers to ask a harder question: which industrial partnerships create value at home, and which only deepen dependency?

In the end, the excess capacity debate is less about one country than about the future of globalization itself. If the world is moving toward fragmentation, then industrial policy will increasingly be judged not by efficiency alone but by strategic loyalty. If the world still wants openness, then countries must accept that competition produces winners and losers, and that success in trade cannot always be separated from political discomfort. China's position paper is a forceful reminder that economic disputes are now being fought with ideological tools. The real test is whether the rest of the world can respond with principles rather than slogans.

A healthier global economy would not treat every export success as a threat, nor every subsidy as a scandal. It would demand transparency, enforce fair rules and leave enough space for development at different stages. That is the standard worth defending. China may be right that the excess capacity narrative is often abused. But the deeper issue is not whether the label is fair. It is whether the international system can still manage industrial rivalry without turning cooperation into permanent confrontation.

Irrigation and improved seed could unlock cotton's next chapter in Kasese

By Kajumba Gorret, bird story agency

Cotton paid for Rwomubuza John's children's education and helped him build rental houses that now provide his family with an additional source of income.

The farmer from Kitabu Cell in Muhokya Sub-county cultivates more than six acres, continuing an agricultural tradition that has supported generations of families in Uganda's Kasese District in the country's west near the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo.

"Cotton has done a lot for my family. It educated my children and helped me invest in rental property," Rwomubuza says.

His children have also taken up cotton farming, making the crop part of the family's continuing economic activity.

Across Kasese, cotton remains an important source of cash income. But farmers and agricultural officials say its ability to generate livelihoods could be strengthened through expanded irrigation, improved seed varieties, more affordable agricultural inputs and a pricing system that gives growers greater certainty.

Three ginneries operate in the district: Rwenzori Cotton Ginnery in Nyakatonzi, Hamudani Ginnery and Mundawulira Ginnery. All three are located within Kasese Municipality and provide a ready market for cotton grown in areas including Nyamwamba Division, Muhokya Sub-county and Mubuku Town Council.

The presence of these buyers, an established community of growers and planned irrigation improvements gives Kasese a base from which to rebuild the crop's competitiveness.

An established source of household income

Cotton is generally planted between July and August, depending on the arrival of the rains, and harvested between February and March.

For farmers such as Rwomubuza, the crop has already demonstrated its ability to turn farm production into longer-term household assets. He believes better returns would encourage families to continue investing in it.

"Cotton requires a lot of labour and expensive chemicals," he says. "The government should ensure farmers receive better prices."

In Rukoki Cell in Nyamwamba Division, Mwesige Eric grows cotton on four acres. He says the crop remains the backbone of many households and a family business passed from one generation to another.

However, cotton requires substantial investment. Farmers may weed their fields up to six times during a season and must spray regularly to control pests and diseases. The crop currently takes about six months to mature.

Mwesige says reducing input costs and giving farmers a stronger role in price discussions would make cultivation more attractive.

"The government should bring farmers and buyers together to agree on a fair price per kilogram," he says.

He estimates that farmers have generally received between UGX1,500 and UGX2,000 (approximately US$0.40–US$0.53) per kilogram in recent years, while pesticide and other input costs have increased.

Because cotton is a cash crop rather than a food crop, growers depend on the income from their harvest to recover these costs. More predictable prices would help them plan their production and decide how much land to allocate to cotton.

Mwesige says prices announced around planting time can also differ from those offered at harvest. Greater transparency between growers, ginners and other industry players could reduce this uncertainty.

Irrigation could extend the opportunity

One of the biggest opportunities lies in reducing the industry's dependence on rainfall.

Most cotton-growing areas in Kasese are rain-fed. Shifting rainfall patterns have made it increasingly difficult for farmers to determine the best time to plant.

Adrian Katwetegeke, regional field officer for the Uganda Cotton Ginners and Exporters Association, supports cotton production and marketing in Kasese, Rubirizi and Kamwenge districts.

He says rains would normally begin in July or around the middle of the month, enabling planting to start. In 2026, however, the rains arrived later than expected and had not provided sufficient moisture by late July.

"The rains have changed. Many farmers are anxious and want to plant immediately after receiving a small amount of rainfall, but the soil is still too dry," Katwetegeke says.

He advises farmers to prepare their land and secure quality seed, but to wait until sufficient rain has fallen before planting. Light showers followed by a prolonged dry spell can prevent seeds from germinating or damage young plants.

Better access to weather information and planting guidance could help farmers respond more effectively to these shifting conditions.

In the longer term, Katwetegeke believes expanded irrigation could transform production by allowing farmers to plant with greater confidence and protect their crops during dry periods.

The Mubuku Irrigation Scheme already demonstrates the potential of irrigated agriculture in the district, although its reach remains limited.

"It is our wish that irrigation infrastructure is expanded to cover more cotton-growing areas so farmers who want to irrigate can access the service," he says.

Kasese District Principal Agricultural Officer Julius Rukara says the government has plans to expand irrigation around areas including Mubuku Prison Farm, an important cotton-producing zone that frequently experiences extended dry spells.

If implemented, the expansion could help farmers maintain production despite less predictable rainfall. It could also make investment in seed, chemicals and labour less risky.

Faster-maturing cotton could reduce climate risk

Improved cotton varieties present another opportunity.

Rukara has called on Uganda's National Agricultural Research Organisation to develop varieties that mature in three to four months rather than the approximately six months currently required.

"If shorter-maturing varieties are developed, farmers will be able to harvest even when rainfall is limited," he says.

A shorter production cycle could allow farmers to take advantage of increasingly narrow rainy seasons, reduce their exposure to drought and earn income sooner. Improved varieties would need to be accompanied by effective extension services so growers know how to cultivate them and manage pests.

Katwetegeke says timely spraying and adherence to recommended farming practices can already help farmers reduce avoidable losses.

Supporting growers with affordable inputs, suitable seed and practical agricultural advice could therefore raise yields while lowering the cost of producing each kilogram of cotton.

Building a stronger market for farmers.

Kasese's three ginneries give the district processing infrastructure and established buyers. However, farmers say the limited number of buyers can leave them with little bargaining power.

Uganda exports much of its cotton, linking the prices paid to farmers to movements in the international market.

Katwetegeke says growers received approximately UGX1,500 (US$0.40) to UGX1,700 (US$0.45) per kilogram last season, compared with about UGX1,900 (US$0.51) in the preceding season and roughly UGX2,000 (US$0.53) in earlier years.

That exposure to global prices cannot be eliminated entirely, but closer coordination between farmers, ginners and government could improve transparency and help growers understand how local prices are calculated.

Farmer associations or cooperatives could also aggregate production, purchase inputs collectively and give growers a stronger voice in negotiations. However, the story still needs direct reporting from an existing association or cooperative to establish whether such organisation is already taking place in Kasese.

Cotton is also competing for land with cocoa, vanilla and coffee, which Rukara says currently offer farmers attractive prices and more dependable markets.

Rather than signalling the end of cotton, that competition establishes the conditions the sector must meet: it must provide farmers with competitive returns, manageable production costs and greater certainty.

Turning cotton's history into its next opportunity

Kasese already possesses several of the foundations needed for a stronger cotton economy: experienced farmers, three operating ginneries, established growing areas and a crop with a proven ability to finance education and household investment.

The next step is to strengthen the conditions under which farmers produce it.

Expanded irrigation could protect crops from unreliable rainfall. Faster-maturing varieties could shorten the production cycle. Affordable inputs and stronger extension support could improve yields, while transparent pricing and greater farmer organisation could ensure that growers retain a fairer share of the crop's value.

For farmers such as Rwomubuza, cotton's contribution is not theoretical. It can be seen in the children he educated, the property he built and the next generation that has joined the family enterprise.

Unlocking the same opportunity for more families will depend on converting the interventions now being discussed into practical support in Kasese's cotton-growing communities.

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Europe is fiddling while Rome burns

By Giulio Boccaletti

Between June 20 and 28, a powerful heat wave hit Europe, creating the conditions that have fueled the wildfires now raging across large swathes of France and Spain. Soon after the June heat wave, city officials in Rome announced a new, scientifically informed operational strategy to prepare for a hotter world. As with other such efforts in Europe, the heat plan includes emergency responses for the vulnerable, green public spaces, more water fountains, climate shelters, investments in grid resilience, and so forth.

This is not the Eternal City's first heat initiative. Rome previously rolled out a heat health warning system in 2002, in time for the 2003 heat wave that killed 70,000 people across Europe (including more than 1,000 in Rome). After that, Rome and many other cities enacted emergency plans to provide early warning systems, register vulnerable people, and prepare hospitals. But when a massive heat wave struck in 2022, those two decades of emergency planning proved inadequate. Another 60,000 people died.

Once again, governments announced structural responses such as school closures, event cancellations, and outdoor labor regulations. But while they had some positive effect, this year's heat wave showed that Europe is still far behind the curve.

The problem is that we are chasing a moving target. Heat waves are becoming more frequent, prolonged, and intense, and this trend has exacerbated other risks. For example, heat waves create ideal conditions for forest fires, which have now hit several countries in southern Europe. They also lead us to overlook increasingly common extreme precipitation, with frequent destructive floods becoming a fact of life, often in the very same places suffering heat waves. Since anthropogenic climate change is the cause of all this, zeroing out greenhouse-gas emissions is the route to stabilization. But until then, current conditions will worsen.

Following major floods in 2023, I argued that a new frontier was coming into view. Europe would need to orchestrate a constitutional response to its shifting material conditions, with a state-led program to transform its economy. Three years and many floods and heat waves later, the frontier is upon us, yet we are still behaving as if nothing has changed. Focusing only on emergency planning, disaster response, and recovery after each catastrophe may fit the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's definition of building "resilience"; but resilience is no longer enough.

That is why I have long focused on the broader, evolving relationship between economic development and the environment. Over the years, country after country has written the story of its future by transforming its landscape. Consider the hydro-infrastructural transformation of the American West during the Progressive Era; Sun Yat-sen's blueprint for Chinese modernization on the Yangtze; Italy's extensive land reclamation and hydropower development to support industrialization; Jawaharlal Nehru's dams, "modern temples of India" that served as symbols of economic emancipation; and Park Chung-hee's spatial reorganization of the South Korean economy in service of export-led growth.

In The Environmental Republic, I argue that, despite all their mistakes and distortionary effects, these efforts hold a crucial lesson. In changing material conditions, resilience cannot just be about "weathering the storm." It must be a property of how we grow. The transformation that climate change makes necessary will be of comparable scale and scope to those pursued over the last century.

Consider the energy system. During the June 2026 heat wave, air-conditioner use pushed Rome toward its daily peak electricity capacity of 2.1 GW, and localized blackouts followed. The grid proved inadequate, even though Italy has been investing in it. There is still too little spare capacity; natural gas dominates production; the hydropower share of production is itself vulnerable to climate change; and a significant share of distribution is underground, where thermal stresses from accumulated heat damage cables.

The solution is not simply to fix each of these individual problems. It requires mapping Italy's long-term energy future. Like many European economies, Italy is suffering declining competitiveness. It needs to find space for innovation and comparative advantage in a global economy that is adopting the tools of 21st-century industrialization: electrification, renewables, automation, and AI. The spatial distribution of that transformation will define the future economy's network needs, which will both drive grid modernization and pay for it.

Europe faces challenges like this around every corner. Its median age is now 45, with a pensioner for every three workers. By the end of the century, one-third of Europeans will be over 65, the age cohort most vulnerable to heat-induced mortality. But a shrinking workforce with declining productivity obviously cannot support welfare services on the scale that people are used to. The solution must be vastly higher productivity, a larger working-age population, or a combination of the two.

As it happens, the median age in Africa, just across the Mediterranean, is under 20, and the continent's total population will swell to 2.5 billion by 2050. Politics aside, the conditions for an extraordinarily beneficial partnership are in place. But accommodating migration on any significant scale and sustaining the increase in related trade will have profound territorial consequences. New social housing, transportation infrastructure, and services will add to challenges already facing cities like Rome, Vienna, and Paris. Now open-air museums to Europe's cultural legacy, these metropolitan centers were modernized with infrastructure designed for a different society, economy, and material conditions.

When asked what made Singapore—transformed from a resource-poor local port into a global hub in the space of a generation—so successful, its founding leader, Lee Kuan Yew, famously answered: "Air conditioning." He understood that modernity's most consequential gift has been the control of material conditions.

Europe can no longer afford to treat climate change as a background trend that is unfolding while we are making other plans. Shifting material conditions are the new normal. History tells us that such challenges can be overcome only through transformations on a societal scale. Europe must think much bigger, aiming not for mere resilience but for resilient growth.

Giulio Boccaletti is the author of The Environmental Republic: Why Citizens Will Save the World (Princeton University Press, 2026), Water: A Biography (Pantheon Books, 2021), Siccità (Mondadori, 2023), and Il Futuro della Natura (Mondadori, 2025).

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FIFA scraps controversial World Cup investment plan

Fifa president Gianni Infantino says he has scrapped the controversial plan to sell off stakes in the governing body's competitions to private investors following widespread opposition.

Infantino said it had become clear the project had "created divisions" that are "no longer in the interest" of its original objective.

The Swiss official added: "As a result, this proposal will not proceed."

Infantino had offered Fifa's 211 member associations $40m (£30m) if they backed a proposal for private investment in its tournaments, including the men's and women's World Cups.

However, Uefa - which governs European football - responded by voting to boycott World Cups if the plans went ahead, and other governing bodies also voiced their opposition.

On Friday, Fifa's chief operating officer Kevin Lamour said the governing body's own administration had been "deceived" about the project.

Carlos Cordeiro - Infantino's senior adviser on global strategy and governance - resigned over the matter, saying the proposal was "a bad deal for football" and would "mortgage football's future".

That came after two other major confederations spoke out against the plans.

Concacaf, which governs football in North, Central America and the Caribbean - and hosted this summer's World Cup - said its members "rejected" the proposal, with sources saying the vast majority of associations from the region are losing, or have lost, faith in Infantino.

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) said it stood in "solidarity" with Uefa and Concacaf, while UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham said Infantino was "the wrong man" to lead Fifa.

It means Infantino is now under immense pressure as he seeks re-election for a fourth term as president at the Fifa Congress in March.

"Our purpose has always been - and will always be - to unite and improve," the 56-year-old added in a statement.

"Moving forward, my intent is to bring all interested parties back together in the coming days and weeks in the spirit of shared interest in our game."

AFC president Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa welcomed the withdrawal of the plan.

"The future of global football must always be shaped through proper consultation, collective dialogue and respect for the established governance structures of our game," he said.

Infantino's plans were unlikely to pass

Despite rejections from Uefa and Concacaf, Fifa initially vowed to continue with its proposals on Friday, saying "nobody is selling football".

However, Infantino would have needed the backing of a majority of member associations to pass the plans - meaning 106 of its 211 members needed to vote in favour.

That became unlikely when the AFC joined Uefa and Concacaf in opposing the plans.

Uefa has 55 votes, Concacaf has 35 and Asia has 46.

If all member associations backed the stance of their governing body, that would have meant 136 nations voting against Infantino's plan.

Governing bodies in Africa (CAF) and Oceania (OFC) had said they would discuss Fifa's plan in August.

Conmebol - South American football's governing body - said it had asked Fifa for "additional information and clarifications" regarding the "scope, structure, governance and possible effects" of the proposals.

What was Infantino's plan?

Fifa and Infantino wanted to create a commercial subsidiary to run its main events, including its World Cups, with external investors able to buy stakes in it.

It said it would "invite third parties to make minority, non-controlling investments" in a new subsidiary - Fifa Forward Enterprise (FFE).

Infantino set a deadline of 19 September for football federations to accept his plans if they wanted to access an initial $20m (£15m).

A 25-page document created by investment bank JP Morgan laid out how Fifa's tournaments would expand to hit an estimated increased payout of 24m euros (£20.5m) per member association in the 2035-2039 cycle.

It mentioned "new business initiatives" and "attracting top talent with incentive-driven compensation". The World Cup is described in it as the "most widely viewed" sporting event but Fifa, by contrast, is said to be "under-monetised".

There was no mention in the document of the women's game.

Fifa said Thrive Eternal was expected to lead the proposed investor group for FFE.

Thrive is an American venture capital firm founded by Joshua Kushner - the brother of US President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared.

Trump - addressing the proposals for the first time on Friday - said he had not spoken to Infantino about the plans.

The two have developed a close relationship since Trump assumed office for a second time in 2025.

Can Infantino survive?

Infantino became Fifa president in 2016 when he beat AFC president Sheikh Salman by 115 votes to 88.

Fifa's next president will be confirmed at the organisation's 77th Congress in Morocco next March. Candidates have until 18 November to put their names forward.

Prior to this week, it had been anticipated Infantino would be re-elected unopposed. Associations around the world, including some in Europe, had already confirmed their intention to vote for him.

It remains to be seen if the events of this week will result in a mass withdrawal of their support.

In his statement, Infantino reiterated his plan was designed to strengthen member associations, "especially in countries where support is most needed" - but the proposal clearly created division within Fifa itself.

Cordeiro, who represented Fifa on the White House taskforce for the 2026 World Cup, is the first senior figure at the governing body to resign over the plans.

In a lengthy statement, Cordeiro said he "unequivocally" opposed the plans and "did not accept the proposition" Fifa needed outside investors to "unlock greater value". He added he had no involvement in the proposal.

It is understood Infantino even left some of Fifa's eight vice-presidents in the dark about his plan, which it is claimed could have raised $10bn (£7.5bn).

Lamour called it "the project of one person" and said "a president must bring people together, unite them, and inspire them" but this was "the opposite".

"If that means I lose my job, then so be it," he added. "I will understand and respect that decision. At least I'll sleep well tonight."

'Bruised Infantino makes humiliating climbdown' - analysis

As reports first emerged on Tuesday about Fifa's plans, a senior figure in English football told me the story would be as big, if not bigger, than the European Super League.

I do not think he felt it would unravel in quite the same way - but the idea only took two days longer than Super League to be scrapped.

There have been no fan protests on the streets, but animosity towards the plans was evident from the moment the likely implications dawned on the game.

Infantino is an astute politician. He knew the numbers were against him and has decided to cut his losses now rather than risk further personal damage.

It is a humiliating moment - but for Infantino, the real work starts now. He has some significant bridge building to do.

In their statement - which, in its own way, was just as damning as Uefa's threatened boycott - the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) pointed to a much wider issue.

"The AFC considers this issue extends far beyond a single proposal," it read. "Rather, it has exposed fundamental weaknesses in Fifa's consultation and decision-making processes that must now be addressed."

Infantino cannot just walk away from the past few days as though nothing has happened.

There are a lot of angry people in football who feel he has been acting beyond his power - just as the organisation's chief operating officer suggested on Friday.

The immediate crisis has passed. Over the short to medium term, it will be fascinating to see whether Infantino can restore his reputation.

Great Ethiopian Run launches record 60,000 registrations as Bank of America joins as presenting partner

Great Ethiopian Run has opened registration for its annual international 10km race with a record 60,000 places, while announcing Bank of America as the event’s new presenting partner in a deal officials say will help expand the race’s reach and impact.

The 2026 race is set for 22 November and will mark the start of the new partnership, which organisers say will support the long-term goal of making the event the world’s biggest 10km road race by 2030. The same partnership will also extend to the women’s 5km race in March 2027, around International Women’s Day, and to the children’s races held on the same weekend.

Great Ethiopian Run said the race’s growth reflects both its strong local appeal and its rising international profile. While most places are typically taken by Ethiopian runners, organisers expect more overseas participants as the event continues to build on its World Athletics Label status.

Dagmawit Amare, managing director of Great Ethiopian Run, said the partnership opens a new chapter for the race and its wider social impact. She said the event aims to create more youth opportunity, boost sport tourism and support local enterprise, while continuing to draw on the backing of existing partners.

Three thousand free places, or 5 percent of the total registration number, will be reserved for high school students in their graduation year. Organisers said the move is intended to address a gap in the race’s participant mix and to keep the event inclusive, especially for young people.

For the first time in the race’s 26-year history, chip timing will be used for mass participants who are targeting competitive finishing times. Organisers said runners will also be encouraged to use a new training app designed to help them prepare for the race and make running a more regular part of their daily lives.

The event is also expanding its charitable work. Great Ethiopian Run said its annual Run For A Cause campaign will be strengthened through its online giving platform, with three organizations selected by the Ethiopian Ministry of Women and Social Affairs set to benefit. This year’s fundraising target is more than 5 million birr.

Yvonne Ike, head of sub-Saharan Africa at Bank of America, said the Great Ethiopian Run has become an important platform for community engagement, youth inspiration and international visibility. She said the partnership reflects the bank’s support for an event that creates economic opportunity and helps strengthen Ethiopia’s global sporting profile.

Registration for the race is available only through the Telebirr app. Entry fees are set at 790 birr for the Red Start from Meskel Square and 950 birr for the Green Start from outside the Ghion Hotel, where the chip-timed runners will begin.

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