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Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

June 15, 2021
Addis Ababa

Press Briefing Transcript of June 15, 2021

Office of the Prime Minister Updates

To start off on highlights of the Prime Minister's activities this week:

- On Sunday June 13th, the Meskel Square Mega Project was inaugurated together with the Addis Ababa Municipality to Leghar Churchill Road walkways expansion project. Initiated by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and executed by the City Administration, the 3.5km sidewalk expansion and the Meskel Square 2.5billion birr development projects are beyond aesthetic value. The works undertaken are human design centred and aspire to unlock the city's economic and social potential. As we know Meskel Square is the country's largest and iconic public square. As a site that has hosted many historical events of cultural, religious, social and political significance, the works undertaken to enhance functionality are aimed at catalysing economic activities with a 1400 basement parking facility, underground and over ground shops.
- As the highly anticipated 6th National Elections take place on Monday June 21st 2021 with more than 40million voters registered to vote, the Prime Minister has made a call to all Ethiopians to also go out and plant. This year's Green Legacy program targets 6billion seedlings nationally with 1billion prepared for neighbouring countries. The call on Election Day is a call for citizens to exercise their democratic rights by voting and to dispense their citizen duty by planting for a climate resilient Ethiopia.

On Tigray:

Before handing over, I would like to reiterate a few points that the global community needs to be aware of, considering continued calls for humanitarian assistance issues that have already been addressed:

- On visas for humanitarian actors: it has been several weeks now since three-month visas for humanitarian actors with possibility of extension has been facilitated
- Communication Equipment: close to 350 Thuraya satellite phones have been provided to humanitarian organizations that have requested
- Preparations are under their final stages for the resumption of direct flights to the town of Shire in the next one or two weeks
- 170,798 Metric Tons of food have been distributed so-far in the region for those requiring assistance;

- The Government of Ethiopia, World Food Program, World Vision, Care International, Food for the Hungry and local NGO REST remain as the key providers of food assistance thus far. So other humanitarian actors willing to support are encouraged to augment current efforts.


Disinformation

Another component that I would like to highlight is the continuation of fake news, disinformation and data distortions that are at play. Support for our people of Tigray entails accurate data driven information and not alarmist polemics, as the Government remains front and center in the rehabilitation and rebuilding of lives and livelihoods in the Tigray region.

You can see in the images some of the fake news that is being circulated widely claiming chemical weapon attacks. We of course know that social media is rife with fake news but concerning is when individuals that are being called by international media and international organizations to give testimony are also using fake images and news for a fictitious narration. As you can see in these images the fake news being used under Tigray and the source of images used in cases unrelated to Ethiopia.

Real ✓

According to a Newsweek report in 2013, Israel said it would stop the use of white phosphorus bombs.



A U.S. Air Force Douglas A-1E Skyraider drops a white phosphorus bomb on a Viet Cong position in South Vietnam in 1966 (Wikimedia Commons)

Fake ✗

Martin Plaut @martinplaut · Jun 13
Three independent reports confirm that chemical weapons arrived in Mekelle. According to new information received tonight from a new source, 42 tons of chemical weapons have arrived on Mekelle through Djibouti.



Martin Plaut
Situation Report EXTRA – EEPA HORN No. 167 – 13 June 2021 Europe External Programme with Africa is a Belgium-based Centre of Expertise...
martinplaut.com

FAKE

Alula Solomon @Alula_Solomon · 29m
Report: @AbiyAhmedAli #Ethiopia and #Eritrea armies carried out chemical weapon (white phosphorus) and cluster bomb attack around Tembien, #Tigray.

18 286 153

Real ✓

Pentagon & Congress
Rights group criticizes use of white phosphorous against ISIS

The Associated Press June 14, 2017



Fake ✗

Tigray Online 50m ·

Breaking News!
ናይ ኢትዮጵያን ኤርትራን ሰራዊት ኣብ ከባቢ ዓብይናዲ ተምቡን ብጠርዞም ጋዝ ድድብድቡ ኣለውኑ ካብቶም ምዕታት ክልተ ህፃናትን ሓቲ እደን ይርከቡም ብዘሉዎም ጭራሎም ኣለው።
Credible reports are indicating Ethiopian & Eritrean forces are bombing at Menji/Guyya around AbiyiAdi, Tembien #Tigray using cluster bombs & White Phosphorus killing at least two children and a mother and injuring more.



103 Comments · 486 Shares

Media Portrayal

- Lastly, I would like quickly address one elephant in the room. This is related to sensational headlines by some global media outlets feeding disinformation to sway global perspectives and sentiments about Ethiopia.
- Many stories and headlines on Ethiopia are rife with sensationalism – supplanting duty to inform, with culpability in putting forth a distorted narrative of an African nation. We have seen similar reporting that aims to pigeon hole African countries into a dominant and condescending narrative of ‘failed’. Ethiopia is being peddled in this direction by headlines that are fail to grasp context and nuances.
- Most prevalent is the character assassination of the Prime Minister while failing to hold to account a terrorist group that has publicly declared waging war on the State.
- The Prime Minister need not be a darling of the west, east, south or north. It is sufficient that he stands for the people of Ethiopia and the development of the nation. And on June 21 the people of Ethiopia will decide.
- Berating Ethiopia and other African countries on freedom of speech, whilst rejecting alternative voices to the current ones adopted in global outlets by refusing op-Ed’s; articles and insights that attempt to provide context to the one-sided narrative being peddled is - hypocrisy in action against universal values and principles.
- Have said this, we would also like to acknowledge the work of other global outlets that have been making painstaking efforts to shed context into complex situations as they seek and share the truth. The efforts to bring balance to stories over outright biases is commendable.

We reiterate once again that Ethiopia is dispensing on its duties to international norms and principles; is undertaking all efforts to address the humanitarian needs of Ethiopians in the Tigray region and stands firmly to collaborate and work closely, constructively with partners in a spirit of cooperation to address humanitarian needs.

Ministry of Agriculture Updates

Overview of 2021 Meher Season Grain Production in Tigray

- Under the oversight of federal ministerial Committee, The Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with Tigray Provisional Administration, Bureau of Agriculture and natural resource, Cooperative unions and development local and International partners is working to restore and strengthen organizational structure of agriculture sector, and also restart basic extension and input supply service for the year 2021 cropping season.
- Under the guidance of the management, a team of expert are assigned and deployed to support to region, Accordingly, by allocating 10-million-birr office furniture’s and equipment purchased and handed over to region. 3 vehicles and expertise awareness creation and motivational Trainings were given. Additional supports and trainings are undergoing based on agro calendar in collaboration with all stockholders.
- As a result of the support given to Bureau Agriculture and natural resource sector in Tigray, out of 61 Rural woreda 46 of the them enabled to start day to day service provision, rapid assessment to damaged and Looted asset during law enforcement is conducted and also currently the regional BoA start mobilizing resources for restoration of the agriculture sector up to zonal, woreda and Kebele level and farmers (farm tools, seed, Fertilizer, restocking livestock).

Status of 2020/2021 Mehere, Irrigation and Belg cropping season performance: -

- At Country level, 12.97 million hectares of land was covered by major grain crops and 341.83 million of quintal is harvested, (It increased by 6.73%), Tigray region by the same cropping season, 0.946 million hectares of land was cultivated and 20.27 million quintals of grains is expected, However, because of security problem, some farmers could not harvest well and some of them were looted. The neighbouring Amhara region produced 110.94 million of quintal grain that may create positive impact on grain supply market.
- In addition to Meher production, the ministry of agriculture in collaboration with regions to fill food gap of the nation, focus was given to develop 805,000 hectares of irrigable land. Of which 415,000 hectares of irrigable land allocated to wheat production and then 7.5 million quintal wheat yield is expected. This wheat production program is planned to be scaled up in the coming consecutive cropping seasons. The rest 390,000 of land cultivated by different horticultural crops.
- In the Belg season, 2,017,077 ha of land is planned to be cultivated and currently 1,934,177 ha is covered with seed. From these 21 million quintals of grain yield expected. Even though, the major cropping season in Tigray is mehere, the region couldn't cultivate the usual 11,000 hectares.

2021 Meher cropping season plan and achievement in Tigray.

- Based on the NMA metrological information, we expect good rain for grain cropping in Tigray which is normal and above normal, so that the Ministry of agriculture and the region in collaboration with Development partners trying all option to give extension service and supply of basic input and machinery support.
- In Tigray region, grain crop production is mainly commenced in Meher. Which is in average expected to be cultivate 950,000 ha, so that:
 - ✓ Agricultural development experts have started providing farm to farm Extension service in 46 rural woreda, current information indicate that 70% of the farmers have started their farming to cover long season crops like sorghum and maize.
 - ✓ In organic Fertilizer Supply: - 1.8 billion bir is allocated to purchase and transport 800,000 Quintal of Inorganic fertilizer, out of which 322,864 quintal NPS and Urea are transported from port Djibouti to Mekele Warehouse, in addition to 214,864 quintals carry over fertilizer a total of 537,728 (67%) quintal fertilizer has already made available in Central WH and 210,795 quintals transported to 27 Woreda and also 91,000 quintal fertilizer distributed to farmers.
 - ✓ Improved Seed Supply: - 334,982,532 birr is allocated to purchase and transport 120,000 Qt of improved seed. Of which 97,246.5 Qt. purchased and 66,387.5 Qt and 44,656 Qt is transported to Mekele and Woreda respectively. And also 26,000 Qt seed is distributed to Farmers.
 - ✓ Agro Chemicals (Pesticide) will purchase and be distributed by using some share of budget allocated to fertilizer, till now 70 Kg and 18 litter distributed to farmers from central WH.
 - ✓ Agro Mechanization Tractor supply: Mekele University and ATA jointly trying to make available Tractor and AGP allocated 5.9 million birr to rental tractors to plough land of farmers who have been looted their oxen. In addition to that the interim government allocated 24 million birr to purchase tractors to give ploughing service through cooperatives. And also encouraging the private companies to supply rental Tractors to give ploughing service.

- ✓ As the livestock resource have great impact in the livelihood of the farmers, government and Partners have allocated birr 71.9 million for livestock restocking and birr 11,126,700 to purchased and supply 6,660.78Qt of Fodder seed. Of which 23,058 Qt is purchased and 180.5Qt is distributed.
- For its very special situation in Tigray, this Meher cropping season plan was prepared jointly with MoA and Regional BoA. According to the plan 70% of 950,000 hectare of land will expected to be cultivate and then 1.4 Million MT of production mainly Sorghum, Teff, Sesame, wheat, Finger millet, Barely and Maize are expected. If the peace and restoration become promising in all woreda of Tigray, the Meher performance will be in better of that of 70 percent.
- The food gap in Tigray is expected to be filled by coordinated action of Productive Safety Net Program which already supporting in 55 woredas 1.1 million beneficiaries and can increase its number of beneficiaries through scalable PSNP and Humanitarian food support. And also the supply from the national market and the neighbouring Amhara region which produce marketable surplus can create positive impact on grain market supply as long as the peace is maintained. The interim government encouraging the cooperative union and private sector to start their supplying basic consumable agricultural and industrial products is also expected to be maintained.
- In general, the agricultural production and economic growth that the country has achieved in the last consecutive years and the food and development assistance provided by development partners, makes the country to with stand the current food gap that has been expected in Tigray and some part of conflict prone areas of the nation. Thus, the famine that occurred in 1984 could not be comparable with the current food gap in Ethiopia, especially in Tigray.

National Meteorological Agency Updates

Tigray Region climate summary (National Meteorological Agency)

- Tigray main rainy season is NH summer (June to September) where it receives rainfall ranging from 300mm in the east and south to 1000mm over southern part of western-half of the Region.
- South Tigray also receives rainfall during NH spring (MAM), which showed a decreasing trend in recent years. This season was also erratic.

Belg 2021:

- March to May 2021 seasonal rainfall was erratic in its distribution and amount over Tigray, especially during March and the first three weeks of April. This was due to prolonged La-Nina effect we had since NH summer of 2020, which resulted in excess rain during NH summer 2020, but deficit rain during Belg (MAM) 2021 in particular for southern parts, where it is Belg benefiting area.
- However, April fourth week and May 2021 had above average rainfall, which compensated moisture deficit in most part of the Region.

Climate outlook for Kiremt 2021 (June to September) season:

Under normal condition Kiremt in Tigray behaves as follows:

- The season attains its peak in July and August
- Rainfall is highly variable during June and September
- Rain onset ranges from first Dekade of June over south-west to first Dekade of July over East and South Tigray

- Rain withdraw ranges from first Dekade of September over East to first Dekade of October over south-west of Tigray
- Kiremt total rainfall ranges from 300mm over east and south east to 1000mm over southern half of western half of Tigray

Kiremt 2021 Outlook:

- Current ENSO Neutral phase is likely to continue through the Northern Hemisphere summer (67% chance in June-August 2021).
- The Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) index will remain neutral
- Western Tigray is anticipated to have normal to above normal rain.
- Central, eastern and southern Tigray will have tends to normal rain.
- The onset & cessation of the seasonal rain is expected to be within the normal periods across most parts of the Region.
- Erratic temporal distribution, with few prolonged dry spells during June and September.
- Based on seasonal climate drivers, 1996, 2001 and 2008 has been selected as analogues years to Kiremt 2021. All of them showed normal to above normal rainfall over most part of Tigray.

In general, with expectation of neutral IOD and ENSO episode events for the upcoming NH summer monsoon season, it will be **positive contribution for the wet performance in the Kiremt 2021** across most of Tigray Region. Therefore, we do not anticipate any meteorological and hydrological drought during the upcoming rainy season in Tigray Region, rather we expect a **good rainy season** for agricultural and pastoral activities as well as water availability.

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