

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

*AEPAC followed the unilateral ceasefire of June 28, 2021, in Tigray by the Federal Government of Ethiopia with a sense of hope and optimism. The AEPAC community believes that the ceasefire will create the right preconditions for access to humanitarian aid in Tigray, help farmers to continue their farming activities by taking advantage of the current rainy season, and allow combatants to look for alternative option to war - which is a peaceful resolution to this conflict.*

*In its recent history, Ethiopia has gone through wars and destruction. The current conflict is another of those that should not be allowed to continue. War undermines confidence and destroys trust, two factors which are the main ingredients for negotiations to resolve differences. The people of Ethiopia, including our brothers and sisters in Tigray deserve their dignity and peace restored. We know restoring peace in a fractured community is not easy, but it can be done. It needs far-sighted vision, good will and firm commitment by community and religious leaders and political leaders from all sides. More than anything it needs sacrifice. As the former German Chancellor Willy Brandt said: "Peace is not everything, but without Peace, everything is nothing".*

*Ethiopia and the United States have developed and maintained more than a century long diplomatic relationship. This is the longest and oldest diplomatic relationship for the United States on the African continent. Since then both countries have established a workable partnership that benefited both parties.*

*We hope the United States will play a positive and balanced role in helping Ethiopia address the problems it is now experiencing.*

*Thank you! God bless the peoples of the United States and Ethiopia.*

**Mesfin Tegenu, AEPAC Chairman**



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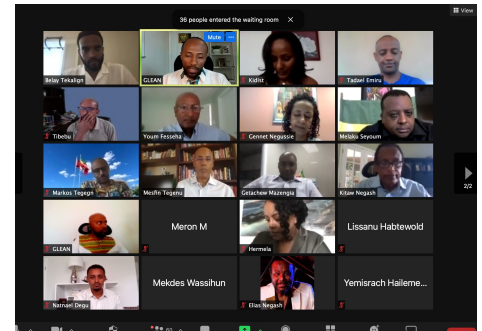
## AEPAC ACTIVITY UPDATE

### Successful Fundraising Event to Support AEPAC Mission

In collaboration with the Global Ethiopian Advocacy Nexus (GLEAN), AEPAC and its partner organizations conducted a successful virtual fund-raising event on July 25, 2021.

The event attracted 500 participants from the US, Canada and Europe and raised over \$200,000 in three hours. The event also introduced AEPAC to more people, provided updates on progress made so far by AEPAC, and outlined our future plans.

The participants showed their generosity in the hope that AEPAC will serve the Ethio-American community to come together to get their voices heard.



### AEPAC, Partners and Mercury Continues Engagement with Congress Members

July is one of the busiest times of the Congressional year and AEPAC, its partners and with the support of Mercury, continued to engage important members of Congress. In total we have now held 40 calls and meetings with Congressional members and staff.

Mercury has also sent letters to key policy makers urging them to act and condemn TPLF's use of child soldiers in Tigray. We were pleased to note that our GR engagement, highlighting the changing environment with the unilateral ceasefire and raising questions about the even-handedness of H.Res. 445, has had influence on the debate surrounding the resolution. It was removed from July consideration and instead will be reconsidered in September at the earliest.

### AGOA

A second major initiative which is getting underway is focused on AGOA, the African Growth and Opportunity Act. We are organizing meetings with the US Chamber of Commerce and the Corporate Council for Africa.

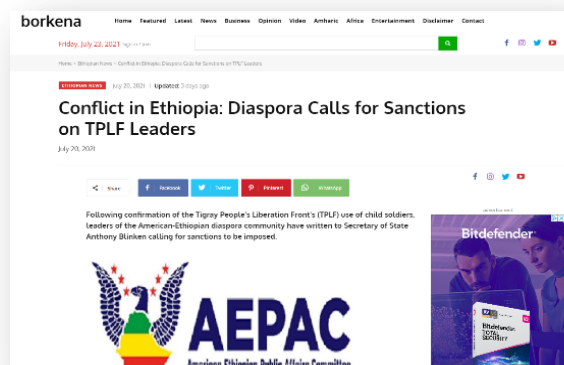
## Media Work

Over the course of July, Mercury has continued to drive an aggressive media strategy focused on inserting a balanced voice into ongoing coverage of Ethiopia, offer a fact-based narrative of the situation in Tigray to journalists and drafted and secured placement of op-eds on prominent sites including [Foreign Policy News](#) and the [Financial Times](#).

## Open Letters

On the 7th of July we published an op-ed letter to all Members of Congress calling for the U.S. to acknowledge the success of the election and to put pressure on the TPLF to agree to a ceasefire. This was very successful on social media, and we secured a number of media hits.

It was published on the following news sites: Borkena, News Breezer and From the Horn.



## Child Soldiers

We have been aggressive in highlighting the TPLF's use of child soldiers and the images posted by the New York Times journalist Finbarr O'Reilly. In addition to sending the Secretary Blinken letter out to our full distribution list, we briefed targeted tier one outlets. We believe this effort has resulted in coverage and further debate on the issue.

Most notable coverage:

[BBC](#) ran the story, including using Finbarr's Instagram images we had been briefing

[Reuters](#) also looked at the issue and ran a denial statement from the leader of the TPLF

[Black Star News](#) ran a very supportive piece being heavily critical of the TPLF for using child soldiers

**Digital**

Our efforts to engage online audiences continues with both Twitter and Facebook pages growing at pace.

Over the last month, AEPAC content generated nearly 5,000 likes, comments and shares on Twitter with our open letter to Members of Congress receiving over 1,000 interactions alone. Altogether our social media content reached over 250,000 users in July.

Mercury created a new mission video to outline the importance of AEPAC's work, a five facts video to amplify the strength of the Ethiopia-US relationship, promoted content highlighting the TPLF's use of child soldiers, GR meetings conducted by AEPAC, its partners and Mercury and content to promote AEPAC media hits and statements.



## NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS

### **Successful Fundraising Event to Support GERD**

The Ethiopian Association for Peace and Unity organized a huge gathering of the diaspora community on the Mall in Washington DC on 25 July to express their joy on the second filling of the GERD and to demonstrate their commitment for continued support of the project by handing over a check for over \$800,000 to the Ethiopian Ambassador Fitsum Arega.

### **The Tigray Crisis Takes a Dangerous Turn by Using Child Soldiers**

By taking the fight beyond the crisis area to Afar and Amhara regions and according to a NYT report of TPLF child soldiers in battle fronts, the TPLF is not only jeopardizing the peace process but breaking international law and endangering the country's stability and territorial integrity. The TPLF's actions have angered the people of Ethiopia and the special regional forces which has resulted in the mobilization of these forces to defend the country against continued TPLF attacks.

AEPAC has expressed its concern of the use of child soldiers by the TPLF by writing letters to US Congress, US Administration and the UN Secretary General.

Read more on AEPAC website [here](#).

The Tigray Democratic Party (TDP) has urged the international community to hold the TPLF group accountable for using children as soldiers against international laws and conventions. Recent reports and footage have clearly demonstrated that TPLF has been committing a number of crimes in violation of international law. The Tigray Democratic Party Office Head, Teshale Negusse, told ENA that recruiting and deploying children in war is against Ethiopian and international laws.

Teshale also urged the people of Tigray to stop sending their children to support the irrational and pointless destructive activities of the terrorist group and denounce the group's cruel agenda. The party head also expressed disappointment with humanitarian organizations for not giving the necessary attention to the crimes being committed by the group on children.

Read more [here](#).

### **The Ethiopian Board of Elections Declares Prosperity Party the Winner**

Ethiopia's governing Prosperity Party won 410 seats out of 436 constituencies. Voter turnout was over 90% among the more than 37 million people who were registered to vote.

This victory assures Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed a second five-year term in office and a parliamentary majority that gives him a governing mandate. Some seats will remain vacant till elections are held in other parts of the country in September. Ethiopia's new government is expected to be formed in October.

The head of the electoral board of Ethiopia (NEBE), Birtukan Mideksa, said that the vote was held at a time when Ethiopia was experiencing challenges, "but this voting process has guaranteed that people will be governed through their votes. I want to confirm that we have managed to conduct a credible election."

### **The Second Filling of GERD Completed per Schedule**

July 19, 2021, was the day Ethiopia announced that it has successfully completed the second phase of the filling of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD).

The first-year impoundment was 4.9 billion cubic meters while the second-round filling is expected to be 13.5 billion cubic meters. When fully operational, the dam will become the largest hydro-electric plant in Africa, providing power to some 65 million Ethiopians, who currently lack a regular electricity supply.

The Senior United Nations official for the Horn of Africa told the UN Security Council that Egypt, Ethiopia and Sudan all have legitimate claims to, and concerns about, the use of the Nile River Basin's waters, and that the three neighbors should negotiate in good faith towards a mutually beneficial agreement on the historic waterway's sustainable management.

Sudan's Minister for Foreign Affairs reaffirmed the need for the process to continue under African Union auspices and urged the Council to play a positive role in resolving the dispute. She said her country has supported the dam's construction from the outset, understanding that its advantages would not be restricted to Ethiopia, and that it would operate according to a legally binding agreement that considers the equitable, reasonable use of cross-border resources without inflicting harm on downstream States.

The United States believes that diplomacy is the only solution to the issue of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD).

Ethiopia's Minister for Water, Irrigation and Energy said Ethiopia has the best wishes for its neighbors, Egypt and Sudan, and believes in their ability to cooperate for their mutual benefit, he said. Pointing out that both countries have dams and canals, large and small, that they constructed without regard for the rights of other riparian countries, he pledged that Ethiopia will continue to negotiate in good faith, while emphasizing: "None of us ought to stand thirsty while watching the others drink."

### **Post-Ceasefire Development: Missed Opportunities**

Following the Ethiopian government's unilateral declaration of a ceasefire on 28 June 2021 after its troops pulled out of Mekelle in what it called a strategic withdrawal, and hopeful statements on 08 July 2021 by the members of the UN Security Council that the ceasefire announcement was an opportunity for parties of the conflict to build upon, the reality on the ground shows the opposite.

A BBC news report of 04 July stated that “TPLF dismissed the truce as a joke and produced a long list of preconditions for a ceasefire”, including statements such as marching on Addis Ababa which to some observers sound unrealistic and a missed opportunity for peace and stability in the country.

According to the United Nations, UN Secretary-General António Guterres welcomed Ethiopia’s commitment to ensuring aid workers can access the war-ravaged Tigray region. The development comes after Mr. Guterres and Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed discussed the extremely concerning humanitarian situation in the Northern Province. “The Secretary- General acknowledged the Government’s pledge to use the ceasefire to facilitate urgent humanitarian assistance, including regular United Nations humanitarian flights into Tigray, as well as support for agricultural activities,” the statement continued.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

### Follow

To keep up to date with AEPAC’s work, please follow us on Twitter, and Facebook for regular updates.

### Share

Want to help push the voice of American-Ethiopians to the audiences who matter? Then please share these Tweets so that AEPAC’s message is seen by more people across social media:

[AEPAC Mission Video](#)

[Open letter to Members of Congress](#)

[Oped in Foreign Policy News](#)

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