

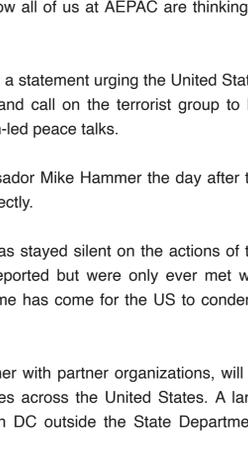


NEWSLETTER

September 2022, Vol 2 No.9

Dear Friends,

This month has brought the news none of us wanted to hear. The TPLF has renewed its offensive against Ethiopia and its people. As I write, their forces are marching through Northern Amhara and Afar attacking towns and villages, bringing more destruction to already devastated communities.



I know for many of you, this will be a difficult time with friends and family back in Ethiopia directly impacted by the war. I want you to know all of us at AEPAC are thinking of you and your loved ones.

Shortly after the war restarted AEPAC released a statement urging the United States Government to condemn the TPLF's attacks and call on the terrorist group to lay down their arms and return to the African Union-led peace talks.

We met with US Horn of Africa Envoy Ambassador Mike Hammer the day after the first attacks and communicated that request directly.

For the past two years, the US Government has stayed silent on the actions of the TPLF. Many atrocities were committed and reported but were only ever met with silence. That is now unsustainable, and the time has come for the US to condemn the TPLF.

In a sign of diaspora solidarity, AEPAC, together with partner organizations, will be participating in "rallies for peace" in major cities across the United States. A large protest took place this morning in Washington DC outside the State Department, thanks to all who attended.

The rallies will have a clear objective - to show the strength of feeling in the American Ethiopian community for peace, not the TPLF's violence.

We will also be handing a letter to Secretary Blinken outlining very straightforward steps the US Government can take to support Ethiopia, these include:

- The TPLF must lay down its arms and end its attacks on the Ethiopian people
- The African Union peace process must be given a chance to succeed
- International human rights organizations should investigate the TPLF's use of child soldiers as a matter of urgency
- The US should support these steps by condemning the actions of the TPLF
- International media outlets must apply robust scrutiny to the vast amount of misinformation coming from the TPLF leadership

We also believe it is critical the Government of Ethiopia is communicating clearly with the international community.

We all know the only way to give peace a chance for the people of Ethiopia and ensure stability in the Horn of Africa is to end the TPLF's violence. We need to keep up the campaign and educate US legislators and the administration on the facts on the ground and the views of the diaspora.

Ethiopia needs your support more than ever. Please get involved in AEPAC's activities, there is plenty going on; fundraising, supporting midterm candidates, or even pushing content on social media. It all makes a difference.

Thank you,

Mesfin Tegenu, AEPAC Chairman

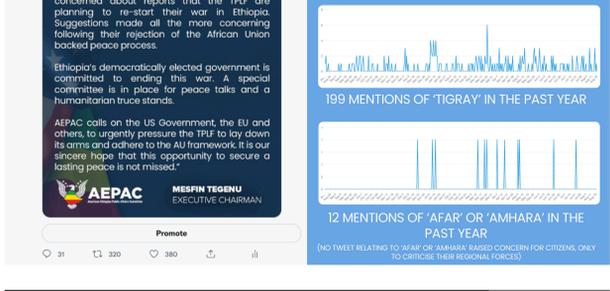
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AEPAC ACTIVITY UPDATE

AEPAC and Partners Meet US Envoy Mike Hammer

Mike Hammer had a meet-and-greet event with AEPAC and partners. There were over 90 participants from the chapters of AEPAC for the two-hour meeting held on zoom. The Envoy thanked AEPAC for the opportunity and expressed his support for Ethiopia's independence and territorial integrity. The Envoy responded to several issues tabled and there was a question-and-answer session. The meeting was a good beginning to continue the dialogue between AEPAC and the US envoy.



Media

Media for the month of August was dominated by the work around the Washington DC fly-in. AEPAC's efforts to reinstate AGOA were covered widely by [African outlets](#) and [diaspora news](#) in the US.

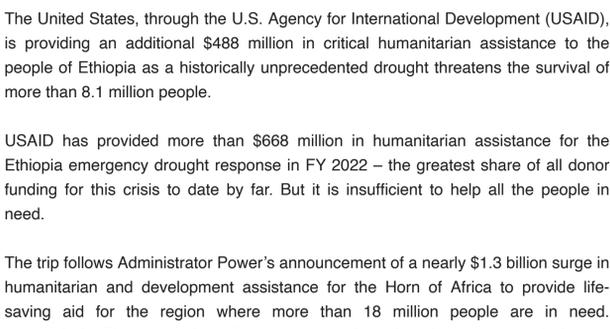
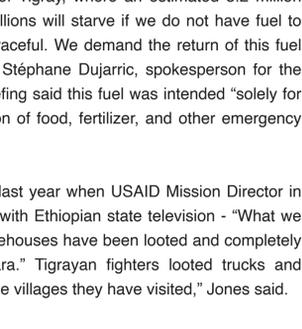
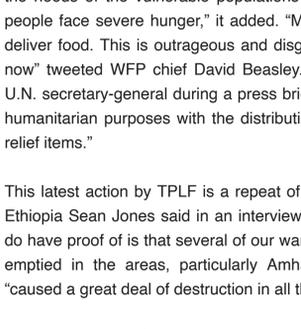
We also challenged Dr. Tedros in the media and online. His comments related to the international community ignoring Tigray due to "skin color" were deeply offensive and just wrong. Following that we looked into his public comments over the past year and found whilst he had tweeted 200 times raising the alarm for Tigray, he tweeted support for the people of Afar and Amhara a total of 0 times. Our Chairman Mesfin Tegenu wrote a piece for [Borkena](#) detailing why there needs to be serious scrutiny of Dr. Tedros' misuse of his position.

Digital

This month in Digital, we've been developing several long-lead projects alongside an increase in reactive content following the sad news that the ceasefire has broken in Ethiopia. Specific projects that have been highly effective include our new campaign to engage US Lawmakers on the need to relist Ethiopia on AGOA. This has resulted in a large number of people contacting their representatives and the US Administration, as many diaspora members, like us, are highly aware of the value that AGOA brings to the people of both the US and Ethiopia. You can have your voice heard and contact your representative [here](#).

We also ran a complex analysis of Dr. Tedros's social media activity, which we have published [here](#), finding that he has excessive mentions of 'Tigray' in relation to 'Afar' and 'Amhara' in his posts. This is highly suggestive that he has been biased in his engagement with the conflict, a concerning development given his status as an international civil servant.

Key content has performed extremely well, with over 204k impressions over the course of the month, and 26.9k profile visits.



NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS

The collapse of the Ethiopian Ceasefire

The six-month humanitarian cease-fire between the Ethiopian government and TPLF collapsed after the resumption of fighting on different fronts. According to a statement from the Ethiopian Government Communication Service, TPLF has begun a new offensive on several fronts. "TPLF has launched an invasion at Wag, Welkait and around Sudanese border," it said, adding that the Ethiopian forces were heroically defending their positions and civilian population.

Earlier this month, the government said it wanted talks "with no preconditions", while Tigray's government has called for the restoration of services to civilians first.

UN chief Antonio Guterres said he was "deeply shocked" by the renewed fighting and appealed for an "immediate cessation of hostilities" and for the resumption of peace talks, full humanitarian access, and the re-establishment of public services in Tigray. The head of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, called for a "de-escalation" and the resumption of "talks to seek a peaceful solution". The US Department of State called on the Ethiopian government and the TPLF to redouble efforts to advance talks for a durable ceasefire.

There were air strikes by the Ethiopian Airforce in the Tigray capital, Mekelle, which the government claims hit strategic military positions while TPLF accused the government of bombing civilians. "UNICEF strongly condemns the air strike ... (that) hit a kindergarten, killing several children, and injuring others," UNICEF's executive director, Catherine Russell, said.

According to reports, on August 24, 2022, Ethiopia downed Antonov aircraft carrying weapons to the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) an armed group fighting the national army in the northern part of the country. Maj General Fedaye Ayalew of the Defense Ministry said "The plane, which flew from Sudan and violated Ethiopia's air space, was heading to Tigray through the northern part of Humera to deliver armaments to the terrorist group." The agency described the plane as "the property of Ethiopia's historical enemies" without openly accusing a country of supporting the TPLF.

Humanitarian Aid Scandal by TPLF

According to the Executive Director of the World Food Program (WFP) David Beasley, a group of armed men belonging to TPLF entered WFP's compound in Mekelle and forcibly seized 12 tankers filled with over half a million liters of fuel.

The WFP said without the fuel, "it is impossible for WFP to distribute food, fertilizer, medicines, and other emergency supplies across Tigray. It also prevents us from powering generators and vehicles, so that WFP and humanitarian partners can meet the needs of the vulnerable populations of Tigray, where an estimated 5.2 million people face severe hunger," it added. "Millions will starve if we do not have fuel to deliver food. This is outrageous and disgraceful. We demand the return of this fuel now" tweeted WFP chief David Beasley. Stéphane Dujarric, spokesperson for the U.N. secretary-general during a press briefing said this fuel was intended "solely for humanitarian purposes with the distribution of food, fertilizer, and other emergency relief items."

This latest action by TPLF is an repeat of last year when USAID Mission Director with Ethiopia Sean Jones said in an interview with Ethiopian state television - "What we do have proof of is that several of our warehouses have been looted and completely emptied in the areas, particularly Amhara." Tigrayan fighters looted trucks and "caused a great deal of destruction in all the villages they have visited," Jones said.

The US approves \$488 million in humanitarian assistance

The United States, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), is providing an additional \$488 million in critical humanitarian assistance to the people of Ethiopia as a historically unprecedented drought threatens the survival of more than 8.1 million people.

USAID has provided more than \$668 million in humanitarian assistance for the Ethiopia emergency drought response in FY 2022 – the greatest share of all donor funding for this crisis to date by far. But it is insufficient to help all the people in need.

The trip follows Administrator Power's announcement of a nearly \$1.3 billion surge in humanitarian and development assistance for the Horn of Africa to provide life-saving aid for the region where more than 18 million people are in need. Administrator Power said the US will be urging the international community to rally resources to stave off mass starvation and deaths, particularly in the most-affected countries, which have an extreme risk of famine.

China Waives African Loans, Offers \$10 Billion in IMF Funds

A recent announcement by China at the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation is forgiving 23 interest-free loans for 17 African countries may be motivated by accusations of "debt-trap diplomacy," say some analysts. China restructured or refinanced about \$15 billion in African debt between 2000 and 2019

In line with its commitment to development cooperation with African countries, China said it will re-channel \$10 billion of its Special Drawing Rights (SDR) to Africa through the International Monetary Fund (IMF). China, along with France, is chairing a committee to deal with debt relief efforts. The move, welcomed by the International Monetary Fund, is ongoing.

Critics have long accused Beijing of practicing debt-trap diplomacy, suggesting it deliberately lends to countries that it knows cannot repay the money, thereby increasing its political leverage. China vehemently rejects this, alleging it's a way for the U.S. to discredit Beijing, Washington's main challenger in the quest for influence in Africa.

According to World Bank data from 2020 cited by Forbes, the African nations with the highest external debt to China as a percentage of gross national income are Djibouti (43 percent), Angola (41 percent), and the Democratic Republic of Congo (29 percent), other countries include Uganda and South Africa.

Japan has pledged \$30bn in aid for development in Africa

At the eighth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD8) held in Tunisia, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Japan will provide \$30bn in aid to African countries over three years, promising smaller sums for food security in coordination with the African Development Bank.

Addressing the summit, the Japanese Prime Minister said Tokyo would work to ensure grain shipments to Africa amid a global shortage.

This latest conference was the first TICAD – held every three years either in Japan or an African country – since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

Beyond the Ethiopia Green Legacy

The target for the four-year plan to plant 6 billion trees has exceeded its goal. The government stated that this culture of planting trees will continue as part of the "Greening Ethiopia" vision through community ownership. The Green Legacy has created employment for hundreds of thousands of persons who are involved in preparing seedlings and supporting logistics. The Green Legacy is part of the ten-year economic development plan (2021-2030) of the Government of Ethiopia (GOE) where agriculture is the top priority sector that can increase the production and productivity of cereals through small and large-scale irrigation development, financing agricultural inputs, encouraging cluster farming, and reducing post-harvest loss.

The Green Legacy is also a package of initiatives that includes wheat cluster farming, Avocado, and other herbs farming all of which are showing good progress, boosting agricultural export revenues and substituting imports by reducing production costs. The wheat sector in Ethiopia is undergoing a significant transformation. With the progress to date, Ethiopia is planning to stop importing wheat in 2023.

Dire Dawa Free Trade Zone Launched

Dire Dawa Free Trade Zone built near Djibouti is the first free trade zone for Ethiopia.

During the inauguration, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed affirmed that such zones are very important to facilitate export and import. He also stated that trade zones like this will be multiplied in a way that will enable competition with the global trade system.

According to the Ethiopian government, the Dire Dawa Free Trade Zone is expected to reduce logistics time and cost, improve efficiency and trade competitiveness, attract more FDI, boost urbanization and industrialization, and eventually boost the country's economy.

The Dire Dawa Free Trade Zone is part of Ethiopia's commitment to contributing to the success of The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), a free trade area encompassing most of Africa established in 2018.

Ethiopia is one of the African countries that have ratified the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), whose impact includes boosting intra-Africa trade, and is at the final stages of negotiations to join the World Trade Organization (WTO).

AfCFTA is the largest free-trade area by a number of member states, after the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the largest in population and geographic size, spanning 1.3 billion people across the world's second-largest continent, with a combined GDP of US\$3.4 trillion. It will gradually eliminate tariffs on 90 percent of goods and reduce barriers to trade in services.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Follow
To keep up to date with AEPAC's work, please follow us on [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#) for regular updates.

Check out our website - www.aepact.org

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](#)

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