NEWSLETTER

October 2022, Vol 2 No.10

Dear Friends,

The midterm elections are now less than 35 days away and it's all hands on deck here at AEPAC.

We have endorsed 12 candidates (listed below in the 'AEPAC Activity Update'), all of whom have demonstrated a real commitment to the American Ethiopian community. We have provided donations and are in the process of arranging fundraisers for some of our closest allies. We are encouraging supporters to also support campaigns by volunteering their time and sharing content online.

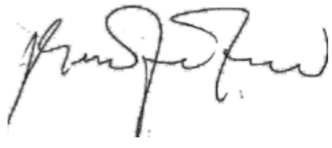
Please do all you can over the next five weeks to make sure we get these pro-Ethiopian candidates elected. The more friends we have in Congress, the more things we can get done to advocate for stronger US-Ethiopia relations.

Elsewhere, we have been working hard to challenge the TPLF's ongoing attacks in Afar and Amhara, and call for international support for the Government of Ethiopia. We worked with Professor Ann Fitz-Gerald to publish and promote a long-read article on the risk of Al Shabab in the region and the importance of a strong Ethiopia to maintain peace. We also publicly challenged the UN Commission's interim report, which was full of contradictions and failed to grasp the reality of the conflict.

I am also pleased to inform supporters, AEPAC was recognized as one of the most powerful African lobbying groups by Africa Report last month. Describing AEPAC's lobbying work on the conflict, Africa Report wrote: "no diaspora groups have been more politically influential."

Finally, I would like to encourage you to read the results of the diaspora survey we ran in September. More than 1,000 members of the community took part and provided us with critical information which we passed on to the median political stakeholders. Among the findings, the only peace process with support among the diaspora is the African Union, and 88% of participants said they felt down by the US government's policy approach towards Ethiopia. Data like this helps give stakeholders a snapshot of the feeling in the community, something that is even more important as we edge closer to the mid-terms.

Thanks for all your work and support,



Mesfin Tegenu, AEPAC Chairman

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How You Can Help

AEPAC ACTIVITY UPDATE

The American Ethiopian Public Affairs Committee (AEPAC)[1] is pleased to publicly endorse the following candidates running for the US House of Representatives during the midterm election of 2022:

- For their dedication to advancing the common interest of the people of the United States and Ethiopia.
- For their commitment to promoting US/Ethiopian Relations.
- For their friendship and support to the Ethiopian American community.

AEPAC Objectives …

- To strengthen and expand the more than a century-old strong relationship between the United States and Ethiopia for the mutual benefit, prosperity, and security of both countries,
- To mobilize Ethiopian Americans and American friends of Ethiopia to vote, donate and run for elective offices in the United States.
- To help preserve and protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ethiopia

AEPAC Election Pledge in 2022 …

In collaboration with its members, supporters, partners, and stakeholders AEPAC has put in place a strategy to mobilize and fully engage Ethiopian Americans and American friends of Ethiopia to achieve the following goals during the midterm election campaign of 2022.

- Mobilize and fully engage Ethiopian Americans and American supporters of Ethiopia so that they cast their votes electing candidates who are willing to help in reversing the unwarranted pressure and sanctions imposed on Ethiopia during the tenure of the current 117th US Congress,
- Conduct election campaign in support of pro-US/Ethiopia members of Congress so that they will be reelected to the 118th US Congress in 2022, help strengthen the Ethiopian American Caucus in the House of Representatives that will closely work with members of the US Congress whose positions on important legislative matters align with the mutual interests of both countries;
- Help elect new members of Congress who will work with AEPAC and other Ethiopian organizations in the United States in order to promote US/Ethiopia relations,
- Establish a dynamic network and campaign structure throughout all targeted states and districts in order to help mobilize, engage, and execute AEPAC 2022 midterm election strategic plan.

Thank you for supporting AEPAC!

Paid for by AEPAC, www.aepact.org, and not authorized by any candidate

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[1] *AEPAC is the first Ethiopian American political action committee (PAC) which was established in March 2021. AEPAC is registered and operating under the laws and regulations of the Federal Election Commission (FEC) and it is a non-partisan organization working with all political parties, groups, and individuals that support its mission*

Black-tie Fund-Raising Dinner

American Ethiopian Public Affairs Committee (AEPAC) to help accomplish its mission, will hold a black-tie fund-raising dinner the "**2022 AEPAC Members Recognition and Fundraising Gala**" on Saturday, December 10, 2022, at 6 p.m. at the Westin Arlington Gateway found at 801 N Glebe Rd, Arlington, VA 22203. The dinner will host about 350 guests at the cost of $300.00 per ticket. AEPAC has set a sponsorship at the four levels with a package of benefits for each level: Platinum

($10,000), Gold ($5,000), Silver ($2,500), or Bronze ($1,000) level, to support its mission-driven Pro-Ethiopia work.

In addition to this event, AEPAC has kicked off a mass thematic fundraising campaign asking for a donation of $20. The campaign is programmed to be released every two weeks to its members using VoterVoice.

AEPAC State Chapters Busy with Election Drives

Several states across the US held their respective Ethiopia Day, Ethiopian New Year, and Meskel celebrations during the month. AEPAC chapters used the opportunity to meet constituents, provide voter education and registration services, and promote the mission and vision of AEPAC. Candidates running for elections at different federal and local offices joined the chapters to be part of these religious and cultural events.

1. MD. Chapter: Voter mobilization and AEPAC promotion at Ethiopia Day event
2. Northern California: AEPAC Chapter colleagues with Jimmy Panetta US House Candidate at Meskel celebration
3. San Diego: AEPAC volunteers conducted Voter Drive at Ethiopian New Year Public Event
4. Texas Chapter: In collaboration with Eritrean community held a successful voter registration at five different Ethiopian churches.
5. VA Chapter: Several State/County officials including Lt. Governor Winsome Earle-Sears joined the Ethiopian community in observing Meskel celebration

US Special Envoy Mike Hammer Meets with AEPAC

Mike Hammer joined AEPAC and its partners for a meet & greet event during the regular weekly National Election Campaign Committee (NECC) meeting. Some of the issues that were addressed included:

- The need for international pressure on the TPLF to enter AU-backed peace talks without placing TPLF preconditions upon the Government of Ethiopia

- Fair distribution of humanitarian aid for Afar, Amhara, and Tigray
- The continued ethnic-based attacks in Western Ethiopia by OLF-Shene
- US support for Ethiopia's rebuilding (AGOA)
- Long-term U.S. support for changes to Ethiopia's constitution
- Diaspora engagement as per the new Africa Strategy

The meeting was also attended by Ethiopian Ambassador to the US Sileshi Bekele and Nora **Dempsey**, Senior Advisor for Diaspora Engagement at the US Department of State. Mike Hammer made himself available for such productive discourse in the future so that there can be a better understanding of the complex issues and ways to promote constructive relations between the US and Ethiopia.

AEPAC collaborates with Hello Ethiopia TV

AEPAC in collaboration with Hello Ethiopia TV has produced several videos that promote AEPAC's mission with a focus on the midterm elections. The videos feature AEPAC central and chapter activities including interviews of members from states.

The following are several of the videos so far released.

https://youtu.be/8xIca1IyHxY
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJAICBLPzQ4
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g9YGLC0p_8E
https://youtu.be/THspsj-maC0
https://youtube.com/watch?v=h7KCoFa_-iw

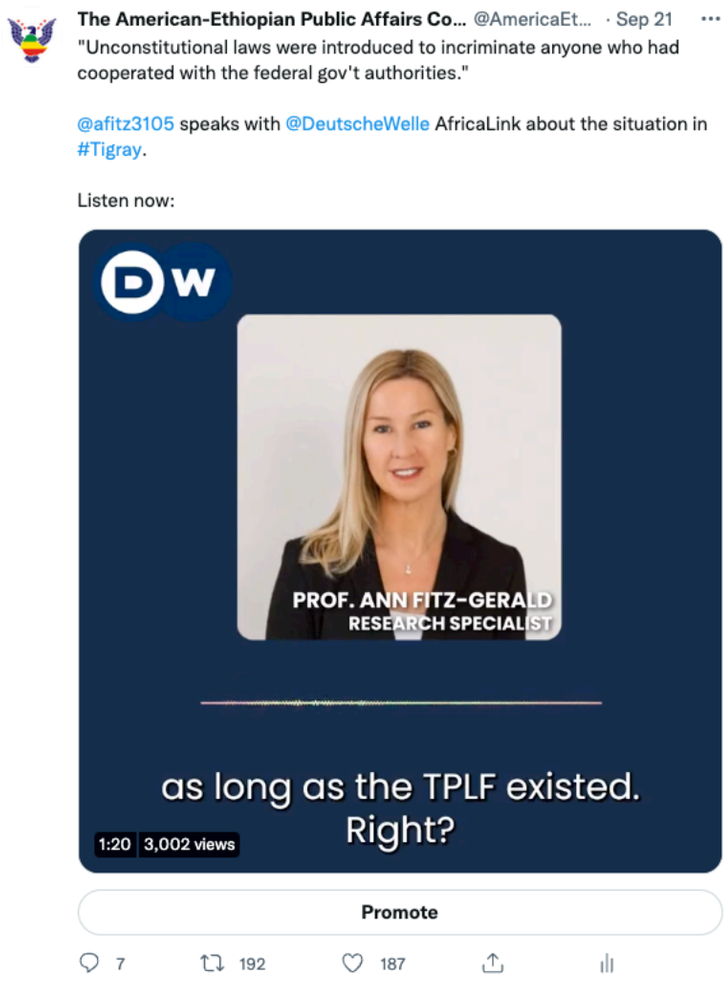
Media

We've had a busy month with a lot of media interest in the renewed hostilities in Ethiopia. We worked with Professor Ann Fitz-Gerald to publish an in-depth article exploring the importance of a strong Ethiopia to maintain stability in the Horn of Africa. Her core argument is that the TPLF is a dangerous and disruptive force for the African continent, and draining regional focus on other security issues such as Islamic terrorism. We published a statement on the UN Commission's interim report, challenging their contradictions and desperate lack of data to justify their assertions. AEPAC was also referenced as one of the most powerful diaspora lobbying groups in the US by Africa Report, the journalist described: “no diaspora groups have been more politically influential than Ethiopian-Americans.” Our board member Neb Asfaw was quoted as saying: “we’re building a foundation for something that’s going to last for decades to come, that the next generation can pick up.” We continue to engage with international journalists and challenge the endless misinformation pushed by the TPLF.

Digital

This month's digital developments have come in the form of a renewed fundraising effort for AEPAC & a continuation of our efforts to counter disinformation spread by the TPLF. Fundraising is key to all our endeavors, but especially with the campaigns of pro-Ethiopian representatives at the Midterm elections, and we thank you for all donations that have been generously given so far.

The most effective content this month has been in relation to the restarting of the conflict in Ethiopia and, on a lighter note, the Meskel celebrations that have been taking place this week.



Ethiopian New Year and Meskel Observed

On the first day of the month of Meskerem (September 11, 2022), Ethiopians and Eritreans celebrate the beginning of the new year. Ethiopian new year is called Enkutatash “gift of jewels” in Amharic, the national language of Ethiopia. It falls on September 11 (or September 12 during leap years) in the Gregorian calendar. Ethiopians follow a 13-month calendar (twelve months plus five epagomenal days) like that used in many Eastern Orthodox churches, trailing the western calendar by seven years and eight months.

Following the New Year, on September 17, 2022, Ethiopians celebrated the annual festival of Meskel (which means “cross” in Amharic) considered the most important religious holiday in Ethiopia, largely because it’s believed that a piece of the cross on which Jesus Christ was supposedly crucified and found in the early fourth century by St. Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine, and corresponds to the Feast of the Holy Cross in the West. The piece of the cross, according to Ethiopian records, was brought to Ethiopia and placed on the mountain of Amba Geshen in Wollo zone, Amhara region. A yellow daisy-like flower, also called Meskel, blooms all over the country and is a symbol of the religious event.

AU-led peace initiative

After the collapse of the six-month humanitarian cease-fire between the Ethiopian government and TPLF and the resumption of hostilities on different fronts, the fighting has erupted fresh on the western and eastern fronts of the Tigrai. The new offensive by the Ethiopian Government has involved drone attacks on strategic military locations, while TPLF accused the government of bombing civilians. With Mike Hammer the US envoy and other peace envoys assigned to help in the peace process, it now looks like the AU-led process is finally supported by the US and other international bodies.

The Ethiopian government continues to show commitment to the peaceful resolution of the crisis. TPLF says they are ready to take part in peace talks led by the African Union (AU), removing an obstacle to potential negotiations with the government which until this latest gesture was not the position.

Africa Demands Seat at the UN Security Council

The 77th session of the UN General Assembly which opened on 13 September 2022 with 120 leaders attending, was a watershed that brought the question of reform of the 77-year-old UN Security Council. The Council currently has five permanent members (China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US) and 10 non-permanent member countries (Ecuador, Japan, Malta, Mozambique and Switzerland, Albania, Brazil, Gabon, Ghana, and the UAE members for the year 2023) which are elected for a two-year term by the General Assembly.

Another matter that dominated the General Assembly was the Russia-Ukraine crisis which has not shown any progress in peaceful resolution between the two forces. The loss of life and property has been staggering and the collateral damage in terms of economic consequences is being felt globally.

The African quest for a permanent seat in the Council has gone on for decades.

Senegal's President Macky Sall, who is also the current chairman of the African Union said “it is time to do justice to Africa's legitimate demand for security council reform as reflected in the Ezulwini Consensus”. The Ezulwini Consensus, a position on international relations and reform of the UN, agreed by the African Union in 2005, calls for a more representative and democratic Security Council in which Africa, like all other world regions, is equitably represented with: at least two permanent seats (including veto power), and five non-permanent seats on the Security Council, with the AU choosing which African governments get the seats.

Many world leaders, including the US, Russia, and Japan now echo the same call: seeking reforms in the UN Security Council, giving momentum to the demand for expansion, both permanent and non-permanent representatives.

Ethiopia Economic Outlook

Ethiopia’s economy is dependent on agriculture, which accounts for 40 percent of the GDP, 80 percent of exports, and an estimated 75 percent of the country's workforce.

Ethiopia has secured more than 4.12 billion US dollars from export trade in the 2021/22 Ethiopian fiscal year. The figure has shown a 13.81 percent increase from the previous year.

With help from USAID, more than 1,000 women are working in nurseries across southwestern Ethiopia to produce high-quality coffee seedlings.
Feed the Future Value Chain Activity

The products that have picked steam relative to 2021 include Coffee and Gold. According to Ethiopia’s Minister of Agriculture, coffee exports had reached a new high of $1 billion in income during the recently concluded 2021/22 Fiscal year. In 2021, China's import of Ethiopian coffee showed an annual increase of 196 percent.

USAID-Ethiopia through the Feed the Future program is supporting the transformation of the agriculture sector by promoting higher productivity to generate greater incomes. Agricultural investments improve the competitiveness of value chains such as maize, wheat, coffee, sesame, chickpea, honey, potato, livestock, and poultry. The program strengthens small- and medium-sized enterprises by providing access to credit and technical support. These efforts are aligned with and support the Government of Ethiopia's Agricultural Growth Program, which aims to improve agricultural productivity and increase market opportunities for smallholder farmers.

Foreign investors have long eyed key sectors including banking, telecoms, transportation, aviation, and others in Ethiopia, a country of more than 100 million and one of the biggest economies in sub-Sahara Africa, where such financial sectors have been among the protected strategic areas closed for foreign companies.

The Ethiopian government has decided to open the country's banking sector to foreign investors, the latest measure aimed at drawing investment from abroad. One of the newly proposed rules that would guide Ethiopia's banking sector liberalization is that foreign banks hoping to operate in Ethiopia must do so in partnership with local banks.

PM Abiy Ahmed said, "in the last four years alone, Ethiopia's banking sector nearly doubled in terms of total assets, deposits, loans, and branch outreach. The policy reform created a favorable regulatory environment for the creation of interest-free banks and Islamic windows in nearly all conventional banks and financial institutions throughout Ethiopia. The interest-free banking market now is not only competitive but is thriving with close to 14 million customers and growing".

Ethiopian Airlines deal with Nigeria

The Nigerian government has confirmed the selection of Ethiopian Airlines as a technical partner and core investor for the establishment of its planned national carrier, Nigeria Air. Although the technical partner/core investor is expected to provide equipment and funds and will have a 49 percent control stake in the new carrier, it is presumed that Ethiopian Airlines would provide equipment, technical personnel, and management for the airline, but would not invest money in the bargain.

Ethiopian Airlines, which is unarguably the best-managed airline in Africa and the most profitable, has invaluable experience in similar partnerships, including its management and investment partnership with Asky/West Africa, Zambia, Malawi, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Mozambique. This makes Ethiopia a major continental service provider with 66 destinations in Africa. Ethiopian airlines have shown consistent growth in its earnings and hit a $5 billion high this year.

As part of the vision to develop the aerospace manufacturing Industry in Ethiopia, Ethiopian Sky Technologies, a joint venture between Geven-SkyTecno and Ethiopian Airlines, has inaugurated a modern manufacturing facility at the new facility at Bole Airport in Addis Ababa to produce insulation blankets for Boeing 737 MAX aircraft as part of an agreement between the JV and Boeing.

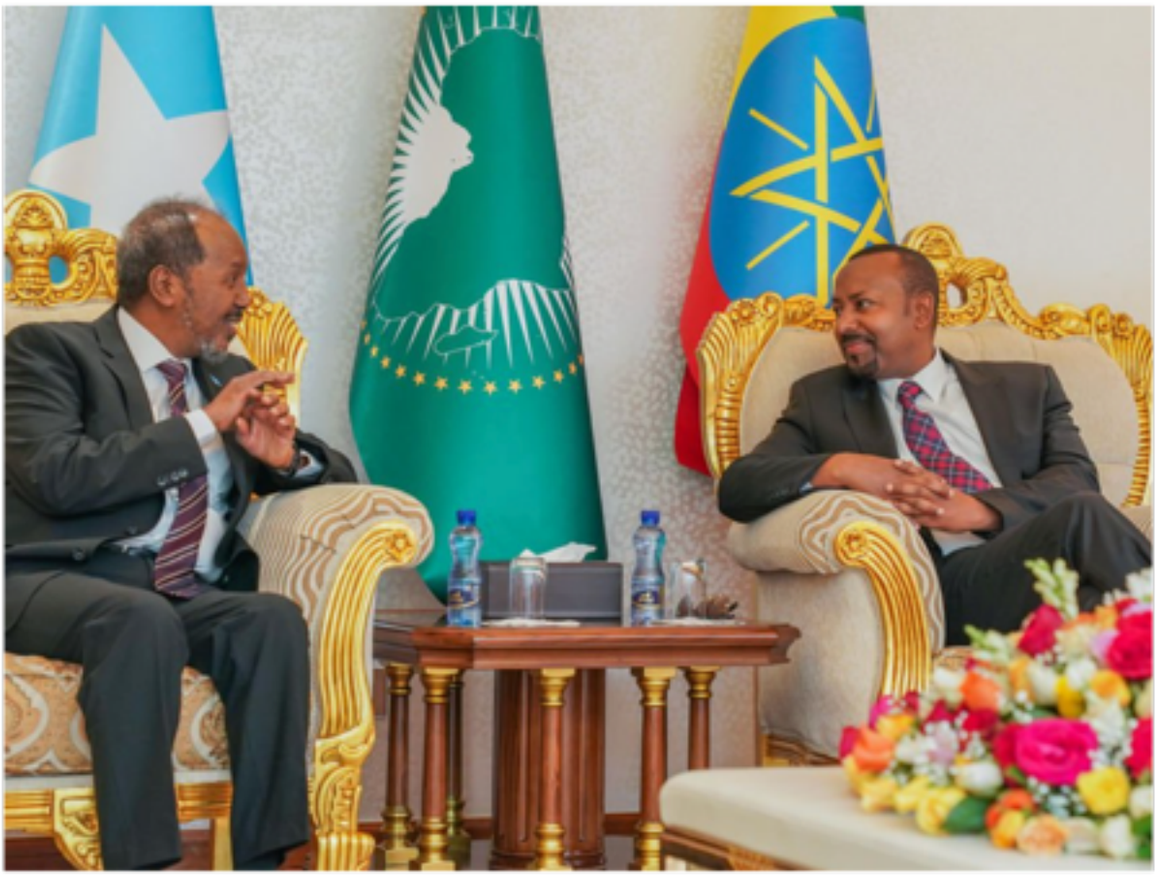
Peaceful Transfer of Power in Kenya

The 55-year-old Dr. William Ruto becomes Kenya's fifth president since the country declared independence in 1963 beating his rival Riala Odinga by a slim margin. After legal wranglings, Kenya's supreme court confirmed William Ruto as the winner of the country's disputed national vote on 15 August, ending weeks of political uncertainty after the opposition – and election officials – questioned the count.

Kenya's new President has tasked his predecessor Uhuru Kenyatta to lead peace initiatives in the region as he renewed his commitment to scale up the country's contribution to regional efforts. President Ruto said his government is keen on advancing regional integration, trade, and peace, continuing in the footsteps of his predecessors. The U.S. State Department said the U.S. welcomes “the appointment of Uhuru Kenyatta as peace envoy for the conflict in Northern Ethiopia and in Eastern DRC.”

President of Somalia Visits Ethiopia

Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud paid a visit to Ethiopia on 27 September, his first visit to Ethiopia after holding office. Since his election to the presidency in May 2022, Mohamud has made trips to Somalia’s neighboring countries and others: Eritrea, Kenya, Tanzania, Djibouti, Egypt, Uganda, The United Arab Emirates, and Turkey.



President Mohamud and Prime Minster Abiy and their delegations held bilateral discussions at the Office of the Prime Minister during which the two leaders expressed the will and commitment to further strengthen relations between Ethiopia and Somalia, particularly focused on enabling a stable Horn Region

For Ethiopia, the visit could readjust relations between the two countries in terms of security and Somalia’s stand on the use of the Nile. In July, the al-Shabaab terrorist group in Somalia breached Ethiopian defenses for the first time, raiding a border town, which Ethiopian military reversed the attack and exacted major damage on the terrorist group.

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

Contact

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