NEWSLETTER

January 2022, Vol 3 No.1

Dear Friend,

As we enter 2023, I have reflected on AEPAC's journey over the past twelve months, and I am truly amazed with what we achieved together.

This time last year the TPLF's war was raging, Ethiopia was facing its delisting from AGOA, the sanction focused bills HR600 and S3199 were progressing through Congress and our voices were being drowned out by a vicious TPLF lobbying machine.

But we kept focused on our mission, we grew the organization welcoming amazing and dedicated American Ethiopians from right across the country and kept belief that with relentless education and advocacy we could change the narrative in the United States.

Thanks to AEPAC's efforts, those of our partners around the world, and the incredibly resilient Ethiopian people, the TPLF's war is over, and they are being disarmed, the US push for sanctions is over with HR600 and S3199 failing to progress, we have dozens of allies in Congress with a new American-Ethiopian Congressional Caucus up and running, and there is hope that AGOA may be reinstated in the coming months. Our voices are being heard.

We have been mentioned in the top national and international media, AEPAC's local chapters in New Jersey, Minnesota and elsewhere have secured local coverage. Our social media channels have grown at a rapid rate and our supporter base is now at more than 30,000.

None of this would have been achieved without your support and commitment to the cause. I was pleased we could celebrate those achievements together at our annual gala dinner in Washington DC earlier this month. For those who couldn't attend - thank you!

Africa Summit

The Africa-US Leaders' Summit held between the 13-15 December demonstrated the change in policy position between the US and Ethiopia. From sanctions being forced on Ethiopia in December 2021 to President Biden watching the World Cup with PM Abiy in December 2022. The language used by the State Department is now far more positive, lots of the use of the word 'partnership' when talking about bilateral relations with African nations. This is a change that has taken a lot of lobbying from African diaspora groups.

One announcement we found particularly welcome was the creation of the President's Advisory Council on African Diaspora Engagement. AEPAC has shared names of individuals we believe should sit on the Council to fly the flag for the Horn of African counties. Regardless of whether an AEPAC member is nominated, we will seek to have professional and constructive engagement with the Advisory Council and share the perspective of the American Ethiopian community.

OLF-Shene attacks

Whilst the peace agreement has eased the situation in Tigray, attacks by OLF-Shene continue to occur in Western Ethiopia, and even reports of attacks around Addis Ababa, mainly against innocent ethnic Amhara citizens. These attacks are seemingly being allowed to occur with limited to no challenge by the Ethiopian Government and the Oromia Regional Authorities.

Nobody can doubt the federal forces have been strained by the multitude of challenges facing the country from the TPLF to Al-Shabaab, but every citizen of Ethiopia should have the right to feel safe and secure in their home and community.

AEPAC published an open letter to the Government of Ethiopia calling for an urgent defence of those citizens facing OLF-Shene persecution.

Looking ahead to 2023

Despite the ongoing issues in Ethiopia, there is real cause for hope this year

We will be working with Congressman John Garamendi to develop the American-Ethiopian Caucus. With our existing and recently elected champions, we have a strong team of pro-Ethiopian representatives in the new Congress who will help give our community a voice in the corridors of power.

One of the projects we are most excited about is introducing a pro-Ethiopian Bill in the first half of 2023. We have representatives such as Congressman Panetta and Fitzpatrick willing to help us get a bill sponsored and on the agenda. This bill will focus on partnership, trade, security, the environment, female empowerment – to bring the US-Ethiopia relationship to where it should be.

We will be reaching out to all new representatives, regardless of whether we supported them or not, to let them know who we are and what we stand for.

Work with the State Department will continue. We have crafted a professional relationship with Ambassador Hammer and his team. We don't often agree, but they are open to a debate, and they listen to our arguments. Slowly, but surely, we will win them over.

Everyone at AEPAC is focused on re-establishing the trade benefits set out in AGOA. With peace secured we think the argument for reinstatement in an off-cycle review is strong. It would be a symbolic sign of support from the US Government, we hope they will agree - eventually.

Last but not least, AEPAC has taken a position that the current Ethiopian constitution as written to be the source of most ethnic based violence, war, destruction, and corruption in Ethiopia. We support an effort to amend the constitution and to that end we have initiated an American Ethiopian constitutional amendment forum to debate and provide the diaspora's contribution towards amending the constitution to the appropriate government body. Details will be provided to AEPAC members and supporters in mid-January, your participation and engagement will be critical to make the project successful.

That leaves me to wish you and your families a very happy new year. Thank you for all of the support you have given so far, let's keep pushing in 2023!

Yours ever,

Mesfin Tegenu, AEPAC Chairman

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How You Can Help

- Follow. Share. Donate.

AEPAC Annual Fundraiser Gala

AEPAC's Gala Dinner Fundraiser was held on December 10, 2022, at the Westin Arlington Gateway Virginia. It was attended by over 150 guests. It was great to reflect on the achievements of the year and come together as we look to the year ahead. Sponsors, classified into four categories, and all who made the year a success by helping AEPAC spread its influence and continue to reinforce the US-Ethiopia relationship were recognized.

This year, AEPAC pushed back on harmful pieces of legislation such as HR660 and S3199 to protect the strength of US-Ethiopia relationship and met with over 100 members of congress, discussing the restoration and progression of Ethiopia in the direction of peace.

AEPAC's tireless campaigning during the 2022 Midterm Elections saw 32 endorsees elected into congressional and state offices. Another 20 were elected for other state local offices including mayors, governors and more.

African Diaspora Heritage Month

U.S. Representatives Abigail Spanberger (D-VA-07) and María Elvira Salazar (R-FL-27) introduced — and the U.S. Senate passed — bipartisan, bicameral legislation to recognize September as African Diaspora Heritage Month. This was led in the U.S. Senate by Senators Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Mark Warner (D-VA).

“This is a very welcome resolution. Such recognition of the African diaspora is what many groups across the US have been calling for,” said Gennet Negussis, American Ethiopian Public Affairs Committee (AEPAC). “It will help shine a light on the immense value of African American communities. We are excited to work with Rep. Span Berger and Rep. Salazar to make African Diaspora Heritage Month a reality.”

Virginia and Florida are home to two of the largest African diaspora communities in the country — and approximately 2.1 million sub-Saharan African immigrants live in the United States. This bipartisan, bicameral resolution would recognize the African diaspora’s contributions to communities in Virginia, Florida, and across the United States, as well as and emphasize the need to incorporate diasporic voices into U.S.-Africa policy.

“The large, vibrant, and diverse African diaspora community in our Commonwealth makes Virginia stronger, with diaspora members serving as leaders in our government and in our communities," said Spanberger**.** "Africa.

"Congresswoman Spanberger's bipartisan legislation designating September as African Diaspora Heritage Month is a crucial step toward acknowledging how Africans are a powerful part of Virginia's story, …" said Bo Machayo, Steering Committee for the Virginia African Diaspora Committee.

MEDIA UPDATE

This month we worked with Congresswomen Spanberger and Salazar to promote a bipartisan bill recognizing African Diaspora Heritage Month (H.R. 9519) which has now been introduce to Congress. If successful, every September will be designate as diaspora heritage month. An accompanying bill passed through the Senate with unanimous support. AEPAC was credited in the press release from the Congresswomen and our very own Gennet Negussis was quoted. This was the first national bill AEPAC has been publicly linked with. You can read the bill and the press release here.

Elsewhere we have been pushing hard on AGOA, Chairman Mesfin Tegenu gave an interview to Politico to explain why it is so important for both US and Ethiopian businesses to have tariff free trade.

DIGITAL ADVOCACY

This month on AEPAC's social media channels and website, we drove attendance for AEPAC's annual fundraising gala and launched a campaign to get the diaspora involved in advocacy regarding the African Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA). January 1, 2023 will mark the anniversary of Biden delisting Ethiopia from AGOA, a benefit program that encourages trade between the US and select African countries. Since the Biden Administration's decision, hundreds of thousands of Ethiopian jobs have been lost and countless families have been thrown into poverty. In addition to working our contacts, AEPAC has been using social media to raise awareness of this decision and to activate our community. We call upon everyone to send digital messages to President Biden, Vice President Harris, and their congressional representatives calling for Ethiopia to be relisted. So far, we have sent a whopping **21,139** messages to Congress calling for Ethiopia's reinstatement to AGOA - but there is still much more to be done. Join us in this effort by clicking here.

Top-Performing Posts

The American-Ethiopian Public Affairs Committee
@AmericaEthiopia

Last weekend, AEPAC's Gala Dinner Fundraiser was in full swing. It was great to reflect on the achievements of the year and come together as we look to the year ahead.

3:00 PM · Dec 15, 2022

The American-Ethiopian Public Affairs Committee
@AmericaEthiopia

Did you know that the companies American families rely on for winter clothing relied on the Ethiopian textile industry? That was until a costly decision made by @POTUS forced these companies to consider more expensive routes.
votervoice.net/AEPACT/Campaig...

2:40 PM · Dec 28, 2022

NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS

The US-Africa Leaders' Summit

Following the first U.S.-Africa Summit in 2014 under President Obama, President Joe Biden convened the second US-Africa Leaders' Summit from December 13-15, 2022 in Washington, DC with 49 African leaders (36 presidents, 9 prime ministers and 4 foreign ministers), plus the African Union Commission chairman, and their respective delegations. All were in attendance for high-level discussions with administration officials, congressional representatives, and business leaders from across the United States.

Four countries that have had unconstitutional changes to their governments and from the African Union (Guinea, Sudan, Mali and Burkina Faso), and Eritrea which doesn't have full diplomatic relations with the US were not invited.

The summit comes after the United States released a new strategy document for Sub-Saharan Africa in August, stressing the region's importance, the threats posed by China and Russia, and vowing to extend defense cooperation with like-minded African countries.

President Biden reaffirmed the United States' commitment to deepen and expand partnership with African countries to better meet the shared challenges and opportunities. There was particular focus on businesses, new technology and innovation, health systems and preparedness for the next pandemic, food security and climate crises, democracy and human rights, and peace and security.

Longtime American diplomat and former U.S. Deputy Secretary of State for Africa Johnnie Carson has been named by the President as the Special Presidential Representative for U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit Implementation.

The U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit came with several announcements meant to show African leaders that Biden is turning the page on U.S.-Africa engagement with new economic investment plans to expand business ties and diplomatic initiatives to empower African countries on the world stage.

President Biden Pledged $55 Billion to Africa

The United States pledged $55 billion in aid to Africa over the next three years for programs on health security, climate change, and trade. This money is not conditional on African nations' condemning Russia over its invasion of Ukraine. In March, shortly after the invasion started, 17 African nations abstained from a vote to condemn Russia at the United Nations.

The United States Government and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat also signed a Memorandum of Understanding to expand engagement to promote equitable, sustainable, and inclusive trade; boost competitiveness; and attract investment to the continent. Once fully implemented, the Agreement Establishing the

African Continental Free Trade Area will create a combined continent-wide market of 1.3 billion people and $3.4 trillion, which would be the fifth-largest economy in the world.

Support for African Union to be permanent member of G20 and for an African seat on the UN Security Council

President Biden announced his support for the African Union to officially become a permanent member of the Group of 20 (G20). Biden reported that he will formally lobby to add the African Union, the bloc that represents the continent's 54 countries, to the G-20 a global forum of major economies and has expressed support for Africa's bid to have a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council. This builds upon President Biden's September announcement of support for permanent seats in the United Nations Security Council for countries in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean.

Biden Creates African Diaspora Advisory Council

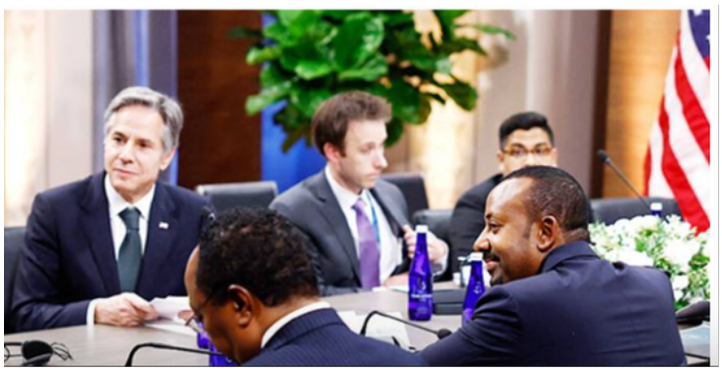
During the US-Africa Leaders' Summit, President Joe Biden signed an executive order (EO) to create a council – the President's Advisory Council on African Diaspora Engagement in the United States (PAC-ADE). This council will advise the President on a wide range of issues, enhance the dialogue between U.S. officials and the African diaspora, and strengthen cultural, social, political, and economic ties between African communities, the global African diaspora, and the United States.

The African Diaspora—i.e., people of native African origin living outside the continent—has been described as the sixth region of African Union. African Americans, including descendants of enslaved Africans, and nearly two million African immigrants who have close familial, social, and economic connections to the continent make significant contributions to America's growth and prosperity. The council of 12 which will report to the State Department would be made up of diverse representatives from African American and African immigrant communities who have distinguished themselves in government, business, social work, sports and other areas.

PM Abiy Ahmed at the US-Africa Leaders' Summit

PM Abiy Ahmed was one of the 49 African leaders attending the U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit in Washington.

During his three days in Washington, the Prime Minister held several discussions with different US senior government officials, members of the Ethiopian Diaspora community in the USA, and leaders of international organizations on the sidelines of the US-Africa Leaders' Summit.



Prime Minister Abiy had an informal encounter with President Biden, their first face-to-face meeting, during the semi-final Morocco vs. France game of World Cup match. Biden sat with Morocco's prime minister, Nigeria's president, Liberia's president (a former football star, whose son plays on the US national team), and three other leaders to watch the game. Biden saluted Morocco for being the first African nation to make it so far in the World Cup.

On the sideline, Abiy met with several officials of the US government including Secretary of State Antony Blinken, US Trade Representative Katherine Tai, World Bank President David Malpass, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund Kristalina Georgieva, and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan. He also met with senators and congressmen giving him an opportunity to assure them that the peace deal is in good hands. Abiy Ahmed also held discussion with the US investment community about the untapped investment opportunities in Ethiopia.

The visit was a significant diplomatic breakthrough with a government which was considered belligerent and under the guns of sanctions. It was also significant for Abiy to assure all that he met Ethiopia's determination to adhere to the AU-led peace agreement signed in South Africa and contribute to peace, stability and development in the horn of Africa. A heart-warming piece of news for Abiy was the World Bank President's announcement of World Bank's approval of $745 million in aid, which would bring WB commitments to Ethiopia to $2.9 billion in total over FY22-FY23.

African Leadership Award goes to two African Leaders

The 2022 Outstanding African Leadership Award went to President Paul Kagame of Rwanda for exemplary COVID-19 response, and to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia in recognition of the Green Legacy initiative.

The award is organized by the American Academy of Achievement and the Global Hope Coalition in Washington DC. It is given during an award event which has for six decades brought young leaders face-to-face with the extraordinary visionaries and pioneers who have helped shape the world.

Rwanda's achievements in fighting COVID-19 have been recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) due to the country's rapid responses and measures put in place to prevent the spread of the virus. These measures were instituted through mass mobilization, treatment, and care for patients.

Ethiopia has been recognized globally for its reforestation efforts and contribution to addressing climate change. With 25 billion seedlings planted throughout the country, Ethiopia has exceeded the set goal and fulfilled the four-year challenge.

Progress on the African Union-led Ethiopia Peace Initiative

AU-Led Monitoring, Evaluation & Compliance Panel Inauguration in Mekelle on 29 December 2022

Former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, a co-mediator at the December AU-led peace talks expressed optimism, saying that “we started in Pretoria, we are inching our way closer. We are now in Nairobi, we are very hopeful next time we will be in Mekelle for our next meeting and ultimately celebrate together in Addis Ababa”. True to his word, the monitoring, evaluation and compliance panel was officially launched in Mekelle on December 29 in the presence of the AU-Lead team, panel members, partners, agencies, Ambassadors resident in Addis Ababa, a representative of the Federal Government of Ethiopia, Tigray Region officials, and religious and community leaders. The AU team were informed that heavy weapons were handed over to a battalion of the Ethiopian Defense Forces and that basic services including humanitarian aid and regular commercial flights by Ethiopian Airlines have started in some places with expansion plans underway.

On December 22, 2022, details of the monitoring and compliance mechanism were finalized by military commanders from Ethiopia's government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). The plan is for a representative from each side of the conflict, plus a delegate from IGAD and the African Union (AU), to form a joint committee to safeguard the peace deal and ensure its provisions are being respected.

A panel of African experts, chosen by the AU, would assist the committee by investigating ceasefire violations and monitoring progress on the ground, including disarming of rebel forces, withdrawal of forces not signatory to the peace agreement and schedule of Ethiopian security forces taking full control of “all federal facilities, installations and major infrastructure such as airports and highways within the Tigray region.”

Ethiopian Government delegation and Tigray counterparts in Mekelle 26 December 2022

The Ethiopian Government didn’t waste time on the peace momentum when it sent a

50-person strong confidence building delegation led by the Speaker of Ethiopia's parliament to Tigray's capital Mekelle for a one-day visit on December 26, 2022 - the first federal delegation to the region since war broke out in November 2020. The working delegation included the two officials who signed the Pretoria agreement, federal ministers & commissioners, members of the National Dialogue Commission and technical service specialists. In Mekelle, the team met with TPLF officials, religious fathers, and community leaders to assure them of the Ethiopian government's commitment to the peace deal and to reinstating the services including banking, utility services, industrial and business initiatives and federal offices/operations that have been affected by the war. On the Tigray side, the representatives thanked the delegation for this impromptu visit and pleaded the delegation to speed up the re-instatement of services.

Africa's Unified Air Transport

The Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) is a flagship project of the African Union Agenda 2063, to create a single unified air transport market in Africa to advance the liberalization of civil aviation in Africa and act as an impetus to the continent's economic integration agenda. SAATM will ensure aviation plays a major role in connecting Africa, promoting its social, economic and political integration and boosting intra-Africa trade and tourism as a result.

The African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC) announced the pilot implementation of the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM), with 15 of the 35 signatory states aiming to pilot the scheme. These countries represent over 80% of the existing aviation market in Africa.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA), which has long championed the scheme, said: "Open air arrangements boost traffic, drive economies and create jobs."

Countries participating in the pilot are Kenya, Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Africa, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Ghana, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo and Zambia.

All participants agree to lift market access restrictions for airlines, remove restrictions on ownership, grant each other extended air-traffic rights, and liberalize flight frequency and capacity limits. Both passenger and cargo aviation are included. Oversight over the SAATM is exercised by the African Union, its Regional Economic Communities, and the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC).

The air transport plan could eventually generate $4.2 billion in additional gross domestic product, 600,000 new jobs, a 27 percent reduction in fares and contribute to United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Some countries have been taking pre-positioning steps that tie to this new initiative as seen in the planned continental airline to jointly be operated by South Africa and Kenya; and Africa's leading airline, Ethiopian Airlines, plans to build a brand-new $5 billion mega airport with a 100 million passengers per year target, in a location 39km south-east of Addis Ababa, which will make it the largest of its kind in Africa when completed.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

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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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