



## NEWSLETTER

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Dear Friends,

We are determined to make this the most historic year yet for AEPAC and we are already making strides towards that intention. Here's some of what we've already accomplished and ways that you can get involved:

### **Ethiopian Constitutional Reform Committee (ECRC)**



AEPAC believes there is no issue as important as a Constitutional Reform in Ethiopia. The current constitution has failed the country. Instead of providing a vehicle to resolve national disputes, it has served as a foundation for fuelling existing ethnic conflicts and creating new ones. Instead of providing a framework to promote equality, freedom, democratic rights (at federal, state, and local levels), protect minority rights, and freedom of movement, it has served as a tool of rampant repression and a means to justify violence. The constitution does not even meet the basic democratic principles of separation of powers.

Right now, we have an opportunity to shape the country we dearly love, to

increase its institutional resilience and to make it more reflective of the democratic ideals we all value. To make this happen, AEPAC has initiated constitutional amendment work in the form of a historic constitutional reform platform.

On January 16, we launched a diaspora dialogue platform and invited the Ethiopian community in America and abroad to participate in a discussion about Ethiopia's constitutional. AEPAC's platform will give the Ethiopian American and the global Ethiopian community a channel to share thoughts on the big challenges facing Ethiopia. Throughout the conflict we in the diaspora have shown remarkable resilience. We have united around a collective desire to see our motherland succeed. We have worked hard to shape foreign policy changes, raise awareness of the atrocities being committed and robustly making the case for democracy and encouraging a move away from authoritarian rule based on ethnic division.

Soon we will be launching a survey to gauge the diaspora's understanding and awareness of certain elements of the Ethiopian constitution and the constitutional reform process. I encourage everyone to take a few moments to fill this out so that we can design an effective plan for progress that is inclusive and reflective of the diaspora's desires. Be on the look-out for the launch of the survey in the coming weeks on our Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and in your inbox.

### **ECRC Committees - Call for Nominations**

Most importantly, we are calling for you to nominate remarkable Ethiopians and American-Ethiopians who would be valuable additions to two ECRC committees: the Dialogue Organizing Committee and the Advisory Committee. The Dialogue Organizing Committee will play an integral role in establishing the procedural foundations of the Ethiopian Constitutional Reform Committee. The Advisory Committee will inform the dialogue and recommendations.

This is truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to help correct the course that Ethiopia is currently on. If you know someone of good moral character, who is upright, honest, and dependable, please review the criteria and nominate them by [filling out this form](#).

### **AEPAC 5-Year Strategic Plan**

In January, AEPAC leadership held its 1<sup>st</sup> annual two-day retreat to evaluate AEPAC's performance since its inception in March 2021 and discussed its vision, goal, objectives, milestones and drafted its five-year strategic plan (2023-2027). Here are three of the biggest projects we will be working on in 2023:

1. The Ethiopian caucus and moving pro-Ethiopia legislation through Congress
2. Advancing Ethiopian-Americans' role in the US-Ethiopia agenda in collaboration with US government bodies
3. An "Intern in Ethiopia" Program for Young Ethiopian-Americans

We will be sure to keep you updated every step of the way as we progress toward these goals and inform you of how you can get involved.

### **Recruiting an AEPAC Executive Director**

Last year, AEPAC launched state chapters, campaigned for pro-Ethiopia candidates across the country, created multiple strategic project management committees, and lobbied local, state, and national. We have witnessed remarkable growth and success in such a brief period – and we are now looking for the perfect figurehead to step up and harness this momentum. AEPAC is recruiting an Executive Director that will be charged with the day-to-day management of all workflows and projects. Ideal candidates will be remarkable American-Ethiopian professionals who have already contributed to the advancement of American-Ethiopians overall from within their respective industries.

### **AEPAC's Statement on the Orthodox Church**

As it emerges from conflict, Ethiopia needs reconstruction, unity and a period of healing. These efforts are not helped by the Ethiopian Government's handling of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church crisis.

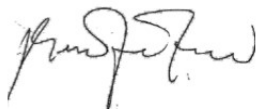
AEPAC is very concerned that the GOE is interfering in the religious and canonical affairs of Ethiopia's ancient Orthodox Church. These actions could lead people to believe that they are siding with the insurgency that attempted to topple the Ethiopian Orthodox Church synod and provide cover for illegal activities.

We call on Ethiopia's political leaders to instead protect the 2,000-year-old

church and its people, and for Ethiopians of all religions and none to ask the Government to meet its responsibilities by not inflaming this situation further. The government is elected by the people to serve all Ethiopians. As such we ask for immediate correction in this matter.

With your help, we will make 2023 a the most transformative year yet for the historic US and Ethiopia relationship.

Yours ever,



Mesfin Tegenu, AEPAC Chairman

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# AEPAC ACTIVITY UPDATE

## **AEPAC Board Holds Retreat**

AEPAC Board held a two-day retreat on January 21 and 22, 2023 in Delaware, USA to appraise the last 22 months of its existence, discuss the accomplishments, challenges and opportunities and develop a five-year strategic plan (2023-2027).

The process involved reviewing the organization's performance and activities since its establishment in March 2021. AEPAC's Five-Year Strategic Plan is intended to serve as a framework for discussion by AEPAC board members.

The key directives included institutionalization of AEPAC, prioritization of youth, and formation of the Ethiopian Caucus. The strategy is a living document to be reviewed and adapted based on the changes in context, progress achieved, and lessons learnt.

The final draft of the plan will be circulated among the National Election Campaign Committee (NECC) members/chapter members for further review and comment. After comments and input from NECC members are incorporated, the plan will be in effect for implementation.

By 2027, AEPAC aims to achieve the following:

- Create a strong Ethiopian Caucus in the House of Representatives
- Establish a dynamic network and campaign structure in target states and districts to help mobilize, engage, and execute AEPAC's 2023-2024 election campaign strategy
- Energize, strengthen, and consolidate AEPAC/NECC Chapters
- Support the AEPAC-sponsored "Diaspora Dialogue Platform for Constitutional Reform in Ethiopia" Initiative
- Strengthen youth involvement at all levels
- Encourage, recruit, and persuade potentially capable Ethiopian American youth and other candidates to run for elected office at all levels in the United States Government
- Encourage women to participate in all leadership positions

- Work with African Diaspora to create a Pan-African Diaspora organization that could help AEPAC to expand its outreach
- Collaborate with the US Presidential Administration, US Congress, and the Ethiopian Government to promote American-Ethiopian relations

### **Ethiopia Diaspora Services Organize Recognition Event**

A total of 51 Ethiopian diaspora organizations and individuals received awards from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Diaspora Services Agency in recognition of their contributions to the national efforts for public diplomacy, promotion of investments, image building and resource mobilization. President Sahlework Zewde and Deputy PM and Foreign Affairs Minister Demeke Mekonnen graced the award ceremony which was held at the Ethiopian Skylight Hotel in Addis Ababa.

The Ethiopian diaspora is comprised of Ethiopian citizens and foreign nationals of Ethiopian origin who reside and work outside of Ethiopia. The diaspora spans the world, with populations in the USA, Europe, the Middle East and Persian Gulf countries, Far East and across the rest of the African continent.

The Ethiopian diaspora has effectively challenged the external pressures and interferences perpetrated by some countries on Ethiopia during the most crucial period of the country's history - when the statehood of the nation was challenged from within and without. This recognition of the diaspora's contributions serves to further solidify their commitment to participating in ongoing nation-building efforts.

Ever since the construction of GERD began in 2011, the Ethiopian diaspora has actively participated in buying bonds and making financial contributions amounting to millions of dollars to ensure the dam's completion and provide electricity to rural areas.

The Ethiopian diaspora transferred more than \$4.2 billion USD in 2022 in the form of remittances to families and other development programs in the country. In the same year, the diaspora contributed more than \$1.5 billion USD in just five months. These funds contributed to the realization of national projects and support for needy citizens in the country, according to Mohammed Idris, Ethiopia Diaspora Service Director General.



AEPAC was one of the many organizations recognized for its myriad activities, including its lobbying efforts to reinstate AGOA and kill the punitive sanctions against Ethiopia.

## NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS

### The 118<sup>th</sup> United States Congress



The 118th United States Congress, composed of the US Senate and the US House of Representatives, is now in session.

During the 2022 midterm elections, Republicans won control of the House for the first time since the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, while Democrats gained one seat in the Senate, expanding their majority from 50–50 (with a caucus of 48 Democrats, two independents, and the Vice President serving as the tie breaker) to 51–49 (with a caucus of 48 Democrats and three independents).

With Republicans winning the House, the 118th Congress ended the federal

government trifecta Democrats held in the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress. It also features the first female Senate president pro tempore, the first Black party leader in congressional history and the longest serving Senate party leader. California Republican Kevin McCarthy's narrow victory came into effect on the 15th ballot — the fifth-longest speaker vote in American history by number of ballots and the longest such vote in 164 years.

McCarthy, 57, is now the highest-ranking Republican in the nation, and second in line for the presidency. He outlined a range of Republican policy objectives that included lowering prices, securing the US-Mexico border and combatting what he described as "woke indoctrination." He said one of his primary goals was to stop "wasteful Washington spending."

With the minority, Democrats continued vote in unison and New York's Hakeem Jeffries becomes the first black person ever to lead a party in Congress.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/118th\\_United\\_States\\_Congress](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/118th_United_States_Congress)

## **Progress on the AU-led Ethiopia Peace Initiative**



The implementation of different elements of the peace deal signed between the Ethiopian Government and Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) on November 2, 2022, in Pretoria South Africa has shown positive results as demonstrated by the silencing of guns, monitoring and verification activities on the ground, disarming of heavy weaponry, rehabilitation of ex-combatants, resumption of basic services like banking, utilities, distribution of humanitarian assistance, and flights to Mekelle and Shire towns. Separated families are also re-uniting and federal government security personnel have taken control of



federal institutions and installations in the region's capitol, Mekelle.

Different federal government offices have started to send teams to Tigray to resume communications and provide repair to destroyed infrastructure and services as the first good will mission of multi-sector ministries and agencies led by the Speaker of the Ethiopian Parliament. Legendary athlete Derartu Tullu, President of the Ethiopian Athletics Federation, led a delegation of Tigrayan athletes to Mekelle. These athletes were the ones that placed Ethiopia second in the medal table at the 18th World Athletics Championship in Oregon, USA. The Tigrayan branch of the federation was happy for the support they received from the national body and the athletes were glad to see their loved ones after more than two years.

A Federal Ministry of Education team of officials has also been dispatched to Tigray to discuss ways of resuming regular schools in the region with local stakeholders.

The US State Department spokesperson reported on January 23 that Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken spoke with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed regarding the significant progress to date on implementation of the November 2 Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, including the ongoing withdrawal of Eritrean troops from northern Ethiopia. The Secretary welcomed this development, noting that it was key to securing a sustainable peace in northern Ethiopia, and urged access for international human rights monitors. The Secretary re-affirmed the commitment of the United States to support the African Union-led peace process in northern Ethiopia. The two also discussed the need to bring an end to ongoing instability in the Oromia region.

## **Post-Peace Deal Challenges in Ethiopia**

The country is continuing to see dividends of the peace agreement following the cessation of hostilities not only in reductions in defense spending and increase in budget savings, but in the silencing of guns, beginnings of normalization of life in Tigray, semblance of national economic recovery, and US and western countries positive engagement with Ethiopia.

Despite the cessation of hostilities and reconstruction and rehabilitation work, the country is also facing a challenge in Ethiopia's Oromia region where rebel groups associated with Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), calling themselves

Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) or *Shene*, are allegedly responsible for ethnic-based violence, destruction, and attacks on Amhara settlers. Diplomatic and military efforts are being pursued, though they have so far been inadequate, to contain the expanding threat and to bring peace to the areas where the *Shene* group is playing hit-and-run tactics.

These developments have led to a rapid increase in internal displacement in many parts of the country where emergency assistance and rehabilitation of the internally-displaced persons (IDPs) has been awfully inadequate and slow. More than 3 million IDPs have been identified across 11 regions, most of them displaced due to ethnic-based attacks, returning migrants, and natural hazards such as one of the worst droughts in recent decades, in addition to frequent floods and landslides. The deteriorating humanitarian situation has led to increased humanitarian needs across Ethiopia, with over 20 million people in crisis-affected communities needing assistance and protection as of 2022. Since the signing of the peace agreement, the improved security situation in Afar, Amhara and Tigray are opening opportunities for humanitarian access to areas that were previously inaccessible. The situation in Ethiopia calls for extra effort from donor countries to respond to the high and urgent need for relief, food and medical supplies, restoration of services and reconstruction of destroyed infrastructure. The U.N.'s humanitarian affairs office in Ethiopia says it needs \$3 billion to meet IDP needs, and those who return home may be worse off.

<https://almariam.com/2022/11/14/converting-our-peace-dividend-into-ethiopian-peaceperity/>

## **Foreign Ministers of China, France, and Germany Visit Ethiopia**

Since the signing of the historic AU-led cessation of hostilities agreement between the Ethiopian Government and TPLF in Pretoria, South Africa on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2022, Ethiopia hosted the foreign ministers of three countries —China, Germany, and France.

Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang's first international tour on January 10, 2023, to five African countries — Ethiopia, Gabon, Benin, Angola, and Egypt — came with a statement that China does not see the continent as an arena for a power struggle between the West and Beijing.



PM Abiy said that Qin Gang's choice of Ethiopia as the first stop of his first overseas visit since taking office fully demonstrates the profound friendship between the two countries and the importance of bilateral relations. Ethiopia's cooperation with China in areas such as infrastructure, green economy, agriculture, and industrial park construction has been exemplary and produced remarkable results, helping Ethiopia to rank among the fastest-growing economies in Africa.

Qin Gang said, since China and Ethiopia established diplomatic relations more than half a century ago, the two countries have helped each other and moved forward side-by-side no matter how the international situation changed. They claim that this sets a fine example of solidarity and cooperation among developing countries. China supports Ethiopia in pursuing a development path suited to its own national conditions. China is currently building — as it did for the African Union in Addis Ababa — the new Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) headquarters.



The foreign ministers of Germany and France were in Ethiopia to support the November peace deal between federal and Tigray authorities that ended two years of brutal war. The two foreign ministers met Ethiopian President

Sahlework Zewde, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, Foreign Minister Demeke Mekonnen and Justice Minister Gedion Timothewos.

The trip by France's Catherine Colonna and Germany's Annalena Baerbock began a day after Tigrayan forces announced they were starting to hand over their heavy weapons, a key component of the November 2 deal. France's Colonna welcomed "good progress which we encourage to continue," at a press briefing. "Hostilities have ceased, aid has been able to reach the regions which had not received it... a return of arms (by rebels) has begun." It is said the ministers' visit could be viewed as being carried out on behalf of the European Union.

The German Press Agency, DPA, quoted FM Baerbock as saying that it was important that Europe now "quickly shows its face" in the wake of the peace agreement.

"Another focus of the talks was the question of human rights. According to UN reports, most severe human rights crimes were committed by all parties during the conflict. The Ethiopian Government is currently working to establish a transitional justice mechanism to investigate these crimes and bring perpetrators to justice. At the same time, an international commission of experts has also been mandated by the UN Human Rights Council to investigate the crimes," the statement said.

Baerbock and Colonna, also held talks with the chairman of the African Union and visited a UN World Food Program grain warehouse on the outskirts of the capital Addis Ababa.

## **Ethiopia's Abiy visit to Sudan and United Arab Emirates**

Ethiopia's prime minister Abiy Ahmed visited Sudan on 26 January 2023 for the first time since border clashes between the neighbors, amid tensions heightened by the filling of a giant hydropower dam. PM Ahmed met Sudan's Sovereign Council Head General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, as well as General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, and other Sudanese political leaders. The aim of Abiy and his accompanying delegation's visit was to show solidarity and stand with the government and people of Sudan and their support to reach a Sudanese-[Sudanese](#) consensus that leads to the stability of the transitional period. This is given that the Sudanese are the most capable of solving their

internal problems, and that Ethiopia aspires to reach an agreement to form a civilian government and other transitional institutions that enable the democratic transition and access to elections. In 2019, Ethiopia's leader played a key role in reaching an agreement between Sudan's military and civilian protest groups following the ousting of former leader Omar al-Bashir.



The two sides emphasized addressing bilateral issues through dialogue and understanding, including the issues of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) and borders, in accordance with existing mechanisms and in the interest of the peoples of the two brotherly countries and other relevant parties. This will ideally lead to comprehensive integration between the two neighboring countries.

The visit to Sudan was preceded by a visit of PM Abiy to Dubai to attend The Atlantic Council Global Energy Forum for the world's top energy and foreign policy decision-makers. President of UAE, H.H. Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and the Ethiopian premier Abiy Ahmed used the opportunity to meet and discuss ways of advancing bilateral relations for the benefit of the two countries and their peoples. They witnessed the exchange of an agreement between Masdar and the Ethiopian government to develop solar power projects with a total capacity of 500 megawatts as a first phase and with the aim of developing up to 2000 megawatts of similar projects within the Eastern African nation.

## **Ethiopian Christmas and Epiphany Observance**

For the first time since the devastating war in the north of the country, Ethiopians had the opportunity of observing the following highly-awaited and revered religious holidays — Ghenna/Christmas and Timket/Epiphany. These are observed in all parts of the country with prominence in Lalibela, Bahirdar,



Gondar, Addis Ababa, and Zwai/Batu. The observance attracted huge crowds and were conducted in a very peaceful and joyous manner. Reports from Tigray indicated a sigh of relief that the religious community had the opportunity to observe the holidays in peace and harmony.



*Timket in Gondar and Ghenna in Lalibela*

## **Africa CDC HQ Building Inaugurated**



The Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) is a public health agency of the African Union to support the public health initiatives of member states and strengthen the capacity of their health institutions to deal with disease threats. The Africa CDC idea was proposed by the government of Ethiopia in 2013 during a TB/HIV special summit in Abuja, Nigeria. The agency was officially launched in January 2017. It was officially inaugurated on January 11, 2023, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Sitting in the southern suburb of the Ethiopian capital city of Addis Ababa, the African Village, just miles away from the monumental China-aided African Union (AU) headquarters, the headquarters building is expected to become one of the best-equipped centers for disease control in Africa, allowing Africa CDC to play its role as the technical institution coordinating disease prevention, surveillance and control in the continent in partnership with the national public

health institutes and ministries of health of Member States. Qin Gang, Chinese Foreign Minister opened the new Chinese-built \$80 million African Centers for Disease Control — part of China's "health silk road".

The Africa CDC also has regional collaboration centers in Egypt, Nigeria, Gabon, Zambia and Kenya; which cover Northern Africa, Western Africa, Central Africa, Southern Africa, and Eastern Africa respectively. The Africa CDC also runs a specialized Pathogen Genomics Intelligence Institute and an Institute for Workforce Development.

## **Top 5 Economies in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2023**

**Source:** Victor Oluwole - Business Insider Africa - January 28, 2023

It's no secret that sub-Saharan Africa is home to some of the world's fastest-growing economies. The region has long been a hub of economic activity and is home to various industries and sectors. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has recently released new projections for the economies of sub-Saharan Africa, and the results are certainly worth paying attention to.

These projections are subject to change depending on various factors, such as global economic conditions and political developments. However, one thing is for certain, the sub-Saharan African economies are ones to watch and will continue to grow in the coming years.

**Here are the top 5 economies to watch in the region, according to the IMF:**

1. Angola - Angola is set to reclaim its spot as the third-largest economy in sub-Saharan Africa, thanks to a return to growth linked to higher oil prices. Angola is the continent's second-largest oil producer after Nigeria and is also a significant producer of rough diamonds. The IMF expects Angola's GDP to expand by 8.6% this year, reaching \$135 billion. This is a significant increase from previous years, and Angola's economy will likely continue to grow in the coming years.
2. Ethiopia - Ethiopia is set to replace Kenya as the fourth-largest economy in sub-Saharan Africa, according to the IMF. This is due to the easing of armed conflict in the nation and the continuation of ambitious economic reform efforts aimed at opening up one of Africa's fastest-growing but most closed economies. The IMF predicts Ethiopia's GDP will reach \$126.2 billion this year, expanding by 13.5%. This is an impressive figure, and Ethiopia's economy will likely continue to grow in the coming years.

3. Nigeria - As the largest economy on the continent, Nigeria maintains its top spot in sub-Saharan Africa's economic rankings. The IMF predicts that Nigeria's GDP will hit \$574 billion this year. This is an impressive figure, and Nigeria's economy will likely continue to grow in the coming years.
4. South Africa - The IMF predicts that South Africa will retain its position as the second-largest economy in sub-Saharan Africa, with a GDP of \$422 billion this year. This is an impressive figure, and South Africa's economy will likely continue to grow in the coming years.
5. Kenya - According to the IMF, Kenya's GDP is projected to record a slower growth of 2.4% this year due to the aftershocks of the Covid-19 pandemic, drought, election jitters, and disruption of global supply chains. The IMF predicts that Kenya's GDP will reach \$117.6 billion this year, behind Angola and Ethiopia. Despite this slower growth, Kenya's economy is still one of the top economies to watch in the region.

[Source: Top 5 economies in Sub-Saharan Africa to watch out for in 2023, according to IMF](#)

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

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Check out our website - [www.aepact.org](http://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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