



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Friends,

This month we have watched the situation in Ethiopia become increasingly more concerning. The Pretoria Agreement, which many of us hoped would foster a period of peace and reconstruction, remains to be seen if it can deliver on its promises as planned and urgently. Although major weaponry is said to be handed over to the federal government, there are many questions unanswered as to the reliability of the reports and completeness of the handing over. The combatants have not been disarmed and there are reports of these combatants still at large as federal forces are limited in few city locations. Millions of Ethiopians now live under the specter of renewed conflict and continued TPLF oppression. AEPAC is dismayed with the U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken's statement of 'bothsideism' emanating from politically construed and unwarranted determination, stating that all sides committed crimes during the conflict in northern Ethiopia.

This all adds up to a fear of a return to the pre-peace agreement days and once again dangerous time in Ethiopia. AEPAC is actively supporting the Ethiopian people to overcome these immediate challenges and helping build sustainable solutions to each. We are utilizing our voice in the US to push back against Blinken's mischaracterization of the conflict, working with Ethiopian diaspora groups globally to campaign for the nation's peace to be protected and working hard to ensure Ethiopians are ensured a nation built on freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. We cannot, however, do this without your help. While the conflict has abated, Ethiopia's citizens still need our support.

Pretoria Agreement

AEPAC is closely monitoring the progress, or lack thereof, of the implementation of the Pretoria Agreement. We have yet to see the TPLF disarm and have even received reports that rearmament is taking place. In partnership with Ethiopian diaspora groups around the world, AEPAC is making direct representations on these matters and to call for the protection of those in Wolkait, Tegede, Humera, Telemt and Raya most at risk for any renewed TPLF aggression to the AU signatories on the agreement. We are also appealing directly to Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to ensure the Pretoria Agreement is fully implemented and that those who sacrificed everything during the conflict do not have their memories betrayed.

Human Right Concerns

Ethiopia remains in the grip of multiple humanitarian crises – including the suffering of millions of internally displaced people, most notably those displaced by ethnic attacks in Western Oromia and victims of forced evictions from around Addis Ababa, the ongoing drought in Borena and around several other parts of the country, the escalating ethnic-based violence, and the widespread crackdown on civil rights as reported by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission have exacerbated the problem.

AEPAC is doing all it can to secure international support for the Ethiopian people at this difficult time. We are working with other Ethiopian and diaspora groups as part of a united front on IDPs and drought and are advocating directly to the US State Department for a values-based pro-Ethiopian US agenda, built on shared human rights values of democracy, the rule of law, freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and free movement.

Call for Nominees for the Ethiopian Constitutional Reform (ECR) Committees

While there are immediate problems in Ethiopia that must be addressed, we cannot lose sight of the fact that many of the challenges arise from the ethnic-based and outdated constitutional settlement. AEPAC is remarkably proud to be leading the charge on Ethiopian constitutional reform and as a long-term solution to the nation's challenges. This is a historic undertaking that will become the legacy not only of our organization but of the esteemed individuals who are granted seats on the two constitutional reform committees.

We are currently seeking nominations for professionals from across the diaspora. We are aiming for a diverse group who represent the full spectrum of the American-Ethiopian community and have good moral character, integrity, honesty, and a strong sense of duty. In our day-to-day lives, we all know and interact with people who

make a positive impact in our community. There's probably someone who has already come to mind. We encourage you to put them all forward for this historic endeavor.

To nominate someone in your community or yourself, [click here](#).

Thank you for your partnership on this journey to securing a prosperous and bright future for Ethiopia and the Ethiopian diaspora.

God bless the peoples of the United States and Ethiopia.
Mesfin Tegenu, AEPAC Chairman

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NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS

Post US-Africa Leaders' Summit Engagements

Blinken is the latest in a steady stream of high-level U.S. official visitors in Africa aimed at demonstrating that the Biden administration is “all in on Africa, and all in with Africa” following December’s U.S.-Africa Leaders’ Summit. Treasury Secretary Janet L. Yellen’s recent 10-day trip to Africa was the first followed by U.N. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield to Somalia, and First Lady Jill Biden to Kenya and Namibia.

U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris began her three-nation Africa tour with Ghana, as part of a visit that includes stops in Tanzania and Zambia. She is the 18th and most senior U.S. official to visit Africa this year as the United States looks to loosen Russia’s and China’s alliances with African nations. Since January, U.S. officials have visited 11 African countries. President Biden and Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo have announced plans to visit later this year.



U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris waves as she arrives to address youth gathered at Black Star Square in Accra, Ghana, on March 28. <https://www.cnn.com/2023/03/28/usa-politics/kamala-harris-ghana/index.html>

U.S. first lady Jill Biden meets youth at Village Creative in Nairobi, Kenya, Feb. 25, 2023. <https://www.foxnews.com/first-lady-jill-biden-kenya>

Historically, the United States and Europe led their engagements through the prism of Africa as a problem to fix, whereas China focused on trade, becoming the region’s largest partner. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has visited the continent twice in six months, with a Russia-Africa summit slated for July in Moscow. China’s new foreign minister, Qin Gang, began his term in office with a five-nation tour of Africa in January, Ethiopia being his first stop.

Secretary Blinken visit to Ethiopia

US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken started his two-country visit with Ethiopia to repair relations that were strained by the two-year war in the northern region. Blinken’s second visit was to the West African nation of Niger, which has been confronting a growing Islamist insurgency.

During his Ethiopia visit, Blinken met with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, Deputy PM Demeke Mekonnen, National Security Advisor Redwan Hussein and Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) strongman, Getachew Reda who flew from Mekelle. The two sides discussed ongoing efforts to solidify peace, restore basic services and address humanitarian needs. They also discussed the need for the establishment of a Tigrayan interim administration as key to maintaining positive momentum, the statement said.



Blinken and Ahmed Bilateral talks



Blinken and DPM Demeke chat at a coffee ceremony

At the two sides meeting, Blinken said: “Prime Minister Abiy and the Ethiopian federal government and Tigrayan regional leaders should be commended for reaching this agreement and the significant progress in delivering on their commitments. These efforts have created the foundation to rebuild the communities that have suffered so much in Tigray, Amhara, and the Afar regions. He added, we welcome the commitments that the parties have made to acknowledging the atrocities committed and their devastating consequences. For our part, the United States acknowledges the human rights violations and repression committed during the past three decades – actions which sowed the seeds of future conflict.”

<https://et.usembassy.gov/secretary-antony-j-blinken-at-a-press-availability/>
<https://www.state.gov/secretary-blinkens-meeting-with-ethiopian-prime-minister-ahmed-2/>

Blinken announced \$331 million in new humanitarian aid to Ethiopia

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has announced \$331m in new humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia during a visit to Addis Ababa aimed at improving the United States’ relations with the East African country. Blinken conveyed to Prime Minister Abiy, the United States – as Ethiopia’s largest bilateral donor, providing over \$3 billion in humanitarian assistance since 2020 – we will continue to be there for Ethiopians.

The new assistance brings the total of US aid for Ethiopia in 2023 to \$780m. The funding will supply food, shelter, safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, healthcare efforts, education, and other key service to Ethiopians.

"Certainly, we share the aspiration of Ethiopia returning to AGOA," Blinken told reporters after his meetings with Abiy and other government figures, adding that "it's moving in the right direction" as Ethiopia continues to implement the peace accord. We'll continue to support Ethiopia's economic development, investing hundreds of millions in health, economic growth, education, democracy, and food security every year. And we'll continue to support migrants and refugees, and victims of human rights abuse. He said Ethiopia had been given clear benchmarks and Washington would continue to work with the government in Addis to achieve the goal.

"We have agreed to strengthen the long-standing bilateral relations between our countries with a commitment to partnership," Abiy said on Twitter after the meeting.

<https://www.state.gov/331-million-in-new-humanitarian-assistance-for-ethiopia/>

U.S. determines all sides committed war crimes in Ethiopia conflict

According to Reuters, the United States has determined that all sides committed war crimes during the conflict in northern Ethiopia that killed tens of thousands of people, left hundreds of thousands facing hunger and displaced millions, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said.

Ethiopia’s government has rejected a U.S. assertion that all sides in the two-year Tigray war committed war crimes, calling the statement coming a week after the secretary of state visited Ethiopia, “unfairly proportions

blame” and “inflammatory” and “untimely.” The ministry added that a report on human rights released by the U.S. State Department on Monday does not contain any information that wasn’t included in a previous joint report done by the U.N. and Ethiopia’s Human Rights Commission.

Blinken said that after a careful review of the law and facts, the State Department determined that members of the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF), Eritrean Defense Force, forces loyal to the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) and regional forces from Amhara committed war crimes during the conflict.

Members of the ENDF, Eritrean forces, and Amhara forces also committed crimes against humanity, Blinken told reporters, including murder, rape and other forms of sexual violence and persecution.

Members of the Amhara forces committed the crime against humanity of deportation or forcible transfer and committed ethnic cleansing through their treatment of Tigrayans in western Tigray, Blinken said.

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/ethiopia>

Tigray Interim Regional Administration Established

The Ethiopian Council of Ministers met and enacted a guideline to establish “Inclusive Interim Regional Administration of Tigray”, adding that PM Abiy’s decision was based on the provision of the guideline article 3(2).

The Central Committee of Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) elected Getachew Reda, member of the party’s Executive Committee, to lead the incoming interim administration. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, based on the decisions of the central committee of TPLF, has appointed Getachew Reda as president of the interim Tigray regional administration after a peace deal ended a brutal two-year conflict.

The Prime Minister’s announcement comes just a day after the Ethiopian House of Peoples Representatives delisted the TPLF from its terrorist designation by a majority vote.

The head of interim administration is responsible for leading and coordinating the executive body of the region by setting up an inclusive administration that ensures the representation of various political forces operating in the region. The interim president of the region was joined by members of his administration in Addis Ababa to meet with the different federal ministries on ways to begin normal regional operations just like the other regions.

Ethiopia Transitional Justice: Policy Options

As part of the peace agreement signed in Pretoria in November 2022 which states: “The Government of Ethiopia shall implement a comprehensive national transitional justice policy aimed at accountability, ascertaining the truth, redress for victims, reconciliation, and healing, consistent with the Constitution of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the African Union Transitional Justice Policy Framework.” It also says that it “shall be developed with inputs from all stakeholders and civil society groups through public consultations and formal policy-making processes”. The government also accepted the transitional justice proposal made by the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) in its initial report on the northern Ethiopian war in 2021. The JIT consists of representatives from the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR).

The Ethiopian government is planning to build its own transitional justice structure, despite pressure from the United Nations, international human rights organizations, and western governments to allow international investigators to investigate human rights breaches during the Tigray war. The Ethiopian government’s draft document - “Policy Options for Transitional Justice” - was unveiled by the Ministry of Justice. Genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and other forms of human rights abuse will all fall under the mandates.

Secretary Blinken during his Ethiopia visits said, “The government of Ethiopia is taking the first steps by publicly releasing a detailed green paper with transitional justice options based upon best practice and building upon the experiences of other states emerging from periods of mass violence,” and added that the US “will partner with Ethiopia as it implements a credible transitional justice process for the benefit of all victims and affected communities.” Blinken also said the Ethiopian government has invited UN human rights monitors “to ensure that such acts have truly ceased” and is holding “public

consultations about transitional justice.” A total of 59 consultations with the public will be held in selected areas across Ethiopia.

Ethiopia Demobilization & Reintegration Program for Ex-combatants

Representatives of the Federal National Rehabilitation Commission (FNRC) led by its Commissioner Ambassador Teshome Toga, Tigray regional state officials and relevant stakeholders held a consultative forum in Mekelle, the capital of Tigray region, on the process of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), and National rehabilitation of ex-Tigrayan combatants.

Holding the joint consultative forum in Mekelle for the first time was indication of the progress of trust between the two warring parties and the potential for the program to rehabilitate members of Tigrayan forces who took part in the fighting to return to their previous occupations. The first consultative meeting in Mekelle was followed by discussions with development partners in Addis Ababa. Similar Consultations are planned to be held in Bahir Dar/Amhara, Semera/Afar and other locations in Ethiopia.

The NRC was established by the Government in November 2022 for a period of two years to assist with demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants across the country.

This Program will support demobilization and reintegration of up to 250,000 ex-combatants in Ethiopia and will be implemented in several parts of the country, making an important contribution to national efforts to consolidate peace and promote stability.

The Government of Ethiopia underscores that resource mobilization and implementation of the broader national recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction program for conflict-impacted areas of Ethiopia will take place in a coordinated manner with a view to promoting sustainable peace and development, and ensuring that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants remains an integral part of this process.

The United Nations is providing technical and financial assistance to the NRC through the operational coordination of United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The resident representative of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Ethiopia, stated that it is the responsibility of the entire international community to stand with Ethiopia in implementing the program and pledged that the United Nations will continue to strengthen its support in all sectors as the rehabilitation program will enable ex-fighters to reintegrate into society and contribute positively.

World Bank and IMF Engagement with Ethiopia

Economic recovery, including an International Monetary Fund loan and a resumption of duty-free exports to the United States under its African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), is a priority for the Ethiopian government. Blinken expressed U.S. readiness to advance those goals in tandem with steps by Ethiopia and the Tigrayan leadership to consolidate peace.

World Bank Vice President for Eastern and Southern Africa, Victoria Kwakwa, made Ethiopia her first destination since assuming the vice presidency position at the World Bank in July 2022. Her visit underscores the World Bank’s strong commitment to Ethiopia as a long-standing development partner. She reiterated the World Bank’s commitment to assist Ethiopia in policy areas to improve on ease of doing business and productivity in the country.

Kwakwa said the country has every chance to return to a strong development path and deliver a better tomorrow for its people. The November 2022 signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and consequent silencing of the guns, delivery of humanitarian assistance, and restoration of services in the North are critical and encouraging. It will be important to ensure that the peace is sustained, and that conflict-affected areas can heal, recover, and rebuild. It is also important that parts of the country which have also endured other shocks are given the opportunity and resources to overcome their challenges and obtain greater prosperity.

On the side of IMF, the peace deal signed between the government and dissidents from the northern Tigray region four months ago has sparked hope of a new agreement with the IMF. A team from IMF has held bilateral meetings in Addis Ababa as part of the new engagement.

IMF spokesperson stated: “The IMF welcomes the strong progress toward restoring lasting peace and stability through the cessation of hostilities agreement. Implementation has progressed well, including the restoration of humanitarian assistance and basic services in Tigray. IMF staff have ongoing discussions with the authorities on the reform plans and how we can support their efforts to address humanitarian and economic challenges. We have received a request for financial assistance, and we are conducting the technical work to prepare for a potential program discussion.”

5th UN Conference on Least Developed Countries (LDC5)



Forty-six leaders of the least developed countries (LDCs) met for five days in Doha, Qatar with the objective of mobilizing international community’s commitments towards the implementation of the Doha Program of Action for the LDCs (2022-2031) adopted by the UN General Assembly in April 2022 in Istanbul, Turkey.

The world’s 46 LDCs are being hit the hardest by multiple crises including the COVID-19 pandemic, climate crisis, growing inequalities, rising debt burdens and economic shocks. They comprise about 14% of the global population, are some of the poorest and most vulnerable economies in the world, account for only 1.3% of global gross domestic product, receive just 1.4% of total foreign direct investment and trade under 1% of world merchandise exports.

UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) calls for bold action and development cooperation to achieve inclusive growth and sustainable development in LDCs in the following six areas.

- Effective debt relief and management in LDCs
- Export diversification in LDCs
- Stronger productive capacities in LDCs
- A new strategy to enable LDCs graduate
- Increased investment capacity in LDCs
- A just, balanced, and sustainable low-carbon transition in LDCs

On the sideline of the conference, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Qatar Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani held talks on various bilateral ties and regional issues. The discussions revolved around supporting social development and investments in Ethiopia. The PM also used the opportunity to discuss with the Sudanese leader on bilateral issues of boarder security, transition to civilian rule in Sudan and the progress of the great Ethiopian renaissance dam (GERD) where the Sudanese showed the PM of his support of the GERD progress.

<https://unctad.org/topic/least-developed-countries/lcd5>

Working for Peace in the Horn of Africa

Of Ethiopia’s six immediate neighboring states, nearly all are involved in conflicts that have triggered violence over recent years or have been impacted by refugees fleeing violence. The high-level diplomatic travel of the past weeks reflects the interconnectedness of peace and security in the region.

South Sudan President Salva Kiir and First Vice-President Riek Machar met with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed who visited Juba in early March to discuss bilateral matters with regional dimensions and outstanding issues in implementing a 2018 peace agreement - known officially as the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan.



Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed also held bilateral discussions with General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, President of the Sovereign Council of Sudan on the sidelines of the 5th United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in Qatar. Although the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) has been the source of tensions between Ethiopia and downstream countries, Egypt and Sudan, ever since work began in 2011, Burhan said that Sudan and Ethiopia are aligned and in agreement on all issues regarding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). In 2019, Ethiopia's leader played a key role in reaching an agreement between Sudan's military and civilian protest groups following the ouster of former leader Omar al-Bashir.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

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