



A Week in the Horn

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Appraisal of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's Sixth Year in Office

"Together we made it possible": the 13th Anniversary of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

Ethiopia Urges Robust Parliamentarian Role to Address Pressing Peace and Stability Issues Worldwide

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ethiopia

On Wednesday (April 03), Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed chaired the 28th Ordinary Session of the Council of Ministers. The ordinary session, among others, deliberated and passed a bill on medium-term macroeconomic and fiscal framework for 2017-2021 EFC and tabled a bill on value added tax to the parliament for approval.

Premiere Abiy on Monday (April 01) held discussions with political parties with the aim of soliciting feedback and critiques of undertakings in recent years, identifying necessary corrections and adjustments for policy input, and determining the type of cooperation needed moving forward.

On Saturday (March 30), the Prime Minister toured the West Omo Zone of the South West Ethiopia Regional State and had an audience with community representatives, as part of the series of discussions he recently held with various constituencies over the past weeks.

On Thursday (April 04), PM Abiy presided over a gathering of youth engaged in the tech and innovation sector to cultivate an environment conducive to youth entrepreneurship, fostering innovative problem-solving businesses under the rubric of "Startup Ethiopia." Recognizing the youth as the nation's engines brimming with innovative ideas, policy support for the ecosystem is vital to translate these ideas into reality, the PM later stated.

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Taye Atske-Selassie, on Thursday briefed the Addis-based diplomatic corps on the city's ambitious Smart City Project including the Addis Ababa corridor development project. Addis Ababa Roads

Authority Director-General Engineer Moges Tibebe on the occasion delivered a keynote presentation on the Addis Ababa City Corridor Development.

Foreign Minister Ambassador Taye on Wednesday evening (April 03) hosted an Iftar dinner for the diplomatic corps and representatives for various regional and international organizations based in Addis Ababa.

State Minister for Political and Economic Diplomacy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Mesganu Arga, conferred on Monday (April 01) with a high-level United States delegation led by Chief of Staff of Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Damian Murphy, on bilateral issues of mutual interest including the current state of the implementation of the Pretoria Peace Agreement.

State Minister Ambassador Mesganu hosted at his office on Wednesday (April 03) a senior ministerial delegation led by Puntland's Minister of Finance, Mohammed Farah Mohammed and discussed potential areas of cooperation in the fields of trade, investment, energy cooperation, and joint infrastructure projects to bolster and broaden the ties between the two sides.

Eritrea

President Isaias Afwerki, on Tuesday (April 02) conferred with a delegation led by Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Russian Navy, Vice Admiral Vladimir Kasatonov, in the Port City of Massawa, on further expediting bilateral ties outlined in St. Petersburg at *Africa-Russia Summit*, the Ministry of Information disclosed.

Kenya

President William Samoei Ruto on Wednesday (April 03) embarked on a State Visit to the West African country of Ghana. During his visit met with President Nana Akufo-Addo and discussed ways of further enhancing cooperation bilateral, regional and international fora. President Ruto with Ghanaian counterpart also bore witness to the signing of seven (7) bilateral agreements aimed at enhancing bilateral relations between the two countries, State House Kenya announced. During a State Banquet in honour of visiting President Ruto at the Golden Jubilee House in the Capital Accra President Akufo-Addo conferred on his Kenyan counterpart the country's highest honour, [*The Companion of the Order of the Star of the Volta*](#).

Prime Cabinet Secretary and Cabinet Secretary for Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, Musalia Mudavadi, during the second session of the Kenya-Ghana Joint Permanent Commission for Cooperation (JPCC) on Tuesday (April 02), ahead of President Ruto's State Visit, the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs disclosed, reiterated

his country's commitment further cementing diplomatic ties with the West African nation.

Cabinet Secretary for Interior and National Administration, Kithure Kindiki, on Tuesday (April 02) chaired the *1st National Border Management Conference* in the Capital Nairobi under the theme "*Building on Coordination and Moving Towards Integration.*" Attended by participants from Kenya's frontier states including Ethiopia, the high-level conference was jointly hosted by Border Management Secretariat of Kenya and IOM Kenya Office.

Somalia

Villa Somalia announced on Tuesday (April 02), President Hassan Sheikh Mohamoud, paid official visit to Saudi Arabia upon the invitation of Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud. The leaders, the dispatched disclosed, discussed the need for strengthening the diplomatic relationship between the two states in the areas of security and trade.

Prime Minister Hamza Barre on Thursday morning (April 04) chaired a cabinet meeting. The session endorsed the appointment for the third time of Abdullahi Mohamed Ali "Sanbalolshe" to head the nation's spy agency, National Intelligence Security Agency (NISA), following the resignation of incumbent Mahad Salad, local media sources reported.

South Sudan

President Salva Kiir Mayardit on Wednesday (April 03) inaugurated the first session of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly (TNLA), commonly known as August House. During the session, President Kiir told parliamentarians that the *Air Traffic Control System* has been completed and would soon be commissioned, subsequently allowing the country to take over control of its airspace and registration of airlines and collection of taxes, Office of the President revealed.

Africa and the African Union

The African Union Commission (AUC), in collaboration with the Government of Kenya, organised the *14th Meeting of the African Task Force on Food and Nutrition Development (ATFFND)* and the *Regional Economic Communities' (RECs) Consultation* in Mombasa, Kenya from 2 to 5 April 2024 under the theme, "*Collaborating for Effective Implementation of the African Union Nutrition Policies and Strategies.*"

President of the African Space Council and Head of the Science, Technology, and Space Division at the African Union Commission (AUC), Dr Tidiane Ouattara, during the *2024 NewSpace Africa Conference (02-05 April)* in the Angolan Capital Luanda presented a status update on the *African Outer Space Programme*. In his presentation, the President underscored the Outer Space Programme as a flagship programme of the African Union envisioned for an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful utilisation of space technologies and applications in Africa.

On Thursday morning (April 04), Burundi deposited the instruments of ratification of the [*Constitution and Convention of the ATU*](#) at the Nairobi-based Headquarters of the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya becoming among the 30 out of 52 African countries ATU represents.

Appraisal of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's Sixth Year in Office

On 02 April 2018, in an exceptionally peaceful transfer of power in modern Ethiopian history, Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali, at the age of 42 was sworn in as the third Prime Minister of Ethiopia. He took over from his predecessor, Hailemariam Dessalegn Boshe. Speaking after the swearing-in ceremony at the House of Peoples' Representatives on this particular day, Abiy declared, "today is a historic day as we bear witness to a peaceful transfer of power." He echoed further, "taking lessons from our mistakes, we should work to bring about political stability, build a better and united Ethiopia."

With the coming to power of the young prime minister, the Nation was on a path to "A New Horizon of Hope" that boasted of fast-tracking the country's economic growth through a series of "home-grown" solutions, fostering a democratic political culture and national consensus, combatting corruption and ensuring the participation of opposition political parties in exile and diaspora in the political and economic landscape that has been undergoing pivotal reforms.

As the establishment and the Nation at large celebrates the prime minister's sixth year in office, it is of utmost importance to appraise some of his administration's key achievements in the fields of diplomacy and foreign relations. In this regard, PM Abiy played among others, a key role in further entrenching Ethiopia's role as a key player in regional, continental and global fora whilst championing pan-African ideals and the universal principles of equality and mutual interest that govern a civilized society.

With these noble initiatives in place, the Premiere mobilised Ethiopians to rally behind the urgent need to mend ties with neighbouring Eritrea, resonating the perennial fact that the two brotherly peoples are "intertwined not only through

shared interests but also bound by blood." In just less than three months, Prime Minister Abiy embarked on a momentous visit to Asmara and worked for the signing of the 2018 Ethio-Eritrean Peace deal that sustainably ended the two-decades long "No Peace, No War" stalemate between the two countries. The signing of the peace deal lauded by the international community, resulted in the shredding of the black curtain between the two countries, once and for all. For this feat and other key achievements in peace and international cooperation, the Nobel Prize Committee awarded him the Nobel Peace Prize 2019 for "his decisive initiative to resolve the border conflict with neighbouring Eritrea."

In the same token, Prime Minister Abiy rehashed Ethiopia's continued commitment to regional peace and security as well as shared development and prosperity. The relation among States of the Horn is, Abiy noted, a unique relationship between one and the same people, living in two sovereign neighbouring countries, whose common destiny is intertwined through a long history of fraternity, mutual trust, respect and strategic interests for the benefit of our peoples, the Region and Africa at large." In this regard, his administration played an exceptionally crucial role in brokering peace in the Sudan by urging the international community to ensure that the peace process is Sudanese-led and Sudanese-owned under the auspices of the IGAD and with the support of the African Union. Especially, his exemplary role as very respectful and dependable mediator while paying due attention to the misfortunes of ordinary citizens and cognizant of the plethora of challenges of the region, caught the attention of the international community. This in turn, gained him recognition and continued boost to ensure peace and stability in the restive Horn of Africa region.

Parallel to ensuring peace and security in the region, Prime Minister Abiy also elevated Ethiopia's status as an anchor of not only peace and stability but also regional economic integration. He once said, "Our relationship has been solidified through time because of the shared vision of the leadership and its unflinching commitment in the path of economic integration." To bring the People of the region closer to benefit from shared development initiatives, the PM worked tirelessly to reinforce Ethiopia's stake in regional infrastructural integration projects such as the *Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia (LAPSSET) Corridor Project* and the *Eastern Africa Electricity Highway Project*. In a bid to facilitate Ethiopia's long overdue access to the sea, the Prime Minister engaged in a painstaking port diplomacy that could not only guarantee access to the sea but also diversify options for economic and geopolitical imperatives.

On another front, under the leadership of Prime Minister also demonstrated the highest degree of a Pan-African outlook in the tripartite negotiations on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). He advocated for conducting the negotiations, albeit the undue pressure from Egypt, under the auspices of the

continental body while paying homage to the principles of *African Solutions for African Challenges*. He diligently asserted Ethiopia's continued commitment for a win-win outcome that will ensure a "fair and equitable utilization" of the Nile waters "without causing any significant harm." The GERD negotiations not only Ethiopia's aspiration for a tripartite diplomatic thaw but also a far bigger commitment to seamlessly connecting the region through energy integration. PM Abiy also repeatedly lobbied a few up- and downstream Nile riparian states to accede to *The Nile Basin Cooperative Framework Agreement (CFA)* and implement the provisions prodigiously as "the Nile River Basin will promote integrated management, sustainable development, and harmonious utilization of the water resources of the Basin, as well as their conservation and protection for the benefit of present and future generations." Par excellence, the GERD project showcases the power of citizen mobilization for national interest, shaping the future of Ethiopia's development and a true testament to unity and progress.

Under PM Abiy's leadership, Ethiopia has also been at the epicentre of Green Diplomacy as envisioned by him in the *Green Legacy Initiative (GLI)*. *Green Legacy* diplomacy, was aimed at further advancing the integration of the Horn of Africa, particularly through broader environmental and sustainable development initiatives. African Union Commission Chairperson, Moussa Faki Mahamat, lauded the GLI as exemplary initiative that should be emulated by fellow African countries, as the continent continues to face sever challenges borne of climate change, expansive desertification and intermittent drought.

To further augment the concerted efforts of the Government to serve the interests of the most populous country in the region, the administration spearheaded by PM Abiy, made Ethiopia join the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa (BRICS) bloc in November last year reaffirming Ethiopia's status as an important country in the South-South cooperation framework. Ethiopia's membership into the BRICS family at the height of manifold challenges serves as "an important impetus both for Ethiopia and other BRICS members", the Premiere told parliamentarians during the same time. For Ethiopia, joining BRICS is also an epitome of its ever-expanding influence and capability to promote and protect its national interest in the international system through an inclusive and diversified partnership.

At home, to the chagrin of many detractors, the Prime Minister's leading role and commitment to sustainable peace resulted in the signing of the *Permanent Cessation of Hostilities Agreement* in November 2022 in Pretoria, South Africa bringing to and end a bloody war that last two years claiming thousands of lives and destroying property and wreaking havoc on the environment. His fingerprints are all over this Ethiopia-owned, AU-facilitated peace deal.

On the same, the Premiere's significant contributions to "rural and economic development" in the country earned the *Agricola Award* from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The conferment of prestigious accolade in January 2024, is an unequivocal recognition of his vision, leadership and commitment to food security and nutrition as well as the pursuit of innovative solutions in wheat self-sufficiency in the context of fast-changing and challenging circumstances.

Last but not least, Prime Minister Abiy has been at the forefront of restitution diplomacy and inscription of various UNESCO heritage sites. Elevating Ethiopia's historical role as the largest refugee hosting country in the region was also at the core of the Government's multifaceted engagements in the realm of humanitarian diplomacy. Taking fellow citizens forward through a rare-combination of committed, ambitious and pragmatic leadership, the Premiere's administration has helped Ethiopia record remarkable milestones in several areas by transforming political and economic landscapes through home-grown reform measures.

"Together we made it possible": The 13th Anniversary of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

April 1, 2024 marks the 13th anniversary of the laying of the foundation of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) project at Guba, Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State, West of the Capital Addis Ababa. Over the past 13 years, the GERD construction has passed through many stages overcoming countless challenges. Today, the dam is in its final phase with 95.8% complete. The completion of the project promises a big return especially considering that with only two out of thirteen turbines operational, Ethiopia has provided affordable energy for the countries in the region. The slogan for this year's anniversary, "*Together We Made It Possible!*", is a tribute to the near completion of the dam as well as the collective efforts of Ethiopians in achieving this key milestone.

The construction of this flagship project was, however, far from being a walk in the park. Since day one, the project has faced immense internal and external challenges. The project implementation was slightly off-track necessitating a high-level intervention to ensure its expedited completion. What is more, from its very inception the project has been subjected to incendiary propaganda and disinformation campaigns that are aimed at blocking financial sources and tying Ethiopia's hands. There were calls ranging from the construction of the dam to be halted to the size of the dam to be adjusted as *per* the demands of external actors. The project was wrongly yet deliberately labelled as a source of tension in the region and suggestions were made publicly for the project to be bombed. The United Nations Security Council, in a rather unprecedented manner, made the issue of this development project an agenda and deliberated on the matter.

Countless statements were issued condemning the project and characterizing the dam as a serious debacle that will drastically affect peace and security in the region.

Overcoming the challenges has been made possible only through the determination of the People and Government of Ethiopia. The reform measures taken by the Government brought the project back on track. Furthermore, a close and high-level follow up and support was crucial in ensuring expedited and accountable construction of the project. Equally, the current achievement is the result of the unwavering support and united efforts of Ethiopians from all walks of life, near and far. It is practically impossible to find a single Ethiopian that has not contributed to the construction of the dam, one way or the other. Financially, as of November 2023, Ethiopians have contributed close to 19 billion Birr for the construction of the dam. Others have rallied behind the immense positive returns of the dam and defended the construction through various platforms. Thousands, especially those living in the Abbay catchment area, have also participated in the massive environmental rehabilitation and conservation efforts, estimated financially to be worth more than 100 billion Ethiopian Birr. Millions have contributed in many other ways and have proven that Ethiopians are indeed capable of accomplishing such projects despite unwarranted pressures from elsewhere.

Throughout this gruelling journey, Ethiopia consistently espoused its long-held position of ensuring equitable and reasonable utilisation of the shared trans-boundary water resources. Indeed, the construction of the dam strictly adheres to these long-held principles. However, noting that downstream countries have concerns on the construction of the dam, Ethiopia initiated trilateral talks on many occasions. Legitimate concerns from downstream countries have been properly addressed. And Ethiopia has further availed itself to address any remaining concerns downstream countries might have by repeatedly showing its commitment for further trilateral talks. Ethiopia's continued assurances are further solidified with four consecutive and successful dam fillings that caused no harm on the downstream countries. Moreover, the current construction stage refutes all the accusations directed against the dam.

Nevertheless, there still remains to be a desire to make Ethiopia give in to unreasonable and selfish demands. Ethiopia has been continuously resisting undue pressures that aim at imposing unrealistic demands that would curtail the equitable utilisation of the current and future generation. As has been stated repeatedly over the past 13 years, the current and future generations of Ethiopia deserve to utilize the shared water resource for development at any point in time. Ethiopia will be guided by these principles in ensuring the completion of this project. And there is no doubt that through the collective efforts of Ethiopians, the dam will soon be completed and starts generating the much-needed electricity in full capacity.

Ethiopia Urges Robust Parliamentary Role to Address Pressing Peace and Stability Issues Worldwide

A delegation led by the Speaker of the House of Federation, Agegnehu Teshager, participated at the 148th *Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly* which was held from 23-27 March 2024 in Geneva, Switzerland.

In his remarks, Speaker Agegnehu emphasised the significance of the 148th IPU assembly for parliamentarians to discuss as a group how parliaments can address the urgent problem of peace and stability worldwide and urged the assembly to take a strong parliamentary role in addressing the issue. He highlighted how crucial it is for lawmakers to be more actively involved in intergovernmental initiatives that promote regional, global, and domestic peace and security.

He upheld the relevance and timing of the Assembly's theme, "*Parliamentary Diplomacy: Building Bridges for Peace and Understanding*," stating that it comes at a very perilous moment when the state of peace in the world is confronting an existential crisis. He brought up the numerous issues that are still present today and that have severely impacted peace in the Middle East, Africa, and other regions of the world, emphasising the need for lawmakers to get involved in order to address the problem.

He stressed the need for modernising the current global governance framework in relation to political polarisation. He stated that in order to effectively promote peace and stability, avert violence, and find peaceful solutions, legislators must push for a new, inclusive, and balanced international framework that takes into account the realities of the modern world.

He further highlighted the importance of parliamentarians taking on social issues like economic disparity and social injustice that fuel political divisiveness and bolstering the autonomy of institutions like the judiciary and media.

In addition to ratifying treaties and agreements, the speaker urged members of parliaments to place a high priority on advancing economic integration and supporting parliamentary diplomacy, dialogue, and cooperation in order to support global peace and stability, particularly in the Horn of Africa.

The Speaker also briefed the assembly on Ethiopia's incessant efforts in bringing peace and security in the Horn of Africa region. In this regard, he mentioned Ethiopia's flagship economic project including the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) role in regional economic integration and underscores Ethiopia's firm commitment in prompting win-win partnership in the region.

He also gave an overview of Ethiopia's efforts to bring about long-lasting peace at home, citing the two-year conflict in northern Ethiopia that came to an end with the *Permanent Cession of Hospitalities Agreement* (COHA) signed in Pretoria in November 2022. He claimed that the peace agreement is evidence that African approaches and pearls of wisdom can be used to resolve conflicts throughout the continent.

He further gave a briefing on the National Dialogue Commission's preparations for conducting consultations and dialogues on important national issues as well as Ethiopia's flagship transitional justice policy, which is thought to have contributed to the nation's long-term peace, justice reconciliation, and accountability.

At the end of the deliberations, the Assembly came out with the [*Geneva Declaration On Parliamentary Diplomacy: Building Bridges For Peace And Understanding*](#), a resolution- addressing the social and humanitarian impact of autonomous weapon systems and artificial intelligence, a Resolution - Partnerships for climate action: Promoting access to affordable green energy, and ensuring innovation, responsibility and equity, Motion - Reform of the United Nations Security Council, and IPU Leadership Statement on the situation in Gaza.

At the margin of the 148th of the Inter-Parliamentary Union /IPU/ Assembly held in Geneva, the Ethiopian delegation also participated in the joint meeting of heads of BRICS parliamentary delegations chaired by Russia. In order to achieve the BRICS parliamentary aims and goals, Ethiopia reiterated its commitment to strengthening the body.

The Ethiopian delegation which was led by Honourable Agegnehu Teshager, Speaker of the house of Federation of the FDR of Ethiopia, also included Chief Government Whip at the House of Peoples' Representatives Honourable Tesfaye Beljige and the Chief of the Permanent Mission of the FDR of Ethiopia at Geneva, Ambassador Tsegab Kibebew.

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A Week in the Horn is a weekly online publication dedicated to regional developments in the Horn of Africa. It aims to promote good will and fraternal relations among states of the region by highlighting major geopolitical events and publicizing news stories as well as feature articles. It features detailed commentaries, analyses and intelligent debate on weekly developments throughout the Horn of Africa region. It is an essential read for policymakers, the diplomatic community, think-tanks, academia, corporate executives and enthusiastic citizens, at large.

