



# ETHIO NEWS

## PREMIER HOSTS 'DINE FOR SHEGER' FUNDRAISING PROGRAM



An artist's rendition of the planned beautification measures

Photo: mfa

The 'Dine for Sheger' event, a culmination of the fundraising program for the Beautifying Sheger Project, was held on May 19, 2019. H.E. PM Abiy Ahmed, has taken a new initiative on urban renewal program starting with Addis Ababa City in order to make the city clean, modern and suitable to its inhabitants. The project has three phases: the immediate mobilization and cleaning of solid wastes from the river system; short-term wastewater cleaning and prevention of discharge which is associated with the revitalization of the existing river and riverside project office's activities; and medium to long term development with distinct objectives. This is expected to be a one system action project. The 1.1 billion US dollars project will run along the rivers of Addis Ababa, developing green spaces starting from Entoto to Akaki alongside the 56km river streams until they reach Akaki waste water treatment plant.

The Sheger gebeta ( Dine for Sheger/ Addis Ababa) is thus the first fundraising drive to finance PM Abiy Ahmed's ambitious project of beautifying the capital Addis Ababa by treating waters of rivers crossing the city and developing riverside for recreational and other purposes. As many as 200 representatives of international and regional organizations, members of business community, celebrities and individuals have purchased the entrance ticket at a cost of five million Ethiopian birr which is an equivalent of US \$174,000. The dinner was organized in banquet hall (locally known as Giber bet) of Emperor Menelik's- the Ethiopian monarch known, among other things, for his leadership during a decisive military victory over the Italian Colonial Army at the Battle of Adwa in 1896 - palace.

## CELEBRATION OF WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY IN ADDIS ABABA



World Press Freedom Day was celebrated around the world on May 3, and this year the main celebration has been taking place in Addis Ababa from May 1-3. The theme for 2019 was "Media for Democracy: Journalism and Elections in Times of Disinformation" and the event has provided a platform for officials, representatives of civil society, media organizations, professional associations, academia and the judiciary to discuss current issues, threats and achievements, on the freedom of the press. The occasion saw the attendance of thousands of journalists from across the world, NGO representatives and officials from government and regional and international organizations. There's been a wide range of plenary sessions, debates, talks and other opportunities to address different aspects of the theme as well as an academic conference on the safety of journalists and the dangers they face as well as a Youth Newsroom for young journalists and journalism students to cover the event and extend their reporting skills.

Ethiopia has demonstrated the largest improvement in the treatment of journalists over the last year. PM Abiy laid out a new approach to the media in his acceptance speech a year ago: "we need to respect all human and democratic rights, especially of those of freedom of expression", and followed this up in a spectacular manner to provide for freedom of the press, releasing a wide range of political prisoners, including both journalists and social media activists and bloggers. Within a couple of months, 264 websites had been unblocked and two externally based opposition TV stations set up inside Ethiopia. Working groups are revising the main laws covering media activity, and the changes have allowed a free press to flourish again in Ethiopia. Ms. Vera Songwe, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, noting the changes, said she hoped Ethiopia would be ranked in the top 20 for press freedom next year; African Union Commission Deputy Chairperson Thomas Kwesi Quartey praised Ethiopia for notable achievements in reforming aspects of government functions, refer-

ring to a year "of remarkable reform."

In his address at the official ceremony of the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize dinner ceremony on May 2 PM Abiy Ahmed said "We acknowledge with great honor Ethiopia's selection to host the World Press Freedom Day," adding that as Ethiopia strives to introduce comprehensive legal and institutional reforms, it was reassuring to note that "our measure so far to effectively realize the right to freedom of expression and the press, are duly recognized by the international community." He added that the symbolism of such a grand gesture was even more significant, given that only a year ago, Ethiopia was labeled as Africa's foremost jailer of journalists and one of the worst environments in the world for the functioning of independent media.

PM Abiy underlined that his government has no misconception that a free, independent and responsible media, augmented by the workings of citizen journalism, is an imperative prerequisite for building a viable democratic political order. However, the PM underscored, "It is also important to highlight that freedoms come with responsibilities. Media establishment and citizen journalists need to seize this current enabling environment and use their voice and pen with ethical considerations. We need to ensure that the opening up of the media space does not facilitate misinformation, the spread of hate speech and fake news."

This year's theme, "Media for Democracy: Journalism and Elections in Times of Disinformation" also relates to the media's potential in supporting peace and reconciliation processes, a subject of particular relevance to Ethiopia today, and for the elections due next year. To quote UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, "no democracy is complete without access to transparent and reliable information." The theme is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. SDG 16, for example, concerns issues of peace and democracy as preconditions for equitable and sustainable development: "When freedom of expression and safety of journalists are protected, the media can play a vital role in preventing conflict and in supporting peaceful democratic processes." It also urges states to "ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements."

This year's UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize was awarded to jailed Myanmar Reuters journalists Kyaw Soe Oo and Wa Lone by Ethiopian and African Union officials.



## ETHIOPIA'S IMPROVEMENTS IN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMENDED AT THE UN PERIODIC REVIEW



The 33rd Session of the UPR Working Group

Photo: mfa

The Third Cycle of Ethiopia's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) was held at the 33rd Session of the UPR Working Group in the UN Human Rights Council on May 14 in Geneva. Ethiopia's delegation was headed by Dr. Gedion Timothewos, Deputy Attorney General; and the three country representatives serving as rapporteurs for the review of Ethiopia were Angola, Hungary and Nepal.

Dr. Gedion briefed the UPR Working Group on the actions that Ethiopia has taken to improve the human rights situation to fulfill its human rights obligations and on the steps taken over the past year to advance human rights in Ethiopia. He said: "Concrete measures have been taken over the past year in Ethiopia to advance human rights despite tensions and communal clashes which have resulted in deaths and displacement of many citizens." He noted that many who had been charged and convicted under the anti-terrorism law, including journalists, bloggers and dissidents from political opposition groups, had been granted pardon by the government. This and other laws were being withdrawn and replaced. The government had repealed the former Charities and Societies (CSOs) law to better respect freedom of association and the work of civil society organizations as well as promote the rule of law and democracy.

Dr. Gedion pointed out that a National Reconciliation Commission had been set up to promote inter-communal understanding, reconciliation and harmony and detailed the government's efforts to provide socio-economic services, including health care, education and housing to the neediest. The proportion of public spending in poor areas in Ethiopia had increased by 2/3 over the past decade, he noted, and this included expenditure in the education sector and for the building of roads and infrastructure.

Member States commended Ethiopia for the improvement of the human rights situation in the country through political reform measures and

steps to widen civil society and political and democratic space, and for the release of political prisoners previously charged as terrorists. They welcomed the progressive policy reforms introduced to improve the political, economic and social situation. They praised the country for achieving gender parity in government positions, for the implementation of the growth and transformation plan 2016-2020 leading to poverty reduction, and for the national action plan 2016-2020.

Member States also commended Ethiopia for implementing many of the recommendations from the previous cycle and encouraged the Government to continue the positive trajectory of the reform process and strengthen its legislative framework and the justice system to ensure the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the country. They recommended Ethiopia to strengthen the capacity of the judiciary, the Ombudsperson and the National Human Rights Commission as well as to step up efforts to combat human trafficking and to improve food security. They also recommended Ethiopia to ensure the holding of equitable, free and transparent elections, scheduled for May 2020, and continue to take steps to promote religious dialogue and prevent discrimination based on religion and promote inter-communal reconciliation. They further recommended Ethiopia to ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to abolish the death penalty, to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and to improve prison conditions.

Dr. Gedion, in his concluding remarks, thanked participants for their constructive engagement and recommendations. He emphasized Ethiopia's commitment to continue to participate actively in the UPR process in the future.

This was the third review of Ethiopia's human rights record by the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review Working Group. The first and second reviews took place in December 2009 and April 2014 respectively. The reviews look at documents provided by the State; information from reports of independent human rights experts and groups, known as the Special Procedures, human rights treaty bodies, and other UN entities; and information provided by other stakeholders including national human rights institutions, regional organizations and civil society groups. During the review, States spell out the steps they have taken to implement recommendations made during previous reviews and on which they committed themselves to follow-up as well as highlighting recent human rights developments in the country.

## 8TH MEETING OF THE TANA HIGH-LEVEL FORUM ON SECURITY IN AFRICA



President Sahle-Work during her opening speech

Photo: mfa

The eighth Tana High Level Forum on Security in Africa was held in Bahr Dar from May 3-4. Well-attended with participants drawn from government, politicians, academia, and think-tanks, those present included H.E. Sahle-Work Zewde, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Moussa Faki, Chairperson of the African Union, the former President of Ghana and current Chairperson of the Board of Tana Forum, John Dramani Mahama, Somalia's Deputy PM, Mahdi Mohamed Guled and Foreign Minister Gedu Andargatchew. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was also represented by State Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene, and relevant department heads and experts. The Forum is an important platform for discussion of new insights on peace and security matters, providing ample opportunities for dialogue with all stakeholders and listen to different perspectives.

This year's theme was the timely topic of "Political Dynamics in the Horn of Africa: Nurturing the Emerging Peace Trends". This issue was widely explored against the background of the ground-breaking Ethio-Eritrea peace rapprochement last year. Many reflected on the positive spill-over effects of the peace deal for the entire region, including its encouragement of talks between Djibouti and Eritrea and between Somalia and Eritrea. It was seen as a manifestation that regional peace projects can and do play a key role in encouraging and building regional political, economic and social collaboration. The deal also encouraged the United Nations to unanimously lift its longstanding sanctions on Eritrea. With Eritrea emerging from decades of international isolation, Asmara can once more be expected to play an active role in both IGAD and the AU. Another important and positive recent development has been the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (RARCSS) last September.

Opening the Forum, President Sahle-Work Zewde, hailed the recent tremendous developments in the Horn of Africa as opening a new chapter to



fully utilize the opportunities available. The transformational changes happening in Ethiopia, she said, had played a pivotal role to fundamentally change the dynamics of the region, but there were still challenges to face on governance and socio-economic development. At the concluding session, the president commended what she called "the active and fruitful participation and exchange of ideas" on the theme of Political Dynamics in the Horn of Africa: Nurturing the Emerging Peace Trends. She stressed that the only way forward to sustain the peace that had been achieved was through continuous consultation and cooperation among member states of the region.

Former President of Ghana, John Dramani Mahama also reviewed the results of the Forum, underlining the importance of sustainable peace for Africa's overall development. He stressed that cooperation and dialogue should be the guiding principles of addressing issues in the Horn of Africa and emphasized that shared goals and long-term strategies would lead to durable solutions for the challenges facing the region.

## **PRESIDENT SAHLE-WORK'S WORKING VISITS TO KENYA AND THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**



President Sahle-Work and President Uhuru Kenyatta

Photo: mfa

President Sahle-Work Zewde of Ethiopia arrived in Nairobi for a one-day official working visit on May 14. She was welcomed at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport by Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs Ambassador Monica Juma, Ethiopia's Ambassador to Kenya, Ambassador Meles Alem and high-ranking Kenyan government officials. At State House, President Sahle-Work was warmly received by President Uhuru Kenyatta and First Lady Margaret Kenyatta and high-ranking Kenyan government officials.

Talks between President Sahle-Work and President Kenyatta Uhuru centered on bilateral and regional issues of common interest including ongoing engagements aimed at deepening diplomatic and bilateral ties. Alluding to the longstanding and historic relations between the peoples and governments of the two countries, which she charac-

terized as demonstrating stability and consistency, President Sahle-Work reiterated the need to further expand possibilities in various areas ranging from people-to-people relations to the flow of trade and investment. She noted that their good neighbourly relations were both effective and exemplary and stressed the importance of working closely together on multilateral issues of common interest and in the maintenance of regional peace and stability.

During her visit, President Sahle-Work also met members of the Ethiopian Community in Kenya. She called upon them to contribute generously towards further cementing the multifarious ties between the two countries. Referring to the current wave of reforms, she also stressed that it was important for all Ethiopians, all over the world, to engage in supporting the reforms brought about by PM Abiy Ahmed.

President Sahle-Work also visited Kenya shortly after. She arrived at Kinshasa for another one-day working visit on May 18. She was welcomed on arrival by Ms. Hannine Mabumda, Speaker of the Parliament and other high-level government officials as well as Ethiopians residing in Kinshasa. At State House, President Sahle-Work was warmly received by President Felix Tshisekedi and high-ranking Congolese government officials.

Talks between President Sahle-Work and President Tshisekedi centered on bilateral and regional issues of common interest including ongoing engagements aimed at deepening diplomatic and bilateral ties. Highlighting the longstanding and historic relations between the peoples and governments of the two countries, President Sahle-Work reiterated the need to further expand the relationship in different areas ranging from air transport, to agriculture, energy and tourist development. She stressed the importance of working closely together on multilateral issues of common interest and in the maintenance of regional peace and stability.

President Tshisekedi also emphasized the prevailing opportunities to strengthen the relations between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia. He said the two countries should work closely to take their current state of relations to a higher level in many fronts. The President hosted a dinner for President Sahle-Work, attended by Speaker Mabumda and other senior government officials.

## **QUEEN MAXIMA OF THE NETHERLANDS ON AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO ETHIOPIA**

Queen Maxima of the Netherlands arrived in Addis Ababa for an official visit to Ethiopia on May 14 in her role as the UN Secretary-General's Special Advocate for Inclusive Finance for Development (UNSGSA), a position she has held since 2009. In this role, she advises the Secretary-General and

works worldwide to promote safe and affordable access to financial services for all. In 2017 Ethiopia launched a national strategy aimed at improving access to financial services for its citizens.

During her two-day visit, she held talks with President Sahle-Work Zewde and PM Abiy Ahmed as well as with Ahmed Shide, Minister of Finance, Dr. Getahun Mekuria, Minister of Innovation and Technology, and Dr. Yinager Dessie, Governor of the National Bank of Ethiopia. Queen Maxima had discussions with UN development officials and partners as well as the private sector and also met with farmers to discuss a new business model that has made some of them shareholders in the Habesha beer brewery. The brewery offers them partial pre-financing for barley production in the form of seed, fertiliser and agricultural advice.

The farmers pay this back with a portion of their harvest and the brewery guarantees that it will purchase the rest. The model helps boost yields and farmers' incomes. A second field visit focused on the various digital financial 'Hello' services provided by the company Belcash.

This was a second visit to Ethiopia for Queen Maxima. She came to the country in December 2013 on behalf of the UN; and also met PM Abiy at this year's World Economic Forum in Davos.

## **FOREIGN MINISTER GEDU ANDARGACHEW ON A WORKING VISIT TO THE SUDAN**



Minister Gedu in during consultations in Sudan

Photo: mfa

Ethiopian Foreign Minister, Gedu Andargachew, headed a high-level delegation on a two-day working visit to Khartoum from May 4-5. It was the Minister's first visit abroad since his recent appointment and it was a clear testimony that Ethiopia stands in solidarity with the people of Sudan at this critical juncture in their history.

During his visit, the Foreign Minister held productive talks with Lt. General Abdul Fattah Al-Burhan, Chairman of the Transitional Military Council and with representatives of the Forces of the Declaration of Freedom and Change who are currently negotiating over the details of establishing a tran-



sitional government in the Sudan. Minister Gedu reaffirmed to both parties that Ethiopia stands in solidarity with the people of Sudan and supports their aspirations based on the principles of non-interference and respect for sovereignty. The Minister, who underscored that the transition process should be inclusive, stressed the people of Sudan were capable of handling their internal affairs by themselves without external interference. He also emphasized that Ethiopia as Chair of IGAD would make every effort to work closely with the AU and the international community at large to support peaceful and inclusive transition process in the Sudan.

The African Union Peace and Security Council has given sixty days for the Transitional Military Council to hand over power to a civilian government, following the removal of Sudan's long serving President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir on April 11 following four months of demonstrations across the country. As current chair of IGAD and a sisterly country that shares not only borders but people and long ties with Sudan, Ethiopia is expected to play a significant role and make every effort to work closely with the African Union and the international community to support a peaceful and inclusive transition process in the Sudan. While in Khartoum, Minister Gedu also held talks with Mohamed El Hacem Lebat, the African Union Special Envoy to the Sudan regarding the current situation in the country.

During his visit, the Minister also visited a safe house run by the Ethiopian Community in Khartoum. This is a shelter and rehabilitation center for Ethiopian orphans and also provides medical assistance for sick and victims of human trafficking waiting to be repatriated.

## DIASPORA IN GERMANY WELCOMES NEW AMBASSADOR DESIGNATE



H.E. Mulu Solomon being welcomed to Berlin by the Ethiopian Diaspora

Photo: emb

Members of the Ethiopian diaspora in Germany welcomed H.E. Mulu Solomon Bezuneh, the new Ethiopian Ambassador Designate to Germany in Berlin on May 18. Hundreds of Ethiopians and people of Ethiopian origin, friends of Ethiopia

and Honorary Consuls of Ethiopia from four German regions and other renowned personalities were present during the celebrations took place at the residence of the ambassador. The Ambassador-designate expressed her gratitude for the warm welcome accorded to her.

During the session of discussion members of the diaspora expressed words of appreciation to the ambassador-designate and underscored that the relation between them and the embassy would be strengthened during the upcoming years. Some others also expressed their commitments to contribute their part by closely working with the embassy and the Office of Consulate General in Frankfurt. They raised some questions which the ambassador-designate answered in a manner which satisfied the participants.

In the conclusion, the ambassador-designate indicated the fact that the Ethiopian Foreign Policy is being stated as a citizen-centered one whereby the diaspora engagement in the country's socio-economic and political matters are highly essential. She stressed that, therefore, all members of the Ethiopian diaspora are required to complement the embassy in the latter's endeavors of promotion and protection of rights of Ethiopian citizens; foreign direct investment and tourist attractions; business and trade flows; transfer of technology and know-how; and promotion of their country's image wherever they live.

Thanking them for their continuous and exemplary efforts in promoting Ethiopia, H. E. Mrs. Mulu took the occasion to acquaint the Ethiopian Honorary Consuls in Munich, Bremen, Hamburg and Stuttgart and heads of different sections with the embassy as well as Ethiopia's Consul General in Frankfurt and members of his staff present to the diaspora community. The event was supported with Ethiopian food, varieties of country music and a traditional coffee ceremony.

## FORMER PRESIDENT DR. NEGASSO GIDADA LAID TO REST WITH FULL STATE HONOURS



The funeral proceedings

Photo: mfa

Former President of Ethiopia, Dr. Negasso Gidada, died in Germany on April 27 after suffering health problems. He was 76. Negasso Gidada

Solon was born on September 3, 1943, in Dembi Dolo, the son of Gidada Solon, one of the first local ministers of a Protestant church in western Ethiopia. A prominent politician, he was President of Ethiopia from 1995 until 2001.

Dr. Negasso studied History at the Haile Selassie I University (now Addis Ababa University) from 1966 to 1971. He then served for three years as a school director and history teacher in Aira, in Western Wallaga, before leaving for Germany in October 1974 where he lived until July 1991. He studied history in the department of Ethnology at the J.W. Goethe University in Frankfurt. During this period, he became one of the earliest members of Oromo Liberation Front, one of the organizations opposed to the then military regime in Ethiopia. Following the 1991 regime change in Ethiopia, Dr. Negasso returned to Ethiopia and joined the Oromo People's Democratic Organization, now the Oromo Democratic Party ODP, one of the four coalition members of the ruling party, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF).

Following his return to Ethiopia, Dr. Negasso was appointed Minister of Information in the then Transitional Government. He also became a member of the Constitutional Drafting Committee, tasked with drafting a new Constitution for the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. He also served as Chairman of the Constitutional Assembly which adopted the constitution in 1995. The same year, he became the first Head of State of the FDRE on August 22nd. One of his first tasks was to sign the proclamation that adopted the final copy of the constitution.

President Sahle-Work said, "Dr. Negasso will always be remembered for his honesty, integrity and love of his country. She said: "He fought for the freedom and equality of Ethiopians, and to the promotion of democracy in Ethiopia towards creating a better and unified Ethiopia." President Sahle-Work, hailing his patriotism and love of his country, urged Ethiopians from all walks of life to emulate his patriotic character for the betterment of the country.

May 6 was declared as a national day of mourning by Parliament with flags flown at half-mast across the country, and in Ethiopian embassies and consulates abroad.