



Ethiopian News

May – June 2010 Issue

Historic election concludes in Ethiopia

The ruling party, Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front, won a large majority of votes in the fourth national elections held on 23rd May.

The National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) announced that the EPRDF won 501 of the 547 federal parliamentary seats in the elections, which attracted a 90% plus voter turnout. Allies of the EPRDF won a further 44 seats. Full results will be announced on 21st June.

The ruling party's landslide victory was a result of its track-record, which includes double-digit economic growth over the past seven years, inputs in the agricultural sector which brought much increased productivity for small-scale farmers and a large increase in social infrastructure such as schools and clinics, jobs, housing, but also roads, telecommunications and hydropower.

Prior to the election, government and opposition parties took part in nine rounds of televised debates on the economy, development, foreign policy and other key issues. Baroness Catherine Ashton, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the EU, in a statement said that "the legislative elections in Ethiopia were an important moment in the democratic process in the country. I welcome the peaceful conduct of the elections and I congratulate the Ethiopian voters for showing their commitment to this process with a high turnout...The EU stands ready to work with Ethiopia to further deepen our relations with the government and the peoples of Ethiopia." The AU also gave the elections a clean bill of health.

Copies of PM Meles Zenawi's speech at a post-election rally on 25th May are available on request, please send an email to info@ethioembassy.org.uk

National Day celebrated across the nation

The 19th anniversary of the 28th May Victory Day, a day that heralded the demise of the dictatorial Derg regime in 1991, was celebrated colourfully across the nation.

In Addis Ababa, the day was celebrated in the presence of dignitaries including President Girma Woldegiorgis, PM Meles Zenawi and Deputy PM Addisu Legesse.

Addressing the gathering, PM Meles paid tribute to the lives of gallant compatriots who had sacrificed their lives to bring democracy, adding that the current generation is fighting the real enemy - poverty. He urged the public to help change the image of the country and called on young people to work together to pull the country out of food aid dependency.

This year's Victory Day was special as it was celebrated on the morrow of the successful completion of peaceful and democratic national elections.

For a Press Release on this topic, please send an email to info@ethioembassy.org.uk

Ethiopia celebrates 47th Africa Day

On 25th May the African Union Commission joined the rest of the continent and the Diaspora in observing Africa Day under the theme 'Promoting peace through Sports'. The Ceremony at the headquarters of the African Union in Addis Ababa included a workshop on promoting peace through sports, a photo exhibition on AU peacekeeping and the launch of "Peace Journey", a journey across 24 African countries to promote peace.



The ceremony, which brought together representatives from world sport corporations, the diplomatic corps, international organisations and officials of the AU Commission was an opportunity for the AU to promote this year as the Year of Peace and Security in Africa, proclaimed by the African Heads of State and Government in Tripoli.

Chairing the occasion on behalf of the Chairperson of the AU Commission, Mrs. Julia Dolly Joiner, Commissioner for Political Affairs of the AU, recalled the importance of 25th May in Africa. "A day to celebrate Africa through peace and a day to take another step in building the edifice of Peace in Africa...a day in which we reflect on the future by celebrating progress that has been established through our collective and individual efforts," she noted.

Speaking on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union, H.E. Bingu Wa Mutharika, the Ambassador of Malawi, H.E. Isaac Monroe, recalled the historical importance of the Africa Day celebration in Addis Ababa, where the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was created. Referring to the theme of the celebrations, Mr. Monroe said that sports can play a critical role in peace-building and have always been a vehicle for rebuilding broken societies in a spirit of fair play that transcends all sorts of divisions and conflicts.

AUC, EC agree to work together

The African Union Commission (AUC) and the European Commission (EC) have agreed to work jointly in implementing the programmes of their respective organisations.

The organisations agreed to work together at the 4th AUC/EC meeting at the African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa, on 8th June.

President of the EUC, José Manuel Barroso, and the AU Chairperson, Jean Ping and other AU Commissioners took part in the meeting which discussed peace and security, democratic administration, human rights, trade, power supply, climate change and other issues.

According to a joint statement, the two continents reached agreement to further strengthen existing relations with a view to ensuring peace and security in Africa, Europe and across the world.

José Manuel Barroso said that Africa and Europe will work together in particular on issues related to climate change so as to advocate similar positions in international fora. European countries are providing support to Africa's position on climate change, he said.

IMF Executive Board approves ESF arrangement and \$58.7 million disbursement

The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has approved the first review of Ethiopia's economic performance under the 14-month arrangement under the high-access component of the Exogenous Shocks Facility (ESF).

The Executive Board's decision was taken on a lapse time basis. The approval will enable Ethiopia to draw about \$58.7 million, bringing total disbursements under the arrangement to about \$166.2 million.

Ethiopia has been successfully implementing policies to reduce inflation and rebuild external reserves as agreed in the ESF-supported programme.

At end-2009, consumer price inflation had declined sharply to single digits and international reserves recovered to just over

two months of imports, helped by strong donor inflows and financing from the IMF. Overall, the negative impact of the global recession has not been as severe as expected. GDP growth is projected to ease to 7 percent in 2009/10. All of the quantitative performance criteria and indicative targets for end-December 2009 were met. The structural measures covered by the Fund-supported program were also implemented.

The second ESF review is expected to be considered this autumn. The ESF arrangement for Ethiopia was approved by the Executive Board on 26th August 2009 to help Ethiopia deal with the effects of the global recession on its balance of payments.

Ethiopian Parliament discuss \$5.6bn budget

On 10th June the Ethiopian government initiated debate on the proposed \$5.6 billion (77.2 billion Birr) budget for the 2010/2011 fiscal year that targets infrastructure development as part of efforts to maintain one of the fastest growth rates in Africa.

This proposed budget exceeds that of the previous year by 18%, and the bulk of the budget is expected to be covered by the government, while local and international financial institutions are expected to provide the remainder.

The proposed budget, prepared by the Ethiopian Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, was presented to the council of ministers.

According to Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Sufian Ahmed, who presented the budget to parliament, most of the government's spending priorities will be dedicated to economic and social affairs.

Of the total budget, 35.9 billion birr will go on development spending, a rise of 23.4%. The development budget would mostly be spent on

electrification and the provision of health services and clean water to rural towns. Just over 24 billion birr will go to Ethiopia's nine federal regions to spend locally. The country's road building program will be boosted by a 12 billion birr investment.

Ethiopia expects to get around \$500 million budgetary support from its development partners. There will be about \$1 billion of deficit to be covered by loans from local institutions.

The proposed budget, Ethiopia's biggest ever, gives priority to expanding electricity access, education, agriculture and health facilities, in the next 12 months, beginning in July.

Sufian told parliamentarians that the government's main campaign was to reduce poverty through increased spending on the key poverty-reducing areas of education, health and energy. 95% of the budget has been dedicated to economic and social programmes.

GDP growth 11.18% annually over last 4 years

Ethiopia's economy has grown by an annual average of 11.18% over the last four years with improved infrastructure and significant growth in investment, posting the fastest growth rates of all non-oil producing sub-Saharan countries in recent years.

In the 5-year performance report, Finance Minister, Sufian Ahmed, said that - investment sector growth stands at 31.5%, a result of sound investment policies, the speeding up of the privatisation process, and the expansion of infrastructure; the agriculture sector grew 8.5% over the period; Industrial sector growth stood at 9.9%; and the services sector rose by 14.65%. Per capita income has increased to \$217 from \$164 five years ago, showing an average growth rate of 7.2%.

Ethiopia, Africa's top coffee exporter, is reliant on agricultural exports and earned \$1.5 billion

from them in 2008/09. It is also a growing destination for foreign investment in large-scale farming, hydropower dams and oil and gas exploration.

Survey: Ethiopia's peace score improves

Ethiopia showed the greatest rise in peacefulness in 2009 among 149 countries studied in a survey released on 8th June compiled by the Institute for Economics and Peace in Sydney.

According to the 2010 Global Peace Index, a drop in the number of fatalities resulting from external conflict was a key contributor to the improved score. Ethiopia's withdrawal of troops from Somalia in January 2009 as well as a decline in military spending helped it to rise to 127th most peaceful nation from 133 the year before.

In an interview, Clyde McConaghy, president of the peace index, said that a well functioning government and judiciary, freedom of the press, the ability to deliver social services and a high percentage of youth enrolled in schools are the key drivers of peace. He added that democracy does not correlate as directly with peacefulness as a well-functioning government does.

The peace index ranks countries using 23 criteria, from military spending and support for United Nations peacekeepers to economic indicators, murder rates, press freedom and human rights protection. It was devised by the peace institute's board of advisers and the data compiled by the Economist Intelligence Unit in London.

Ethiopia to lengthen fibre-optic line

The minister of Finance and Economic Development, Sufian Ahmed, said that Ethiopia is working to extend the current 7,000km of fibre-optics line to 10,000km in the coming

three months with the aim of expanding telephone and internet services.

According to the Minister, access to telecom services in Ethiopia in 5km ranges has now reached 50% from 13% last year. He also noted that in the coming three months the total number of mobile phone users in the country will increase to 6 million from 4 million.

At the end of 2009, Ethiopian Telecommunications Corporation (ETC) signed a contract agreement with SEACOM Telecom Company for the procurement of international fibre optic bandwidth connectivity. Within the deal, Ethiopia will be connected to the rest of the world through the submarine fibre communication system via Djibouti and will obtain high speed internet connection and better telecom services.

World Bank lends Ethiopia \$100 m for roads

World Bank has signed a deal to lend Ethiopia \$100 million for road construction.

Over the past 10 years, Ethiopia has spent \$3.6 billion on building 101,359km of asphalt and gravel roads with just over a third of that amount provided by the International Development Agency, the European Union and Japan. The Ethiopian Government paid for the rest.



The government has focused on improving links to Ethiopia's northern tourist sites and regions producing exports like coffee. This has galvanised thriving businesses and trade across the nation.

The government inherited only 18,000km of roads when it overthrew the Derg regime in 1991.

More than \$2 bn earned from exports

The Ministry of Trade and Industry (MoTI) said that more than \$2 billion has been earned from agricultural and industrial products supplied to overseas markets over the past 10 months.

The revenue was obtained from coffee, gold, flowers, spices, oil seeds, live animals, leather and leather products, meat, fruits and vegetables, *khat*, cotton and tantalum.

The products were mainly exported to North America, Europe, the Middle and Far East and Australia.

This year's export trade has grown by over 34% compared to the same period last year. The Government of Ethiopia is working to raise foreign trade by 25%.

EHDA obtains over \$153.6 million from horticulture exports

The Ethiopian Horticulture Development Agency (EHDA) has secured more than \$153.6 million from horticulture exports.

The agency earned the income by exporting over 1.2 billion flower stems and 51,400 tonnes of vegetables, fruits and herbs to Europe, the Middle East and other countries during the past 10 months.

Flower exports have fetched some 86% of the revenue.

The revenue obtained has shown a \$29.8 million increase as compared to the same period last budget year.

Increment of the revenue was attributed to the capacity building activities undertaken to improve productivity of the sector.

Flower firms form freight cooperative

Over 38 Ethiopian horticulture growers and exporters have set up a non-profitable marketing cooperative that will replace the existing costly logistics and freight forwarding services provided by private companies.

The new Ethiopian Horticulture Producers Marketing Cooperative (EHPMC) will serve members of the cooperative with lower prices.

There is a huge demand for cargo services in the horticulture sector with only a few companies offering services. Last year, two major private companies, Sher Ethiopia and Trade Path International, merged to establish Flower Port Cargo Plc which rented four aircraft from Ethiopian Airlines for one year to export flowers for nine companies operating under Sher's umbrella.

The new cooperative is expected to compete with these kinds of companies for the flower transport market and other horticulture products.

The cooperation would enable growers to find an innovative way to reduce the price of freight services, said Tsegay Abebe, Chairman of Ethiopian Horticulture Producer and Exporters Association.

1 billion Birr grant for excellence in education

Ethiopia has been granted 1.326 billion Birr for its performance in education and its drive to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set for the sector.

The grant was allotted by the Fast Track Initiative (FTI), a consortium of multi-lateral donor groups including the World Bank, the United Kingdom, Finland, Italy and the Netherlands.

According to Demeke Mekonnen, Minister of Education, Ethiopia was chosen because of its achievements both in the expansion of

education and in attaining a concomitant level of performance in quality, capacity and skill as a standard bearer.

Biosphere reserve in Ethiopia joins UN list

The biosphere reserve in Ethiopia has joined, for the first time, the United Nations network that was created with the view to halt the loss of biodiversity and promote sustainable development.

The new UN biosphere reserve of Kafa in Ethiopia is a highland region with 50% of Ethiopia's remaining Afromontane evergreen forest ecosystems and origin of the rare Coffee Arabic. Public-private partnerships for economic growth and efficient use of resources have been implemented successfully in the area and can serve as models for new initiatives, particularly for sustainable coffee production.

The site of Yayu, in south-western Ethiopia, was also added to the network. Yayu is said to be one of the world's 34 vital yet threatened areas for biodiversity conservation.

According to UNESCO, which oversees the network through its Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme, the more than 500 sites in 109 countries are part of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR), designated to "serve as places to test different approaches to integrated management of terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine resources and biodiversity."

Ethiopia's endangered species on the increase

Rare animal species endemic to Ethiopia and once considered at risk of extinction have been successfully protected and have increased in numbers.

Ethiopia is known for a wide variety of animal species, but many have been threatened with extinction due to large-scale poaching and loss

of their natural habitat due to human activity. A recent census however revealed that the numbers of the endemic *walia* – a chestnut-coloured wild goat – the Ethiopian wolf and the Gelada baboon at the Simien National Park have increased dramatically.



(l-r) The Ethiopian Wolf and the Walia

According to the census, the number of walias in the park has risen to 751, up from 50 in 1992. The Ethiopian wolf population has also increased in numbers to 84, up from only 15 two decades ago. The number of Gelada baboons has risen to 15,000, a significant increase after a previous drop owing to hybridisation with other monkey species.

The rise in the number of endemic wildlife at the Simien National Park is a result of sound park management and awareness among the local human population.

Events

Ethiopia to host the 5th International Conference on Federalism

Preparations are well in progress to successfully host the 5th International Conference on Federalism to be held from 2nd – 4th December 2010 in Addis Ababa.

The conference will make a significant contribution to building a positive image of Ethiopia and Africa at large.

Ethiopia was chosen to host the conference at the 4th International Conference on Federalism held in India. It will be held for the first time in

Africa under the theme *'Equality and Unity in Diversity for Development'*.

Sports

Haile to make New York Marathon Debut, triumphs in Great Manchester Run

Ethiopian athletics legend, multiple Olympic and World Championships gold medallist, and Marathon World record holder, Haile Gebreselassie will make his first career appearance at the ING New York City Marathon on 7th November 2010.

The announcement was made at Icahn Stadium on 3rd June, where Gebreselassie joined 1,500 schoolchildren for the New York Road Runners Might Milers Fun Run as part of the second annual National Running Day celebration.

"It has been a long dream of mine to compete in this outstanding event, and I'm so excited about competing for the first time in my career in the ING New York City Marathon this November," Gebreselassie said.



Gebreselassie also won the BUPA Great Manchester Run for the third time in 28 minutes, two seconds, which was 23 seconds off his winning time last year.

Gebreselassie, who had been hoping to beat the record of

27 minutes and 1 second set by Kenyan Micah Kogo in 2009, said that strong winds kept him from posting a faster time.

Compatriot Worknesh Kidane, world silver medallist in the 10,000 metres at the 2003 outdoor championships, won the women's race in 31 minutes, 19 seconds.

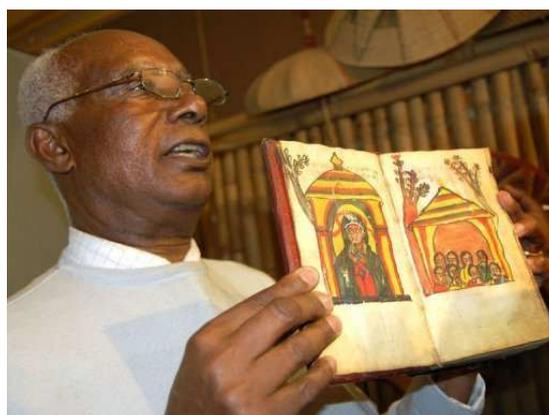
The event, involving 36,000 runners, is now one of the biggest 10k events in the world after its launch in 2003 with 10,000 participants.

News in Brief

Ancient prayer book returned to Ethiopia

A century-old Ethiopian prayer book, stolen decades ago, was returned to Ethiopia on 2nd June when an American collector agreed to its return.

The precious relic is a Psalter written in the liturgical Geez language and illuminated with colourful pictures of saints. It belonged to Emperor Menelik, who ruled Ethiopia from 1889 to 1913, and carries his seal.



It was handed over to the Ankober Medhanealem Museum, North Shoa Zone of Amhara State.

American philanthropist, Gerald Weiner, agreed to return the prayer book after a renowned expert in Ethiopian Manuscripts, Prof. Getachew Haile, initiated contact with him through his friend Prof. Stephen Delamarter.

Gerald Weiner is the largest collector of Ethiopian antiques in North America. Delamarter said he was still working with the Ethiopian authorities on ways of repatriating all the items in Weiner's collection.

Officials say thousands of Ethiopian historical objects remain in the hands of foreign collectors and museums in Western countries due to centuries of poor management which led to looting. Another relic, the Axum Obelisk, was re-erected in its original site two years ago after Rome returned the 150-tonne stela plundered by fascist Italy seven decades earlier.

£17,000 raised for Ethiopian NGOs

A total of £17,000 was raised for Amhara (£13,000) and Tigrayan (£4,000) indigenous NGOs at fundraising events held in London on the weekend of 29th and 30th May. Both NGOs have an unrivalled record in effective development projects. The support and contributions from the Diaspora was overwhelming.

Dr. Mulu Muleta receives Leadership Award

Dr. Mulu Muleta was awarded the 2010 Global ATHENA Leadership Award by ATHENA International, at the 16th Annual ATHENA Women's Leadership Summit in Chicago.

Dr. Muleta is the Senior Medical Advisor to Women and Health Alliance International, a not-for-profit that addresses maternal care and women's post-partum reproductive health in disadvantaged communities throughout the world. Muleta has been instrumental in developing the Alliance's maternal and neonatal health projects in various areas of Ethiopia, including the Gondar region.

The award recognises women who demonstrate excellence, creativity and initiative in their professions and provide valuable service to improve the quality of life in their communities, and whose work has national or international significance.

Dr. Muleta has worked with the Ethiopian Ministry of Health, the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital and the United Nations Population Fund. Trained as an obstetric surgeon in

Ethiopia, for the last 18 years she has treated women with fistula in Africa. She earned a Masters degree in Public Health at the Institute of Antwerp in Belgium and a PhD from Bergen in Norway. She has published several articles in peer-reviewed medical journals, and has been profiled in the Lancet. In 2009, she was recognised by the International Federation of Gynaecology and Obstetrics for her lifetime service.

Ethiopia hosts international film festival

Ethiopia hosted an international short film festival from 14th – 19th June, where 100 films were shown, the first international film festival to be staged in East Africa.

The organisers said that the festival encouraged the use of film as a personal, social and economic tool for development, boosting production of short films internationally, in particular on the African continent – in the context of unprecedented growth in African broadcasting.

Among the movies shown was *'Desert Flower'* starring Ethiopia's Liya Kebede, a film based on the true story of a former African supermodel, Waris Dirie, who rose from a nomadic life to the top of the international modelling business.

The event comes after three Ethiopian films won coveted awards at the **7th African Film Festival** in Tarifa, Spain. *Teza* (Haile Gerima), *Atletu* (Rasselas Lakew, Davey Frankel) and *LEZARE* (Zelalem Woldemariam) won the main awards at the Festival. The award is granted according votes cast by viewers.

The festival, one of the biggest African film festivals in Europe was held from 21st to 29th May in Tarifa, the closest Spanish town to Africa on the Andalusian coasts of the Strait of Gibraltar.