



Ethiopian News

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Ethiopia makes National Geographic Traveller’s ‘Cool List’ for 2020



Ethiopia's Statement on the Negotiations on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia noted with disappointment the Statement issued by the United States Department of Treasury on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) released on 28th February 2020, following a meeting held without Ethiopia's participation. Ethiopia had notified Egypt, Sudan, and the US that it needed more time to deliberate on the process.

Ethiopia, as the owner of the GERD, will commence first filling of the GERD in parallel with the construction of the Dam, and in accordance with the principles of equitable and reasonable utilization and the causing of no significant harm as provided for under the Agreement on the Declaration of Principles (DoP).

Ethiopia does not accept the characterization that the negotiation on the Guidelines and Rules on the First Filling and Annual Operation of the GERD (Guidelines and Rules) is completed. The "text"

reportedly initialled by the Arab Republic of Egypt in Washington D.C. is not the outcome of the negotiation or the technical and legal discussion of the three countries. Ethiopia made it clear that the Guidelines and Rules must be prepared by the three countries. The Countries are yet to address outstanding issues pertaining to the finalization of the Guidelines and Rules.

Ethiopia, with the full knowledge and agreement of Egypt and Sudan has addressed all dam safety related issues during the International Panel of Experts process. Egypt and the Sudan had expressed their appreciation under Principle 8 of the DOP and Ethiopia will continue to implement it in good faith.

Ethiopia is committed to continue its engagement with the Arab Republic of Egypt and the Republic of the Sudan to address the outstanding issues and finalize the Guidelines and Rules on the first filling and annual operation of the GERD.

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 29th February 2020



UK-Africa partnership: Why the UK should review its visa system for African visitors

An open letter to Boris Johnson, both Houses of the UK Parliament, and friends of Africa

by Arkebe Oqubay

A new beginning

In January 2020, the UK hosted the UK–Africa Investment Summit 2020, the first of its kind. At this historic event the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, declared that “Africa is the future, and the UK has a huge and active role to play in that future ... the UK and African nations are taking the first steps on the road to a new partnership”. Mr Johnson pledged that the UK will introduce a fairer immigration system built on “treating people the same wherever they come from, by putting people before passports”.

Does the UK discriminate against African visitors? A recent cross-party study by the Royal African Society (RAS) concludes that “The UK has good relations with most African countries, but it needs to be recognised that no single issue does more potential damage to the image or influence of the UK in Africa than this visa question”. The study

highlights that “Home Office data on visa refusals shows that African applicants are over twice as likely to be refused a UK visa than applicants from any other part of the world”. The perception is that the objective of the policy and practice is to increase barriers and “deliberately decrease the number of applicants” from Africa. Separately, British MPs have warned that UK-African relations are being severely damaged by what they refer to as a “broken” UK visitor visa system.

Problems faced by African applicants for UK visas

That the RAS report and the warnings by MPs have received little attention from government bodies, Parliament, and the majority of the media is disconcerting. There is a lot of truth in the finding of a cross-party inquiry that “people from African countries often perceive the reasons given for failed

applications as biased or discriminatory”. This perceived discrimination runs counter to the government’s ideals and values, is damaging to the country’s long-standing historical ties with Africa, and will weaken the overall relationship between the UK and Africa at a time when the UK needs to strengthen links with old friends outside the EU.

The bias against African visitors is multi-faceted, and not just limited to visa refusals. The visa process is lengthy and bureaucratic. Almost all visa applications from African countries are processed in Pretoria, South Africa, often taking up to 3-4 weeks. In most cases, visas granted are valid for 30 days only, even for ministers and government officials. Applicants are often charged a much higher fee than British visitors pay for visas to enter African countries. Comparison with other developed countries’ visa systems shows that it is less costly and time consuming for Africans to travel to the USA, EU, and China than to the UK. Visa applications to the USA and the EU, which often grant two-year multiple visas, are usually completed within a week. Some countries, such as Singapore, offer a visa service on arrival for African visitors.

Three practical measures for implementation in 2020

African governments have themselves been working to improve visa systems. More than twenty African countries grant E-visas for international visitors, including UK citizens. In January 2020 South Africa and Ethiopia signed a visa waiver for government officials and diplomatic passport holders. It would be easy for the UK to take three practical measures to eliminate the apparent bias against African visitors to the UK in 2020.

1) Visas should be easily accessible for African visitors to the UK and the fees should be reduced from their current levels. The minimum validity period should be comparable to those of the EU Schengen visa and the USA visa, which is 24 months. Applicants requiring visas for health care or business purposes should be encouraged and the duration of the visa process shortened.

2) Student visas are instrumental to the strategy of developing long-term and deeper relationships with African countries. Students educated in the UK

will be the next generation of business leaders, government officials, and community representatives. Student visas should be the simplest and most accessible, enabling African students to benefit from the UK’s excellent higher education system and allowing African universities to work closely and exchange academic staff and students with UK universities.

3) The UK should sign bilateral reciprocal agreements with the governments of individual African countries waiving visa requirements for diplomatic passport holders.

In addition to these, a comprehensive review of the current system should be undertaken, with particular attention to the findings of the cross-party study, which identified areas urgently requiring improvement.

Issues highlighted include: practical and logistical barriers; inconsistent and/or careless decision-making; perceived lack of procedural fairness; financial discrimination in decision-making; perceived gender or racial bias; and lack of accountability or a right of appeal. Addressing these problems will be seen by all Africans and African governments as a symbolic demonstration of the UK government’s commitment to partnership with Africa.

Thus, without prejudice to the UK’s right as a sovereign state to determine its own immigration policy and visa system for visitors to the UK, I call on the UK government to give urgent attention to improving the current system, especially as it applies to applicants from the African continent. As the UK leaves the EU, it will be seeking to further strengthen its diplomatic relations with other countries and increase its engagement in Africa. In a landscape where many international powers are competing for stronger ties with and influence in Africa, an easing of the visa process and increased goodwill towards African visa applicants could be of considerable mutual benefit to African countries and the UK.



Arkebe Oqubay, senior minister and special advisor to the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, ODI Distinguished Fellow, a member of the Royal African Society.



Ethiopia's tree-planting drive shortlisted for national climate change award



Ethiopia's Green Legacy Initiative, which resulted in over 4 billion trees being planted in 2019, has been shortlisted for The Climate Coalition's *Green Heart Hero Award*, which recognises the incredible work that is being done to tackle climate change.

The Awards are aimed at celebrating the unsung heroes who are helping to create a safer and cleaner future, and include green businesses, schools and Members of Parliaments.

Ethiopia is nominated in the "Overseas Inspiration" category:

“Between [May and October 2019], Ethiopia planted an almost unbelievable four billion trees. Enrolling volunteers from across the country, it embarked on one of the most ambitious tree-planting programs in history, with one day in July alone ending with 350 million trees planted. As part of the Green Legacy Initiative, the scheme is an example to the rest of the world of what is possible when a nation works together to help protect the things they love.”



PM Abiy Ahmed, who spearheaded the Green Legacy Initiative, plants a seedling within the Office of the Prime Minister's compound

Ethiopia is shortlisted alongside Sierra Leone's Ngoleagorbu Cocoa Farmers Union and Nigeria's Jos Green Centre E-Waste Solar Project. The nominations are submitted by the public.

Winners will be chosen by an independent panel of judges and announced on Monday 9th March at a ceremony held at the Houses of Parliament in London and hosted by Sky News presenter Kay Burley and BBC Presenter Evan Davis.

Ambassador Fesseha and the Head of Public Diplomacy, Mr Mekonnen Amare, will attend the reception on behalf of Ethiopia.

The British Institute in Eastern Africa celebrates 60 years of partnership with Ethiopia

On 26th February, the Ethiopian Embassy in London hosted an event to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the very successful collaboration between the Ethiopian Cultural Heritage Authority and the British Institute in Eastern Africa (BIEA).

H.E. Ambassador Fesseha Shawel Gebre warmly welcomed 90 guests to two illustrated talks, which were followed by a cocktail reception sponsored by Diageo plc, who have been investing in Ethiopia for

some years. Ambassador Fesseha congratulated the institution on their historic milestone and encouraged more collaborative efforts in archaeology, given Ethiopia's rich history and heritage.

At the event, BIEA's Director, Dr Jane Humphris, spoke alongside her colleague Dr Niall Finneran, of Winchester University. They stressed that much of the Institute's contribution involves the training of Ethiopian archaeologists as their research work is community based.



Dr Jane Humphris presents Ambassador Fesseha with a copy of Professor David Phillipson's "Archaeology at Aksum, Ethiopia, 1993-7" which provides detailed account of five seasons' research at Aksum.

Dr Humphris began by outlining some of the highlights of the partnership that involved investigation of Ethiopia's spectacular archaeological history.

She also addressed some of the exciting plans for future cooperation including a publication on iron works in ancient Aksumite iron production.

Dr Niall Finneran, who has previously directed landscape archaeology fieldwork projects in Ethiopia at Aksum, Shire and Lalibela, presented some of the fundamental results of the research he conducted under the supervision of renowned Ethiopian expert **Professor David Phillipson** in northern Ethiopia. In a broad-ranging presentation he explored aspects of early Aksum, shrine archaeology, kingship and monasticism in medieval Ethiopia.

Full event coverage, including interviews with BIEA will be up on our YouTube page soon. You can subscribe at www.youtube.com/EthioEmbassyUK.

Brighton Festival 2020 launches with Lemn Sissay as Guest Director



Brighton Festival is set to get a little taste of Ethiopia thanks to acclaimed Ethio-British poet, playwright, broadcaster and speaker, Lemn Sissay MBE, who has been selected as this year's Guest Director.

Brighton Festival is the largest annual, curated multi-arts festival in England, and this year's theme is Imagine Nation.

The Festival, scheduled to take place from 2nd –24th May 2020, will feature over 120 events taking place in 27 venues and locations across the region. Artists experimenting and creating new work is at the heart of the Festival with 17 premieres, exclusives, commissions and co-productions and many Festival debuts from international artists.

Lemn's personal passions flow throughout the 2020 programme, connected by a love of words and language across theatre, song, spoken word, art and poetry. Contemporary writers and poets are given a particular spotlight with several spoken word and book events.

His support for new and established Ethiopian artists also features prominently with appearances by Ethio-jazz legend Mulatu Astatke, contemporary pianist/composer Samuel Yirga and writers Maaza Mengiste and Aida Edemariam.



Maaza Mengiste, Mulatu Astatke and Samuel Yirga

In Adopt A Nation, Lemn invites the public to adopt him in an intimate one-on-one experience that will ask participants to share their own thoughts about family; and his best-selling memoir *My Name is Why* is discussed in conversation with British-Eritrean writer Hannah Azieb Pool.



Explaining how Imagine Nation is a place to join in, reflect and take time for a personal creative experience, Lemn said:

“The most damaging mirror trick in society is to convince people they have no imagination and that they are not creative. It’s just not true. There’s going to be something for you in this Festival. Broaden your horizons, be open and maybe try something different. Welcome to the Imagine Nation, welcome to the whole world in one celebration here at Brighton Festival 2020.”

Andrew Comben, Chief Executive of Brighton Festival added:

“Brighton Festival is an annual invitation to everyone to explore great art from all over the world and inspire individual creativity. We’re excited and proud to be bringing the Festival to so many areas of the city and the wider region and we hope that Lemn’s encouragement to be brave and try something new creates an ‘Imagine Nation’ in which we can all take part.”

Tickets go on sale at 9am, Weds 19th February.

For further information, visit Brighton Festival website at www.brightonfestival.org. The Ethiopia-related events can be accessed directly via the links provided.

Adopt A Nation

In this powerful, reflective, one-on-one experience, Lemn Sissay invites you to adopt him and tell him something about ‘family’ that you think he should know. For further information visit <http://bit.ly/AdoptANation>.

Mulatu Astatke | Monday 4th May, 8pm

Few musicians can claim to have kickstarted a whole genre, but Mulatu Astatke can rightly be called the father of Ethio-jazz, a fusion of traditional Ethiopian sounds with funk, soul and Latin rhythms.

Tickets: <http://bit.ly/MulatuAstatkeBF>

My Name Is Why | Wednesday 6th May, 7.30pm

Leinn Sissay reflects on a childhood in foster care, self-expression and Britishness as he discusses his memoir, *My Name Is Why*, with Hannah Azieb Pool.

Tickets: <http://bit.ly/BrightFestxMyNameIsWhy>.

Superheroes | Friday 15th May, 7.30pm

Join acclaimed poet Lemn Sissay in conversation with John Bird, social entrepreneur, life peer and founder of The Big Issue.

Tickets: <http://bit.ly/BrightFestxSuperheroes>

The Time Has Now Come: New Habesha Visionaries | Friday 15th May, 7.30pm

Spend an evening with some of Ethiopia and Eritrea’s new visionaries: Maaza Mengiste, Hannah Azieb Pool and Aida Edemariam.

Tickets: <http://bit.ly/HabeshaVisionaries>

Samuel Yirga | Saturday 23rd May, 1.30pm

Young Ethiopian pianist and composer Samuel Yirga comes to take Brighton by storm with his thought-provoking exploration of Ethiopian music fused with forward-thinking jazz and soul.

Tickets: <http://bit.ly/SamuelYirga>



Stolen 18th century crown returned to Ethiopia

A rare Ethiopian crown from the 18th century that was stolen and has been missing for two decades, was returned to Ethiopia on 20th February after it was discovered in the Netherlands.

The crown was received by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, the Minister of Culture and Tourism, H.E. Dr Hirut Kassaw, and other senior officials.



The Dutch Government, led by the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Sigrid Kaag, facilitated the handover with the belief that “it has a duty to reconstitute this important artefact back to its country of origin.”

The gilded copper crown, which features depictions of the Holy Trinity and Christ’s disciples, went missing from Holy Trinity Church in the village of Cheleqot in 1993 and was discovered in Rotterdam in October 2019, in the custody of Sirak Asfaw, a Dutch national of Ethiopian origin. Asfaw told the AFP in an interview that he found the crown in a suitcase left behind by a guest to his apartment.

According to a statement by the Dutch government, “Last year, Asfaw got in touch with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through the mediation of art detective Arthur Brand, to discuss how to return this important cultural artefact to Ethiopia. From

that point on, all parties worked together on the best way to restore the crown to its rightful owner.”

“We’re honoured and delighted to have been able to facilitate the rightful return. This is the crowning achievement of returning this heritage to its rightful place.”

~Sigrid Kaag, Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation

Following the handover, the crown went on display at the National Museum in Addis Ababa, and then will be returned to its original place in the church in Cheleqot.



The crown is taken to the National Museum in Addis Ababa

“Today Ethiopia receives a precious crown stolen several years ago and taken to the Netherlands. I am grateful to Sirak Asfaw and the Netherlands government for facilitating its return,” Prime Minister Abiy said in a tweet.

The bronze crown is thought to be one of just 20 of its kind in existence.

...museums urged to return stolen artefacts

Last year, on her debut visit to the United Kingdom, the Minister of Culture and Tourism, H.E. Dr Hirut Kassaw called on all museums and others who retain Maqdala heritage in their collections to return the artefacts to their rightful home.

The minister made the remarks during the historic ceremonial handover of locks of hair belonging to one of Ethiopia’s most popular Emperors – Tewodros II - at the National Army Museum in London.

Applauding the National Army Museum for the “brave and principled decision to return the Emperor’s hair,” the Minister said, “...for Ethiopians, these are not simply artefacts or treasures but constitute a fundamental part of the existential fabric of Ethiopia and its people...[I urge] all concerned to consider the intrinsic value of the items in their collections which are of far greater significance to Ethiopians than to those who removed them.”



Ethiopians celebrate the historic return of Emperor Tewodros' hair at the National Army Museum in London

As part of her trip to the UK, the minister also visited the British Museum, the British Library, the Victoria and Albert Museum and St. George’s Chapel in Windsor.

In discussions with the British Museum, the Minister formally requested the return of 11 replica Arks of the Covenant, taken following the Battle of Maqdala, that are currently privately stored at the British Museum.

“The Arks act as spiritual anchors for the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and are more than just artefacts,” the Minister emphasised.

Ethiopia to hold 2020 elections on 29th August

The National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) announced that 29th August will be the date for the next parliamentary elections.

The date is two weeks later than the electoral board had previously indicated (16th August), on account of the weather.

“Looking at parts of the country which will be affected by the rainy season, pushing the schedule a little further will ease our burden,” NEBE chairwoman Birtukan Mideksa said at a conference held in Addis Ababa on election preparations.



During the conference NEBE also unveiled its new logo

Voter registration is due to begin in April and political parties can commence their campaigns late in May.

According to the new schedule, the final results of the election will be announced from 30th August to 8th September.

Parliament approves hate speech and disinformation prevention law

The Ethiopian parliament has approved a hate speech and disinformation prevention and suppression law, aimed at preventing individuals from engaging in speech that incites violence, promotes hatred and discrimination against a person or a group.

The Law is also aimed at promoting tolerance, civil discourse and dialogue, mutual respect and understanding and strengthening democratic governance, and is intended to control and suppress

the dissemination and proliferation of hate speech, disinformation and other related false and misleading information.

The law prohibits disseminating hate speech by means of broadcasting, print or social media using text, image, audio or video.

254MW Genale Dawa III hydro dam inaugurated

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on 4th February inaugurated the 254MW Genale Dawa III hydro dam project, alongside the Minister of Water, Irrigation and Electricity, Dr Seleshi Bekele and the Minister of Innovation and Technology, Abraham Belay.

The Chinese-built hydro dam project cost around \$451 million and is expected to fill a critical gap in Ethiopia's ongoing efforts to meet the energy needs of the country's population.

The energy sector is one of Ethiopia's priorities as the country envisages becoming a light manufacturing hub in Africa and middle-income economy by 2025.

Recently, a 10-year energy roadmap was unveiled that aims to increase energy generation four-fold using various energy sources such as geothermal, hydro, wind, co-generation and solar power.

...\$6.5 billion needed to achieve universal access to electricity by 2025

The Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy (MoWIE) said Ethiopia needs \$6.5 billion to bring power, from renewable sources, to all its people by 2025.



This was revealed at consultations the Ministry had with representatives of the World Bank Group, the European Union (EU) and other development partners.

State Minister of Water, Irrigation and Energy, Dr Firehiwot Woldehanna, said the government is working to achieve universal access to electricity by 2025.

More than 7 towns/cities so far have access to electricity from renewable resources, he said, adding the private sector should play the leading role to boost the country's power generation capacity.

Ethiopia's overall access to electricity currently stands at only 44%.

Ministers approve additional \$870 million 2019-20 budget

As part of efforts to finance the ongoing economic reforms, the council of ministers approved a supplementary budget of \$877.87 million for 2019-2020.

According to a statement on the Prime Minister's Facebook page, 18 billion birr (approximately \$563 million) from the additional budget is allocated "to overcome current economic challenges."

"The rest of the money, which is 2 billion birr and 7.9 billion birr, will be allocated for safety-net programmes and the national implementation of equal pay for equal work, respectively."

This additional budget is pending approval by Parliament.

Ethiopia ratifies Kampala Convention for IDPs

Ethiopia became the 31st African Union (AU) Member state to ratify the AU Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Africa, known as the Kampala Convention.

The Convention, a key regional legal instrument aimed at protecting, assisting and resolving the

plight of IDPs, was unanimously passed by Ethiopia's parliament.

The Kampala Convention is the world's first and only regional legally binding instrument for the protection and assistance of IDPs, who often face heightened risks of sexual and other violence during their displacement, while they struggle to access their basic rights.

Welcoming the news, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, said in a statement that "this represents a significant achievement for a country that has had to recently manage massive internal displacement within its borders."

"The ratification of this Convention underscores the Government's concern and attention to the large number of people who are displaced, whether as a result of conflict or changing climatic conditions," said UNHCR's Representative in Ethiopia, Ann Encontre.

"UNHCR welcomes the opportunity to support the Government in implementing the tenets of the Convention and honouring its commitments, including through the development of a national action plan for IDPs".

33rd African Union meeting takes place in Addis Ababa

The 33rd Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union opened on 9th February at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa. The meeting, which ran until 10th February, was held under the theme "**Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development.**"



SILENCING THE GUNS:

Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's Development

In his opening address, the newly elected Chairperson of the African Union, H.E. President Cyril Ramaphosa of the Republic of South Africa, outlined the priorities that will need to be the focus of the Union to bolster the progress being made in driving Africa's growth trajectory within the framework of Agenda 2063 including:

- Deepening the unity of the continent;
- Advancing inclusive economic growth and sustainable development
- Ensuring political and economic unity, good governance and peace
- Supporting integration, industrialisation, economic development, trade and investment
- Development of an appropriate strategy for the fourth industrial revolution
- Economic and financial inclusion for women and mainstreaming the interests of women
- Conflict resolution
- Championing the position of Africa as a strong and influential player in the global arena



On the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which will become operational in July 2020, Mr Ramaphosa noted that the AfCFTA will be a major driver for reigniting industrialization and paving the way for Africa's integration into the global economy as a player of considerable weight and scale. Mr Ramaphosa also announced that South Africa will host the Extra Ordinary Summit on the AfCFTA to be held back to back with the Extra Ordinary Summit on Silencing the Guns in May 2020.

While speaking on the Theme of the Year, Mr Ramaphosa noted that, along with Africa taking

charge of its peace and security agenda and finding African solutions to African problems, there was an urgent need to "...deal with the action of countries outside our continent that are fighting proxy wars and fuelling ongoing conflicts on our continent."

The AU Commission (AUC) Chairperson Mr Moussa Faki Mahamat, speaking on the theme of the summit, emphasised the need for solidarity among African countries if the continent is to achieve its goals for a peaceful and secure Africa, noting that "the deficit of solidarity is one of the big weaknesses of the system of resistance and Africa's overall capacities for continental resilience.

In line with the ongoing efforts by the AU to ensure inclusion of women in Africa's development agenda, Mr Mahamat announced that 2020 to 2030 has been declared The Decade of Financial Inclusion for Women.

The UN Secretary General Mr Antonio Guterres spoke on the importance of including women and youth in Africa's peace initiatives.



He said that "peace, social cohesion and sustainable development require women's contribution and leadership. Women clearly have an essential role to play in conflict prevention and political transitions," he said.

He also said that it is necessary to engage and empower Africa's youth, whom he said have become advocates for peace through dialogue and addressing the root causes of conflict. In this respect he commended the *1 million by 2021* initiative of the African Union which aims to reach millions of African youth with opportunities.

TRADE AND INVESTMENT



Ethiopia resumes WTO accession negotiations

Ethiopia resumed its World Trade Organization (WTO) membership accession negotiations at the 4th meeting of the Working Party held on 30th January.



Mr Mamo Mihretu, senior advisor to the Ethiopian Prime Minister and chief trade negotiator, led a high-level government delegation, including Ambassador Misganu Arga Moach, State Minister of Trade and Industry, Dr Eyob Tekalign Tolina, State Minister of Finance, Ambassador Zenebe Kebede Korcho, Permanent Representative of Ethiopia in Geneva, as well as other senior government officials and experts from a range of ministries and government agencies.

This was the first meeting of the working party in almost eight years. The Ethiopian delegation said it was ready to work jointly with members to advance

and, hopefully, conclude, the accession process by the end of 2021.

Mr Mamo underscored the government's commitment to the accession process and called on members to accelerate negotiations in consideration of Ethiopia's status as a least developed country (LDC).

"Membership of the WTO is only the logical next step in Ethiopia's broader efforts to inject rule of law and predictability in its relations with all states around the world," he said.

"Ethiopia is now ready for a deal; I am here to seek your full support and commitment to facilitate this process and bring Ethiopia into the WTO within the shortest possible period, ideally not later than the end of 2021."

WTO members welcomed the resumption of the accession process and supported Ethiopia's domestic reform efforts through this process. In addition, members pledged to provide technical assistance to Ethiopia to expedite its accession.

The chair of the Working Party, Ambassador Morten Jespersen of Denmark, stressed that the resumption of Ethiopia's accession process coincides with the internationally recognised peace and integration efforts by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who was awarded the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize.

“As the Prime Minister said in his Nobel speech, while the world is shifting rapidly, it is time for Ethiopia to reap peace dividends with good faith to blossom into prosperity, security and opportunity. I have no doubt that today's Working Party meeting will contribute to reaching this goal, by becoming a critical turning point in the history of Ethiopia's accession” to the WTO, Ambassador Jespersen said.

“This meeting convened after almost eight years, has been critical at least on two accounts: first, sending a clear message that the accession of Ethiopia is back; and second, Ethiopia's engagement is decisively different from the past - it is pro-active and bold, as the WTO accession is integral to Ethiopia's ambitious economic reform agenda,” he added.

The chair noted that Ethiopia plays a major role in the Horn of Africa region, which has the highest concentration of WTO accession activities. “Therefore, the resumption of the accession of Ethiopia is expected to give positive impetus to other African accessions, as well as regional integration efforts on the African continent, such as the African Continental Free Trade Area.”

Given Ethiopia's strong drive to advance the accession process, the chair said members could aim at holding the 5th meeting of the Working Party after the northern summer break.

Mr Mamo's full statement is available on request. Please email press@ethioembassy.org.uk.

Independent Council of Economic Advisors established to enhance role of private sector

Ethiopia has established a 12-member independent Council of Economic Advisors to enhance the role of the private sector in the economy.

The establishment of the Council is meant to ensure successful implementation of the ambitious and comprehensive reform programme recently unveiled by the government to address macro-imbalance and sustain growth.

In her remarks at the establishment of the Council, Dr Fitsum Assefa, Commissioner of Planning and Development Commission, said the home-grown economic reform agenda initiated by the government has given attention to the private sector.

A 10-year economic plan, which will be announced by the government soon, requires the real involvement of the private sector, the Commissioner added.

Stating that the previous working system will no longer continue, she said, the government will continue to support the private sector, ensure rule of law and fulfilling infrastructure demands.

The Council will also offer an independent, objective and evidence-based economic policy advice to the government of Ethiopia.

Ethiopia presents new coffee logo at the International Coffee Event 2020

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Ethiopia unveiled a new coffee logo at the International Coffee Event (ICE) 2020 that was held in Addis Ababa from 6th to 8th February.

The new brand logo is expected to distinguish Ethiopian coffee and help coffee farmers obtain premium prices in the international market.

Speaking during a one-day stakeholder meeting held in August 2019, Aduagna Debela (Ph.D.), Director-General of the Ethiopian Coffee and Tea Authority, said that the new brand represents Ethiopia as the birthplace of coffee, with numerous varieties, and is hoped will build the reputation and acceptability of Ethiopian organic coffees.

Ethiopia is the largest coffee producer in Africa, with average annual exports of 200,000 tonnes over the last decade.

Albeit obtaining over 30% of its foreign exchange from exporting coffee, Ethiopia consumes half of the coffee it produces locally.



Dubbed “Coffee from the Land of Origins”, the second edition of the three-day International Coffee Event featured a conference and exhibition, as well as cupping and barista competitions, coffee origin trips and traditional coffee ceremonies.

56 exhibitors, hundreds of coffee buyers and experts from all over the world, and hundreds more coffee industry actors in Ethiopia took part in the event.

Addis Ababa gets 4G

Ethio Telecom, Ethiopia’s sole telecom services provider, has launched LTE Advanced 4G (Fourth Generation) technology “in some parts of Addis Ababa where there is high internet usage trend”. Frehiwot Tamiru, Ethio Telecom’s CEO, said there are plans to “launch the service in the regional states soon as well.”



The 4G internet service, Ms Frehiwot said, will contribute to the national effort towards creating a social, economic and digital economy. Furthermore, she said, it will be able to address the increased needs of users.

The network upgrade, carried out by Huawei after making the deal ten days ago, cost Ethio Telecom close to \$5.5 million (173 million Birr).



**VISIT | INVEST | TRADE
IN THE LAND OF ORIGINS**



Ethiopia makes National Geographic Traveller's 'Cool List'

Ethiopia has been included in National Geographic Traveller (UK)'s 'Cool List' of 20 must-see destinations for the year ahead.

Listed at number 12, Ethiopia is noted for its 'new tours, improved safety and a tourism trade that's growing faster than anywhere else in Africa'.

"...green, mountainous **Ethiopia is one of the most exciting places to visit in Africa, if not the entire world.** The government introduced electronic visas in June 2018 and encouraged the construction of new hotels in Addis Ababa, while new direct flights from Manchester have begun with Ethiopian Airlines. Travellers traditionally come to seek out the ancient rock churches of Gheralta and Lalibela, but several tour companies, including Wild Frontiers, are branching out to offer tours of the Omo Valley with visits to tribes including the Mursi, famous for their lip plates."

Pat Riddell, editor of National Geographic Traveller, said: "...we've scoured the globe for 2020's most interesting destinations. It's a list that gives you plenty of inspiration close to home, as

well as further afield, highlighting hiking trails, emerging culinary hubs, luxury lodges and landmark attractions...We hope this year's Cool List helps you enjoy the journey."

Other African destinations included in the annual list include Namibia at number 1, and Cairo at number 13.

The National Geographic recommendation is the second big international endorsement of Ethiopia as a tourist destination for 2020. Last November, Ethiopia was placed among the ['4 Best Countries to Visit' in 2020](#) by travel publisher and tailor-made trip provider, *Rough Guides*.

Rough Guides said "Ethiopia is utterly unique. The only country to cling onto its independence during the nineteenth-century Scramble for Africa, its culture and traditions have remained virtually intact. What's more, its history goes as far back as the beginning of human existence. Its age-old structures, fiery cuisine, Amharic language and high-altitude wildlife occur nowhere else in the world."

Ethiopian Airlines marks first anniversary with gift of roses to the North



Ethiopian Airlines Traffic and Sales Manager at Manchester, Timothy Bettney, right, and Tatton Park's head gardener, Simon Tetlow

Ethiopian Airlines marked its first anniversary of direct flights from Manchester Airport to Addis Ababa by donating rose bushes and bouquets featuring Ethiopia's famous flowers, to Tatton Park in Knutsford, Crook Hall and Gardens in Durham and other locations across the North of England including Newby Hall and Gardens near Leeds and Renishawl Hall in Sheffield.

The North-East is one of the top five regions to fly with the airline from Manchester this year since it launched flights from the Northern hub in December 2018.

The airline has flown more than 17,000 customers from Manchester Airport's Terminal Two since the launch and has helped contribute to the boost in tourism, not only to Ethiopia but to other countries in Africa, with its popular onward connections.

Roses are the biggest export on the airline's flights to Manchester, bringing in over 26 tonnes each month. Other key cargo includes machinery and garments.

Michael Yohannes, the Airline's UK Country Manager, said: "We are thrilled to be celebrating our first anniversary at Manchester Airport, and we could not think of a better way than bringing a touch of Ethiopia to the region. We are proud to have flown thousands of customers from Manchester and beyond to Ethiopia, and some of the other wonderful countries in Africa. The rose bush donation is a symbol of the growth of the airline across Manchester and the wider region."

Carole Hyde, Business Development Manager at Tatton Park, said: "Thank you to Ethiopian Airlines for selecting us as one of the gardens to be involved in this campaign to celebrate Ethiopia's top export, fresh-cut roses. We are only a short hop from

Manchester Airport so we are thrilled to welcome this new addition to our beautiful rose garden, and look forward to the connections between these two destinations blooming and blossoming further.”



Ethiopian flowers at Crook Hall and Gardens

Ethiopian Airlines, which flies to more destinations in Africa than any other carrier, uses the ultramodern B-787 Dreamliner on the route with business and economy classes. The service to Addis Ababa operates on Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

...non-stop Manchester-Addis Ababa route from July



Ethiopian Airlines will make its Manchester-Addis Ababa route, which currently transits in Brussels, a non-stop service from July. Further details will be provided in our next issue!

...Ethiopian Airlines welcomes new UK PR Manager

Ethiopian Airlines welcomed Sally Peters as newly appointed PR Manager for the UK.

Sally Peters joined Ethiopian Airlines on 3rd February, further strengthening the UK marketing team at their London offices in Chiswick. Sally brings a huge amount of experience to the fast-growing African airline, having previously worked in the airline and tourism industry.

Michael Yohannes UK Country Manager for Ethiopian Airlines said “We are delighted to have Sally join our team here in the UK. She brings with

her such a wealth of valuable experience and a network of industry connections. We are excited to expand our team and continue to grow passenger numbers and increase awareness of our brand.”

Commenting on her appointment Sally Peters said “I am delighted and very excited to be working with Ethiopian Airlines. I have admired the growth of the airline over the years and look forward to working with the team with my PR & Marketing experience to promote the airline and its brand in the future.”

After a year of continued successful growth, in line with its 15-year strategic plan, Vision 2025, the airline is looking to increase its market share from the UK and expand its operations out of Manchester Airport after celebrating a rewarding first year of service in December last year.

...Ethiopian Airline’s Skylight Hotel receives 5* rating

The Ethiopian Skylight Hotel has been awarded five-star rating by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

The \$65 million Hotel, which opened its doors last year, offers much needed 5-star accommodation in Ethiopia’s fast-growing capital city, Addis Ababa.



Conveniently located adjacent to the airport, its unique aircraft-shape design provides 373 guest rooms and spacious executive suites, 4 restaurants including the largest Chinese restaurant in Africa, 2 bars, a swimming pool, gym, health centre, café and gift shops.

The hotel also has 5 meeting rooms and a huge conference hall offering Addis a convenient location for global and regional conferences and events.

...Ethiopian mobile app hits 1 million downloads

The number of Ethiopian Airlines Mobile App users has reached one million.



With a robust and integrated digital strategy, the airline has set an innovative approach to simplicity and seamless end-to-end customer experience with its user-friendly mobile App.

The multi-award-winning global airline launched into a digitization journey with localised services, languages and 38 payment options.

Ethiopian Mobile App enables global passengers to book, pay, check in, board as well as enjoy flight status notifications all with a single-window system and a mobile-cloud first strategy.

Accor set to expand Ethiopia footprint with new Ibis Styles hotel

Accor, a world-leading augmented hospitality group, is expanding its presence in Ethiopia after signing a management agreement to open a new property under its design-led economy brand, Ibis Styles.

Accor has partnered with private conglomerate, Yuluch Elyano Trading plc, to operate **Ibis Styles Addis Ababa**, its fifth upcoming property in the capital, with a scheduled opening date of 2023.

Conveniently situated in a secluded location just off the city's main thoroughfare, Bole Road, 1km from Addis Ababa Bole International Airport and close to corporate institutions and embassies, the property will appeal to regional and international business travellers seeking stylish and affordable accommodation.

“Our partnership provides Accor with an exciting opportunity to showcase the Ibis Styles brand in a market where demand for innovative budget hospitality concepts is being driven by the continent’s booming domestic travel sector,” said Mark Willis, CEO Middle East & Africa for Accor.



“The deal also marks another important step in our African development strategy, growing our Ethiopia pipeline to five properties strong, across a diverse range of targeted brands and strengthening our presence in a region we have earmarked for accelerated expansion.”

Mr Goitom Girmay, Major Shareholder and CEO, Yuluch Elyano Trading plc, said: “Ethiopia is Africa’s fastest-growing economy, fuelled by significant investments in infrastructure and manufacturing, and visitor numbers to the capital are surging. This calls for high-quality accommodation operated by world-leading hospitality groups and our agreement with Accor to deliver a cutting-edge economy hotel brand in the dynamic capital aims to meet this market need.”

Ibis Styles Addis Ababa is expected to become a destination for travellers and families who appreciate trendy boutique-style accommodation with creative and culturally relevant design, modern technology and home comforts.

The hotel will join Accor’s growing pipeline of properties in Addis Ababa under brands including MGallery, Mercure, Pullman and Movenpick.

Kenenisa Bekele wins Vitality Big Half 2020 in new course record

As part of his preparations for the 2020 London Marathon, Ethiopian long distance great, Kenenisa Bekele set a new course record as he claimed victory at The Vitality Big Half on 1st March 2020.



Kenenisa with British athlete, Lily Partridge, who won the elite women's race

Seeing off strong competition from runner-up Chris Thompson, Kenenisa recorded a time of 60 minutes and 22 seconds, smashing Sir Mo Farah's previous course record of 61:15.

Bekele said: "This was my second half marathon in the UK and I'm very happy to win. It was a little bit windy...The new course record is a great bonus. I wasn't focused on time today; I just wanted to win."

"I'm on schedule in my preparation for the Virgin Money London Marathon in April. If the weather is good, then I'm hoping to run like I ran in Berlin last year."

"There's no question about the crowds in London being great. There was cheering all around the course; it felt like a great place to be thanks to the amazing people of London."

Ababel Yeshaneh breaks half marathon world record by 20 seconds

Ethiopia's Ababel Yeshaneh smashed the half marathon world record by 20 seconds on 21st February to win the Ras Al Khaimah (RAK) event in the United Arab Emirates.



The 28-year-old crossed the finish line in one hour, four minutes and 31 seconds at the World Athletics Gold Label road race, eclipsing the previous record of 1:04:51 set by Kenyan Joyciline Jepkosgei in Valencia in 2017.

Marathon world record holder Brigid Kosgei finished second, and her time was also two seconds inside Jepkosgei's mark.

Ethiopian distance runner Abadi Hadis dies

We were saddened to hear that Ethiopian distance runner Abadi Hadis died on 4th February at the age of 22.

A regular competitor on the international track and road circuits, Hadis made his big breakthrough in 2016. Clocking PBs of 13:02.49 and 26:57.88, he was the fastest U20 athlete in the world that year at

both 5000m and 10,000m. He also represented Ethiopia at the Olympic Games in Rio that year, finishing 15th in the 10,000m.

In 2017, while still a teenager, he finished third in the senior men's race at the World Cross Country Championships in Kampala, leading Ethiopia to the team gold medal. He went on to finish seventh in the 10,000m at the World Championships in London later that year.



Hadis at the World Championships in London

Hadis went on to record a 5000m PB of 12:56.27 in 2018 and followed it with a half marathon best of 58:44. He replicated that half marathon time at the start of 2019 and followed it with a 26:56.46 10,000m PB in Hengelo. His last competition was the World Athletics Championships Doha 2019, where he exited in the heats of the 5000m.

He is one of just five men in history to have bettered 13 minutes for 5000m, 27 minutes for 10,000m and 59 minutes for the half marathon.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Hadis' family and loved ones. May He Rest in Peace.

EVENTS

Women, War and Resistance in The Horn of Africa



The Bernie Grant Arts Centre is hosting an evening with award-winning author Maaza Mengiste, as she reads extracts from her new book *The Shadow King*, followed by an interview and audience Q&A chaired by Hannah Azieb Pool.

The Shadow King is set in Ethiopia in 1935 with the impending invasion of Mussolini's army. The novel is a captivating exploration of female power, and what it means to be a woman at war, casting light on the female soldiers written out of European and African history.

Date: Thursday, 5th March 2020 at 7.30pm

Venue: Bernie Grant Arts Centre, London, N15 4RX

Tickets + Info: <http://bit.ly/BGACxMaaza>

Save The Date: 8th April 2020

On Wednesday, 8th April, the Embassy will host an event where conservators working for the Ethiopian World Heritage Fund (EHF) will give an illustrated talk on their restoration of Ethiopian church wall paintings.

To register your interest, please send an email to rsvp@ethioembassy.org.uk.

For more information about the Fund, please visit www.ethiopianheritagefund.org and www.gerdahenkel-stiftung.de. EHF's mission was also highlighted in our November newsletter, as well as featured in *The Observer* and in a [BBC interview](#).

Eagles, Edges and Edifices: Touching the Heavens in Tigray, Ethiopia

Visiting Ethiopia's Orthodox Christian churches carved into cliff faces soaring more than 2,000m above sea level is an epiphanic experience – even for a non-believer.

Feet bare, belly pressed against a slab of rock, I inch my way along the ledge. The grainy surface feels oddly reassuring, given that beyond its edge lurks a sheer 200m drop. Across the gorge, a row of flat-topped cliffs rise abruptly like a set of colossal teeth; a lone eagle hovers lazily above the void. The next careful steps lead into a small cave, a locked wooden door improbably etched in the cliff side.

Upwards four-and-a-half metres and one dizzying ledge walk later, a simple padlock remains the last obstacle to Abuna Yemata Guh, the church cut straight into a cliff face. It's one of around 120 in Tigray, Ethiopia. A mountainous expanse of bare, razor-edged peaks jutting from flat plains of arid desert-like scrubland, the country's most northerly region is shrouded in myth and legend, none more captivating than its bizarre rock-hewn churches.

Here in the jagged Gheralta massif there are 30 or so. Carved into solid rock, hidden atop mountains and hollowed out of vertiginous cliff sides, they're some of the most obscure and hard-to-reach places of worship on earth. Despite this, the churches are still very much in use, serving the local community as they have done for hundreds of years.

Getting there is part of the test, Zelasie, our guide, tells me, only the truly devout (and a few crazy "ferenjis" – Ethiopians' word for foreigners) pass. Zelasie explains that going to church is a regular part of the weekly routine in Tigray. The local flock will scale its 4.5m wall, shuffling across its perilous ledge without a second thought. Even new mothers, newborns tightly swaddled on their backs, make the climb to baptise their babies.

Inside, the church is simple, a small cave with carpeted floors and painted murals covering its roof. With no wind, rain or sun exposure, the images on the ceiling have been perfectly preserved. Like a biblical comic book, the stories of Christianity plaster the roof – depictions of the Nine Saints who helped spread the religion through Ethiopia in the 5th century, the 12 Apostles, and Abuna Yemata, the church's founder.



We're alone: a rare treat, I'm told. "When I come here, I lose everything. I feel free. It's not like anywhere else. It is a special place," says Atsbha, leafing through the pages, now jaundiced and greasy with age. I have to agree, even as a non-believer something eerily ethereal hangs heavy in the air. His wide eyes are glassy as he tells of his plan to dedicate his life to the church and the community, just as his father has.

Read more at http://bit.ly/Visit_Ethiopia.

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