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THE BRIEF

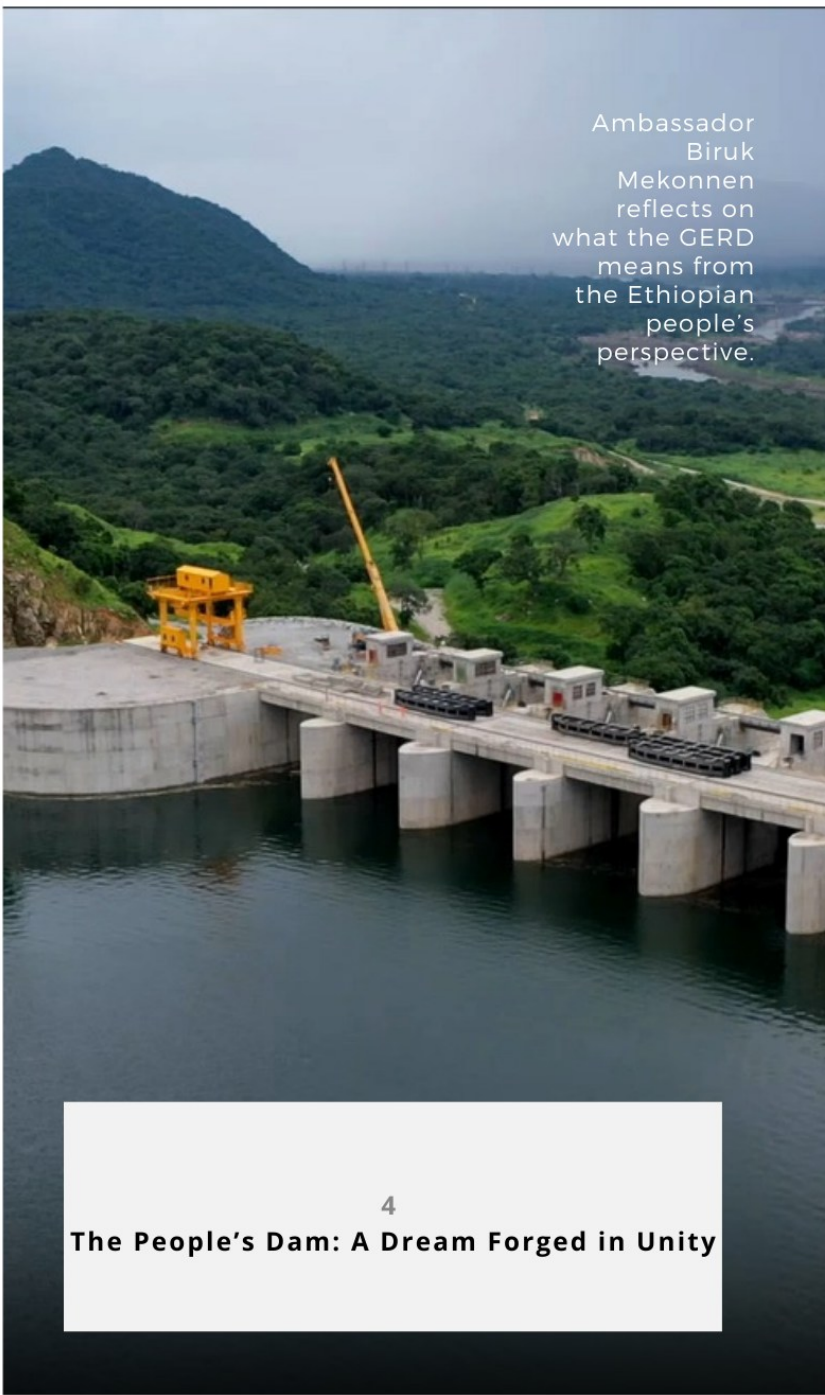
THE PEOPLE'S DAM



A MONTHLY
MAGAZINE

ETHIOPIAN EMBASSY,
LONDON

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Message from the Ambassador

It is a pleasure to present this edition of *The Brief*, our platform for sharing Ethiopia's story with fresh energy and perspective. I warmly thank our readers for your continued engagement and thoughtful feedback, which have helped shape and enrich our content. I am also grateful to the embassies and institutions now contributing articles, a sign of growing trust and collaboration we deeply value.

This September, Ethiopians everywhere will celebrate the arrival of the year 2018. I extend my heartfelt wishes for a joyful New Year filled with blessings and renewal. It is also with great pride that we mark the inauguration of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam—a symbol of unity, perseverance, and shared vision. To our diaspora, especially those in the UK who stood by this project through every challenge—thank you. Your support, through bonds and belief, helped make this day possible.

September also marks the Africa Climate Summit, highlighting Ethiopia's leadership in green development and the continent's broader environmental progress. The Summit coincides with the sixth year of the Green Legacy Initiative, which shows the concrete measures Ethiopia has been taking to protect the environment. With our proven experience in hosting major events, I am confident Ethiopia will excel once again. I warmly encourage all who can to physically attend the summit in Addis Ababa and actively participate in shaping our continent's future. For a deeper understanding, please revisit our July edition with detailed coverage of Ethiopia's climate initiatives and Green Legacy.

Another reason for celebration is the launch of a new megaproject jointly developed by the Ethiopian government and the Dangote Group. This initiative is set to shape Ethiopia's agricultural future and redefine the fertilizer market in Africa, further advancing the continent's economic integration. As we step into the New Year, let us celebrate how far we have come—and look ahead with purpose. Together, let us continue telling Ethiopia's story with clarity, pride, and unity.

H.E. Ambassador Biruk Mekonnen

***Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ire-
land***

THE PEOPLE'S DAM

**From blood and sweat,
From tears and tide,
A wall was raised,
A nation's pride—
This dam shall speak for all time.**



By H.E. Ambassador Biruk Mekonnen

This verse, a contextual translation of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's poetic reflection during his recent visit to the final phase of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), captures not only the emotional magnitude of the project but also the enduring spirit behind it. Now set to be inaugurated this September, the GERD is more than an engineering feat. It is the physical embodiment of a nation's collective will — a generational dream made real through unity, perseverance, and unshakable purpose.

In the heart of East Africa, where the Blue Nile carves its way from the Ethiopian highlands toward the Mediterranean, a monumental dam now stands—complete, resolute, and deeply personal. But long before its foundation was laid in 2011, the dream of building a great dam across the Abbay River had taken root.

Emperor Haile Selassie, deeply aware of the Abbay's untapped potential, spearheaded early efforts to study and harness the river's power. From various consultations with experts to commissioning a comprehensive hydrological study, his vision laid the intellectual groundwork. That landmark study identified potential projects including a large dam on Abbay. Though global and regional

pressures prevented his plans from materializing, he never wavered in his belief that future generations would carry the dream forward.

That belief bore fruit under the leadership of the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, who, in April 2011, laid the foundation stone for what would become Africa's largest hydropower project. In a bold move that set the tone for everything to follow, the decision was made to fund the GERD without external finances — relying entirely on the contributions and commitment of Ethiopians at home and abroad. Emphasizing the need for nationwide commitment, he declared, "Our shared contribution will serve as a legal declaration that every Ethiopian is a rightful owner of the dam." It was an audacious vision, but one that ignited the hearts of millions.

Across the country, schoolchildren, farmers, artists, engineers, and civil servants mobilized — not by decree, but by conviction. Mothers gave from meager savings, teachers from modest salaries, business owners from earned trust, and diaspora communities rallied globally in solidarity. This was not merely infrastructure. It was a deeply personal act of national ownership.

Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn, who succeeded Meles Zenawi, highlighted the success Ethi-



PHOTO (Above and Below): A recent image of the soon-to-be-inaugurated GERD. Road races like "I Run for GERD" rally public support and raise funds, fostering solidarity, patriotism, and commitment to the project.

opians achieved with the GERD, attributing it to their resilience, amicability, and the sustained diplomatic efforts of the government—often conducted under significant pressure. His leadership during these formative years helped ensure that Ethiopia remained committed, composed, and forward-looking, even amid mounting international scrutiny.

At every stage, the GERD has been shaped not only by the will of the people but also by resolute leadership. The project has faced numerous internal and external challenges. Yet rather than falter, it advanced — slowly and steadily — driven not by convenience, but by resilience.

When Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed assumed office in 2018, the GERD had reached a decisive

juncture. Technical disputes, financial delays, and questions of transparency clouded its future. Recognizing its central place in the national consciousness, his administration reorganized the project's management, recalibrated strategy, and re-energized public trust. Under his leadership, construction gained pace, key milestones were reached, and final preparations for the dam's inauguration were set in motion.

The GERD now stands as the largest hydro-power project on the African continent. Yet its legacy extends far beyond power generation. In a nation marked by rich diversity, the dam emerged as a rare symbol of unity — a project vast enough to include and uplift every Ethiopian. It revived confidence not only in national endeavours, but also in one another. ➡





The GERD Trophy, a symbol of national pride, toured Ethiopia to mobilize public support and raise funds for the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam.



Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed during an inspection tour of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD).



Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and former Deputy PM & Foreign Minister Demeke Mekonnen launching GERD's first turbines.

The GERD is Ethiopian in every sense — conceived by Ethiopian minds, built with Ethiopian resources, and defended with unwavering Ethiopian resolve. From vision to execution, it reflects a sovereign commitment to national development, grounded in self-reliance and collective pride.

Artists, media professionals, and musicians didn't merely report on the GERD — they made it their cause. Patriotic songs filled the airwaves, poets and dramatists invoked its meaning, schoolchildren debated its implications. Even its challenges became part of the national narrative. Contracts were reassessed, oversight tightened, and reforms implemented — not out of crisis, but out of care. The dam's most reliable source of energy, from beginning to end, remained what it always had been: public trust.

The dam also marks a significant turning point in the politics of the Nile. For generations, upstream countries like Ethiopia — contributing over 85% of the river's volume — were excluded from key water agreements. GERD does not aim to deny downstream nations their share, but rather to assert the right to equitable and fair use.

The dam has the capacity to reshape regional dynamics — powering Ethiopian industry, providing electricity exports to neighbouring nations, and offering a model for interdependence built on shared benefit rather than historic grievance. Its vast reservoir, stretching over 240 kilometers, has the potential to support tourism, fisheries, and environmental renewal.

To walk among Ethiopians today is to sense a quiet pride — not the fleeting pride of headlines, but a profound awareness of achievement born of struggle. The GERD is, of course, about electricity. It will light homes, power factories, and transform rural life. For countless Ethiopian mothers, it means relief from carrying heavy bundles of firewood over long distances and cooking over smoky open flames that strain their eyes and harm their health. It means cleaner kitchens, safer homes, and the possibility of rest where once there was only labour.

But beyond the turbines and transmission lines, it is about dignity — about reclaiming a voice, owning a vision, and reminding the world what is possible when a people and their leaders act in unison.

As Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed remarked during one of his visits to the dam:

“After all that has been said — and much that would have been better left unsaid — seeing this project reach completion is a moment every Ethiopian can celebrate. It is a testament to our decision to turn a dream into a beautiful reality, one that was truly worth our pain and struggles.” ■

This article was authored by H.E. Ambassador Biruk Mekonnen, the Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

ETHIOPIA'S BOLD MOVES SIGNAL A NEW ERA FOR AFRICAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

In a season of far-reaching reforms and headline-making agreements, Ethiopia is emerging as one of the continent's most determined architects of regional integration. From launching Africa's largest airport project and joining the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) trading regime, to establishing a four-country corridor authority and securing a landmark \$2.5 billion fertilizer investment with Nigeria's Dangote Group, Ethiopia is redefining its role not only as a national player but as a central force in Africa's economic transformation.

These are not isolated policy wins. Taken together, they represent an increasingly coherent strategy: to link infrastructure development, cross-border coordination, and continental trade liberalization into a framework of shared African prosperity.

Lifting Off: A Mega-Hub for African Aviation

Earlier this month, Ethiopia and the African Development Bank (AfDB) signed a landmark agreement to finance the \$10 billion Bishoftu International Airport, which

is set to become the largest aviation hub on the continent. Located 40 kilometers south of Addis Ababa, the new airport will begin construction in late 2025, with the first phase expected to be operational by 2029.

Under the terms of the agreement, the AfDB will mobilize \$7.8 billion in funding as the Mandated Lead Arranger. The airport will be able to handle 60 million passengers at opening, eventually scaling to 110 million — more than three times the current capacity of the continent's busiest airports. A complementary “airport city,” with hotels, commercial zones, and transport links, is also planned.

At the signing ceremony in Addis Ababa, Ahmed Shide, Ethiopia's Minister of Finance, called the project “transformational,” noting that “speed and scale are now the hallmarks of Ethiopia.” For the AfDB, which views aviation as a catalyst for integration, the airport marks a milestone in connecting African economies, markets, and supply chains.

More than a national asset, Bishoftu International is designed as a continental gateway, positioned to streamline cargo flows, enhance global connectivity, and deepen intra-African travel. The hub will relieve congestion at Bole International Airport, which has reached near-capacity, and help

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Ethiopian Airlines expand its pan-African network — long a lifeline for business and diplomacy across Africa.

From Agreement to Action: Ethiopia Joins AfCFTA Trading Regime

While planes have yet to take off from Bishoftu, a quiet but significant shift has already begun in Ethiopia's trade regime. On August 17, the country gazetted its Provisional Schedule of Tariff Concessions, formally enabling Ethiopian firms to begin trading under the rules of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) — the largest free trade pact in the world by number of members.

This step marks Ethiopia's transition from a signatory to an operational participant in a bloc that includes 54 countries, a combined GDP of \$3.4 trillion, and a market of 1.4 billion people. The Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration has begun equipping exporters with tools to comply with AfCFTA protocols and access new markets.

With a large domestic market of over 120 million and emerging industrial sectors in textiles, leather, and agro-processing, Ethiopia is uniquely positioned to serve as a manufacturing and logistics hub for East Africa. Its landlocked geography, once a constraint, is now being leveraged through strategic investments and regional partnerships — a sign of how infrastructure and policy are moving in parallel.

AfCFTA's ambitions go beyond tariff reductions. They involve the creation of pan-African value chains, more resilient domestic industries, and a reduced reliance on external markets. Ethiopia's entry adds weight to this vision and places it in the vanguard of countries that are translating continental commitments into operational trade.

This new trading environment is already yielding tangible results. In August, Ethiopia signed a \$2.5 billion agreement with Nigeria's Dangote Group to establish a world-class fertilizer plant — one of the largest industrial investments in the country's history. The project reflects AfCFTA in practice: African capital building African capacity to serve African markets. By reducing reliance on imports and supporting agriculture across East Africa, the plant strengthens Ethiopia's industrial base and deepens its role in regional value chains — a reminder that integration is

not only about moving goods, but also about producing them.

Seamless Borders: Regional Corridors as Economic Lifelines

But neither airports nor trade agreements can unlock growth in isolation. Movement — of goods, people, services — must be reliable, coordinated, and cost-effective. To this end, Ethiopia took a third strategic step in February by signing a Memorandum of Understanding with Djibouti, South Sudan, and Uganda to establish the DESSU Corridor Management Authority, a multilateral body designed to harmonize and manage regional trade corridors.

The Authority will oversee logistics networks, customs regulations, transport protocols, and environmental and health standards across critical trade routes in East Africa. It builds on Ethiopia's earlier bilateral framework with Djibouti and reflects a shift toward regional governance of infrastructure — something long missing in Africa's integration efforts.

By coordinating road, rail, and port services, the DESSU authority aims to turn fragmented corridors into functional economic arteries. This institutional structure — supported by a joint technical committee and slated to be formalized later this year — reflects Ethiopia's drive not just to build infrastructure, but to embed it within a governance framework that enables trade.

The Shape of Things to Come

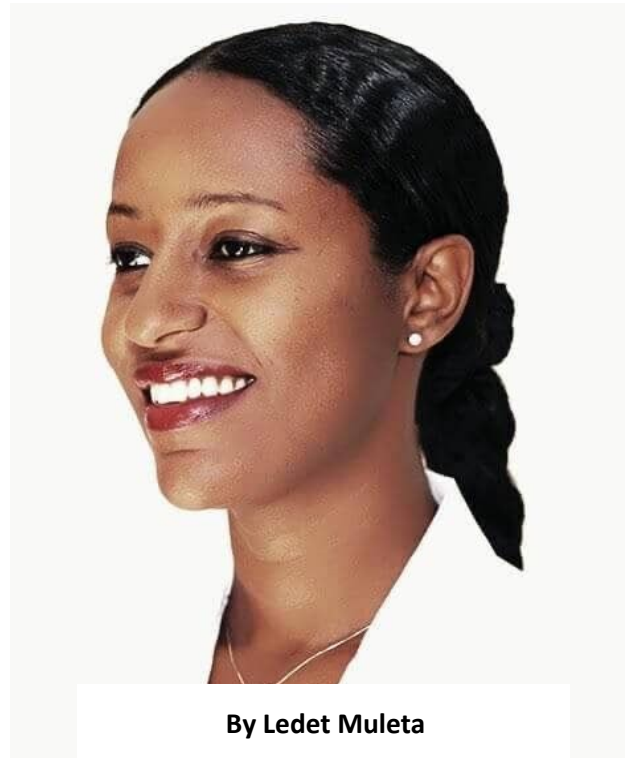
Ethiopia's momentum is not merely a story of domestic ambition; it is a continental signal. In aviation, trade, and logistics, the country is modelling how African states can align national development with regional value. The cumulative effect of these four moves is to close the gap between vision and implementation — something the African Union's Agenda 2063 has long aspired to.

That these projects are unfolding simultaneously is not coincidental. It reflects a shift in strategy: integration not as a political slogan, but as an infrastructural, legal, and institutional reality. And while challenges remain, the direction is unmistakable. A new logic is taking hold: that the way to continental strength is through regional interdependence, and that the path to a resilient economy is one built with neighbours.

In the long journey toward an integrated African future, Ethiopia has decided to move first — and fast. ■

Integration is
not a moment,
but a process
— and Ethiopia
is making that
process visible.

HEALING RIVERS IN ADDIS ABABA



By Ledet Muleta

Long known as Africa's diplomatic capital, Addis Ababa is now setting a bold example in sustainable urban development. Home to the African Union, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, and more than 130 embassies and missions, the city has long held continental influence. Today, it is drawing global attention for something new: the transformation of its rivers.

The **Addis Ababa River and Riverside Development Project**, a 44-kilometer-long initiative, is reshaping the capital both physically and symbolically. More than a beautification effort, the project represents a model for how African cities can pursue green growth, public health, and urban renewal—all at once.

For decades, the city's rivers, fed by more than 70 streams, suffered from neglect. Polluted with industrial waste and sewage, and bordered by informal housing and refuse, they had become corridors of decay. One of the two major rivers, stretching 21.5 kilometers and covering an area of more than 1,000 hectares, winds through Friendship Park and continues on to

Peacock Park, passing through five sub-cities and 12 districts. Once blighted, it is now emerging as a central vein in the urban fabric of the city.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the administration of Mayor Adanech Abiebie, those waterways are being reimagined as thriving ecological corridors. The project creates a continuous network of landscaped walkways, orchards, flood control dams, and restored natural habitats.

The initiative is improving life for millions of residents. By cleaning and recycling polluted water, it supplements the city's water supply and combats disease. Thousands of trees, including fruit-bearing varieties, purify the air and mitigate flooding. New recreational spaces—parks, playgrounds, and pedestrian paths—encourage physical activity, mental well-being, and social interaction, especially for the city's growing youth population. The renewed spaces also support employment and free up land for sustainable development, fostering long-term economic growth.

But the riverside project is not only about livability—it's a powerful tool for international diplomacy and identity. As host to numerous high-level gatherings, Addis Ababa is leveraging its revitalized riverbanks to provide world-class venues for climate summits, cultural exchanges, and peace dialogues. These green spaces offer more than aesthetics—they symbolize shared responsibility, unity, and a commitment to a sustainable future.

Foreign envoys have taken notice. For many, the project signals that African cities can be resourceful, ambitious, and environmentally conscious, even amid development constraints. It challenges old narratives about urban Africa, replacing them with a vision of leadership, innova-

tion, and ecological stewardship.

The riverside development is also positioning Addis Ababa as a **living laboratory**. Environmental scientists are tracking improvements in biodiversity and water quality, while urban planners study community integration, inclusive design, and climate resilience. Public programming, cultural installations, and neighbourhood participation have turned riverbanks into spaces of learning and social cohesion—valuable case studies for cities facing similar challenges.

For the international community based in Addis Ababa, the project has both symbolic and practical value. Beyond showcasing Ethiopia's commitment to the environment, it offers residents—including diplomats and aid workers—safe, open areas for exercise, family outings, and engagement. For some, the project echoes practices from their own home countries; for others, it provides a benchmark for future efforts. Framed as an **open-air museum**, the initiative dramatizes Ethiopia's principles of innovation and cooperation. The rivers are not just cleaner—they are curated spaces that reflect a new vision of the city. Each element, from public art to shaded walkways, serves as a living exhibit of sustainable planning.

Ultimately, the project is more than local infrastructure. It is a statement of intent: that Addis Ababa is not only a political capital but a **moral leader** in Africa's sustainable future. By turning its neglected waterways into vibrant arteries of renewal, the city invites the world to witness a new kind of diplomacy—where nature, culture, and cooperation flow side by side. ■

This article was authored by Ledet Muleta, Advisor at the Strategic Programs Management Office (SPMO), Addis Ababa City Administration Mayor's Office.





A NEW BRIDGE FOR BUSINESS

WHAT THE BRITISH ETHIOPIAN CHAMBER MEANS FOR THE FUTURE OF TRADE

The soft launch of the British Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce (BECC), held at the Ethiopian Embassy in London this August, marked more than a ceremonial occasion. It represented the formal introduction of a strategic platform designed to advance bilateral trade, facilitate cross-border investment, and lay the foundation for long-term economic cooperation between Ethiopia and the United Kingdom.

As both countries pursue expanded international partnerships and seek to diversify their economic ties, the establishment of the Chamber reflects a shared commitment to building a more structured and dynamic commercial relationship.

From Dialogue to Delivery

Historically, ties between Britain and Ethiopia have run deep. The two nations were early diplomatic partners: Ethiopia was the first African country to open an embassy in London, and Britain was among the first to establish a presence in Addis Ababa. But this chamber looks ahead, not back. Its creation signals a move from diplomatic goodwill to practical economic collaboration.

At its core, **BECC is a facilitation mechanism**—built to serve businesses navigating the often complex corridors of trade policy, regulation, and investment due diligence. For Ethiopian exporters, it offers access to one of the world's most sophisticated consumer markets. For British companies, it provides a doorway to

one of Africa's most populous, reforming, and strategically located economies.

What's at Stake

The stakes are not abstract. Ethiopia, home to over 120 million people and undergoing a sweeping economic transformation, is liberalizing key sectors, opening its first securities exchange in half a century, and pursuing industrialization with urgency. That creates immediate needs: capital inflows, technology transfer, market linkages, and credible international partnerships.

The United Kingdom, meanwhile, brings deep experience in finance, clean energy, logistics, and high-value manufacturing. It also holds a network of companies—particularly small and medium-sized enterprises—that are



increasingly looking beyond Europe for stable, growth-oriented markets.

The British Ethiopian Chamber is the mechanism that could make those aspirations actionable. Rather than relying solely on government-to-government agreements, BECC supports businesses directly: offering market insights, legal guidance, advocacy, and high-level networking between exporters, investors, financiers, and institutions.

A Chamber with a Mission

Unlike many chambers that operate in name only, BECC is built on a strategic blueprint. With founding support from both the Ethiopian and British embassies, its structure is designed for agility and access. The chamber plans to host trade forums, run B2B matchmaking events, organize business roundtables and facilitate dialogue between ministries, regulators, and the private sector.

It also seeks to play a quiet but critical role in policy advocacy—helping shape the regulatory environments in both countries to better reflect the realities of modern commerce. In this way, BECC is not merely a business club. It is a connector, a translator, and a catalyst. The formal launch of the Chamber is scheduled to take place in Addis Ababa toward the end of 2025, underscoring its dual presence and the importance of anchoring its mission in both capitals.

As Ethiopia's Ambassador to the UK, **Biruk Mekonnen**, noted during the launch event: *"This chamber is a bridge—where a coffee farmer from Sidama or a textile innovator from Hawassa can one day see their products on shelves in London."*

His words speak to the chamber's broader vision: a space where local entrepreneurs and global investors can meet not as strangers, but as collaborators.

The Spirit of Mutual Growth

For UK-based businesses looking to enter African markets, Ethiopia offers a compelling entry point: a youthful labor force, an improving infrastructure backbone, and regional trade access through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). And for Ethiopian producers and service providers, the UK remains a gold-standard export destination—demanding but rewarding.

The chamber offers a way to close the information gap and lower the barriers to entry on both sides.

With its three pillars—**networking, advocacy, and trade services**—BECC is positioning itself as a long-term partner in shaping a trade relationship defined not by aid or dependency, but by shared interests and aligned incentives.

Joining the Next Chapter

In an era marked by geopolitical uncertainty and global economic recalibration, BECC offers a rare model of bilateral cooperation grounded in pragmatism and possibility.

As trade corridors evolve and supply chains shift, platforms like this will be essential—not just to promote exports or attract capital, but to humanize and localize trade itself. Business, after all, is about relationships—and relationships need spaces to grow.

Membership is open. For companies, institutions, and entrepreneurs ready to engage across borders, now is the time to step in—not as observers, but as participants in building a more connected, resilient, and equitable economic future. ■

🔗 Learn more or become a member at britishethiopianchamber.com

Ethiopia's Pursuit of WTO Accession

A Defining Moment for Building Prosperity Through Global Integration



By H.E. Ambassador Negus Kebede

In today's interconnected global economy, few undertakings better reflect a country's dedication to reform, transparency, and international integration than joining the World Trade Organization (WTO). Ethiopia—Africa's second most populous nation and one of its fastest-growing economies—is now decisively reaffirming its path toward WTO membership, marking a pivotal chapter in its economic transformation and diplomatic engagement.

Since submitting its application in 2003, Ethiopia's accession journey has been protracted and complex. Yet, in 2024, the country has taken a decisive turn. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the stewardship of the Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration, Ethiopia has renewed its determination to conclude accession in line with national development priorities, regional integration goals, and international obligations. This effort is not simply about joining a rules-based trading system—it is about securing Ethiopia's rightful place in the global economic architecture and unlocking sustainable, inclusive growth.

A Journey of Reform and Readiness

Over the past years, Ethiopia has steadily advanced reforms in economic liberalization, infrastructure investment, and institutional modernization. The Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda, launched in 2019, laid the groundwork for transforming Ethiopia into a more open, private-sector-driven economy. Reforms in telecommunications, logistics, and finance have already sent strong signals to investors and trading partners.

Since 2020, Ethiopia has undertaken comprehensive economic reforms to align with WTO principles, focusing on market liberalization and institutional modernization. Key initiatives include the liberalization of the foreign exchange market, introducing a market-based system with broader access and improved transparency, and the creation of the Ethiopian Securities Exchange, which enhances long-term financing and investment opportunities for both the public and private sectors.

Ethiopia has also pursued sectoral liberalization in telecommunications, logistics, trade, and financial services, while professionalizing state-owned enterprises through Ethiopian Investment Holdings. Additionally, over 80 business regulatory reforms have been implemented to reduce costs, streamline procedures, and foster a predictable, investor-friendly environment. Collectively, these reforms aim to deepen financial markets, attract investment, and support sustainable economic growth.

In a congruent dovetailing, WTO accession now complements and reinforces this transformation. Ethiopia has updated its legislative action plans, services and goods offers, engaged in negotiations with key bilateral partners, and strengthened interministerial coordination to align domestic policies with WTO rules. The country has also taken notable steps to meet international standards on trade facilitation, sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures, and technical barriers to trade.

Central to this renewed drive is the 2024 WTO Accession Roadmap—a meticulously sequenced, time-bound framework that details legislative reforms, stakeholder consultations, negotiating rounds, and capacity-building initiatives. Endorsed at the highest levels of government, the roadmap provides for regular performance monitoring and policy oversight to maintain coherence, discipline, and momentum.

In this context, WTO accession has been repositioned not as a symbolic milestone, but as a strategic anchor for Ethiopia's domestic transformation and deeper integration into the global economy.

Strategic Imperatives and the Global Context

Ethiopia views WTO accession not as an end in itself but as a means to build an inclusive, resilient, and sustainable economy. The government's strategy emphasizes special and differential treatment, policy flexibility for Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and the safeguarding of national interests. Accession, in Ethiopia's perspective, must reinforce—rather than undermine—its development priorities, including food sovereignty, employment creation, and structural transformation.

This approach is consistent with Ethiopia's broader commitments under the African Union's Agenda 2063, the United Nations Sus-



Photo: Ethiopia's WTO Accession Working Party Meeting, 19 March 2025 (© WTO)

tainable Development Goals (SDGs), and regional trade frameworks. A successful accession would enhance investor confidence and consolidate Ethiopia's standing as a reliable, rules-based trade partner. It would also strengthen Ethiopia's role in advancing regional integration, particularly through the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

For Ethiopia, WTO membership is a strategic imperative to accelerate industrialization, enhance the competitiveness of local firms, and achieve deeper integration into global value chains. In an era of fragmented trade regimes and shifting geopolitical alliances, Ethiopia regards multilateralism as an anchor of stability, predictability, and legitimacy.

Accession is expected to improve Ethiopia's trade and investment climate by fostering transparency, predictability, and enforceability of trade rules. It will help create a more level playing field for domestic and foreign enterprises, encourage export diversification, and generate employment—especially for the country's large and youthful population.

Moreover, WTO membership offers Ethiopia the opportunity to consolidate trade and investment reforms, enhance the transparency of its trade regime, and gain access to binding dispute settlement mechanisms. As the country advances its Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda—including liberalization in telecommunications, finance, logistics, and manufacturing—WTO accession can serve as a vital anchor for sustained economic transformation, diversification, and competitiveness.

Ethiopia's accession also reinforces the WTO's role as a universal and

inclusive institution. At a time when the multilateral trading system faces growing challenges to its relevance and effectiveness, Ethiopia's pursuit of membership sends a powerful signal: that developing and least-developed countries continue to recognize the value of rules-based trade, non-discrimination, and transparent, binding commitments. As WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala observed, “although we are passing through a great deal of turbulence, the WTO is probably even more necessary today than it was when it was established in 1995. Indeed, the fact that large economies such as Ethiopia and Uzbekistan wish to join the WTO is a testament to the continued importance of the multilateral trading system and the stability and transparency it offers.”

Challenges on the Path Ahead

The path to WTO accession is complex and demanding. It entails rigorous bilateral market access negotiations, alignment of domestic policies with WTO agreements, and institutional strengthening. Certain domestic policy sensitivities—particularly in agriculture, state-owned enterprises, and services liberalization—require careful calibration to balance competitiveness with development objectives.

At the same time, Ethiopia must navigate complex bilateral demands, including issues related to investment rules, intellectual property, subsidies, and national treatment. While the special and differential treatment provisions for least-developed countries (LDCs) provide some flexibility, achieving a fair and development-friendly accession package remains a top priority.

Dr. Kassahun Gofe, Minister of Trade, Regional Integration, and Ethiopia's Chief Trade Negotiator, has consistently emphasized Ethi-

opia's readiness to engage constructively with all WTO Members. The country is committed to addressing outstanding issues in a business-like and time-sensitive manner, and to finalizing the remaining elements of the accession package efficiently.

Ethiopia calls upon WTO Members to exercise pragmatism, solidarity, and respect for national policy space. Accession should not impose unrealistic or excessive obligations; rather, it should foster domestic reform through partnership, dialogue, and targeted technical assistance, ensuring that accession is a mutually beneficial process.

A Whole-of-Government, Whole-of-Society Effort

Successfully concluding Ethiopia's WTO accession requires far more than formal negotiations—it calls for sustained engagement across government, business, civil society, and development partners. To this end, Ethiopia has institutionalized inter-agency coordination and expanded awareness campaigns, technical training, and private sector consultations.

Beyond the executive branch, the Ethiopian Parliament, judiciary, and regional administrations are increasingly involved to ensure the enactment and enforcement of WTO-consistent legislation. Guided by strong leadership from the Prime Minister's Office and coordinated through the National WTO Steering Committee, the process exemplifies a genuine whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.

The government recognizes that accession is not merely a procedural milestone but a long-term commitment to a complex framework of global rules, obligations, and institutional norms. What sets the current phase apart is the unequivocal political will at the highest level to see the process through to completion.

The fifth meeting of the Working Party on the Accession of Ethiopia, held in March 2025, marked a strategic turning point. Ethiopia submitted key documents, including updated goods and services offers, detailed responses to WTO Members' questions, and questionnaires on import licensing and state trading enterprises. Bilateral negotiations with dozens of WTO Members are now underway, reflecting Ethiopia's readiness to address both technical and political dimensions of the process in a transparent, results-oriented manner.

Notably, Ethiopia's revised services offer includes commitments in priority sectors such as finance, telecommunications, education, transportation, and tourism. In goods, Ethiopia has made bold commitments, with tariff bindings aligned with the benchmark levels typically required of least developed countries (LDCs). This demonstrates both a determination to meet WTO Members' expectations and a commitment to preserving necessary policy space for development.

Looking ahead, Ethiopia is preparing intensively for the sixth Working Party meeting, scheduled for last week of September 2025, which will be a critical step in advancing the accession process.

A Call for Strategic Partnership

Ethiopia's accession to the WTO is not merely a national aspiration; it reflects the country's long-standing commitment to multilateralism and regional integration. The government's goal of completing the accession process ahead of the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference in Yaoundé, Cameroon carries both symbolic and strategic significance.

Ethiopia has played a tenaciously pivotal role in the African Union, consistently contributed to regional and global peace and security, emerged as a continental hub for the aviation industry, and demonstrated a steadfast commitment to multilateralism.

Ethiopia is not seeking shortcuts; rather, it is calling for fairness, understanding, and constructive support. As a committed development partner, the country invites WTO members and international institutions to accompany its journey through active engagement, capacity-building, and mutually beneficial cooperation.

Ethiopia's accession will represent a milestone for Africa, marking the first least-developed country (LDC) accession in Sub-Saharan Africa since 2016. It will serve as both a precedent and an inspiration for other African countries pursuing WTO membership. Moreover, it will strengthen the integration of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) with the global economy, leveraging WTO principles to enhance regional cooperation and trade opportunities.

Conclusion: A Transformative Opportunity

Ethiopia's renewed drive toward WTO membership goes beyond procedural formalities—it is a political and economic choice: a choice to open its markets, modernize its economy, and engage confidently with the global trading system. It reflects a vote of confidence in multilateralism, the rules-based system, and Ethiopia's capacity to compete and thrive in an increasingly complex global economy.

Ethiopia looks to its partners to continue supporting its accession by recognizing the scope of domestic reforms, applying the Guidelines on LDC Accession in a spirit of solidarity, and contributing to the successful conclusion of the accession process in the near future.

This accession effort is emblematic of a broader transformation in Ethiopia's economic governance and global engagement strategy. Guided by reform-minded leadership, backed by broad institutional commitment, and supported by international partners, Ethiopia is on a credible path toward WTO membership.

The time is ripe. With sustained commitment, coordinated action, strategic diplomacy, and international goodwill, the conclusion of Ethiopia's WTO accession is within reach, ushering in a new era of prosperity, partnership, and peace. ■

This article was authored by H.E. Ambassador Negus Kebede,

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Permanent Mission of Ethiopia to the United Nations Office
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2018 E.C.

HAPPY ETHIOPIAN NEW YEAR

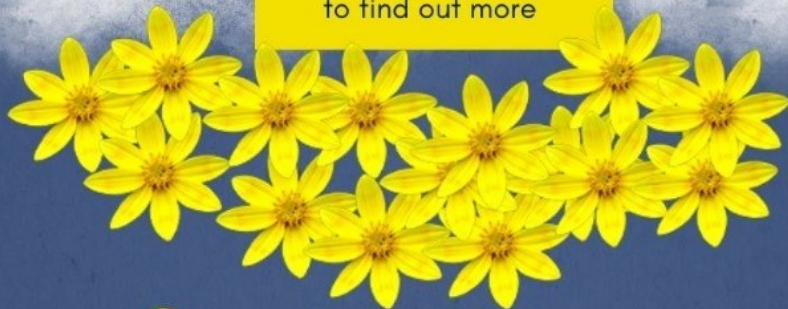
As Ethiopia prepares to enter a new year following the unique month of *Pagume*—the thirteenth month that marks the end of the Ethiopian calendar year—the Ethiopian Embassy in London is gearing up to share New Year greetings through cultural activations and symbolic gestures.

From flowers and coffee to QR-coded cards, the initiative invites friends of Ethiopia to explore the meaning of Enkutatash and the beauty of a calendar that holds thirteen months of sunshine.

Scan the QR code on the postcard displayed here to dive deeper into the story of *Pagume* and the features that make Ethiopia truly unique.



Scan me!
to find out more



Happy Ethiopian New Year 2018

As the rains fade and the golden Adey Abeba blooms
across the highlands, we joyfully welcome Ethiopian New
Year 2018.



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