

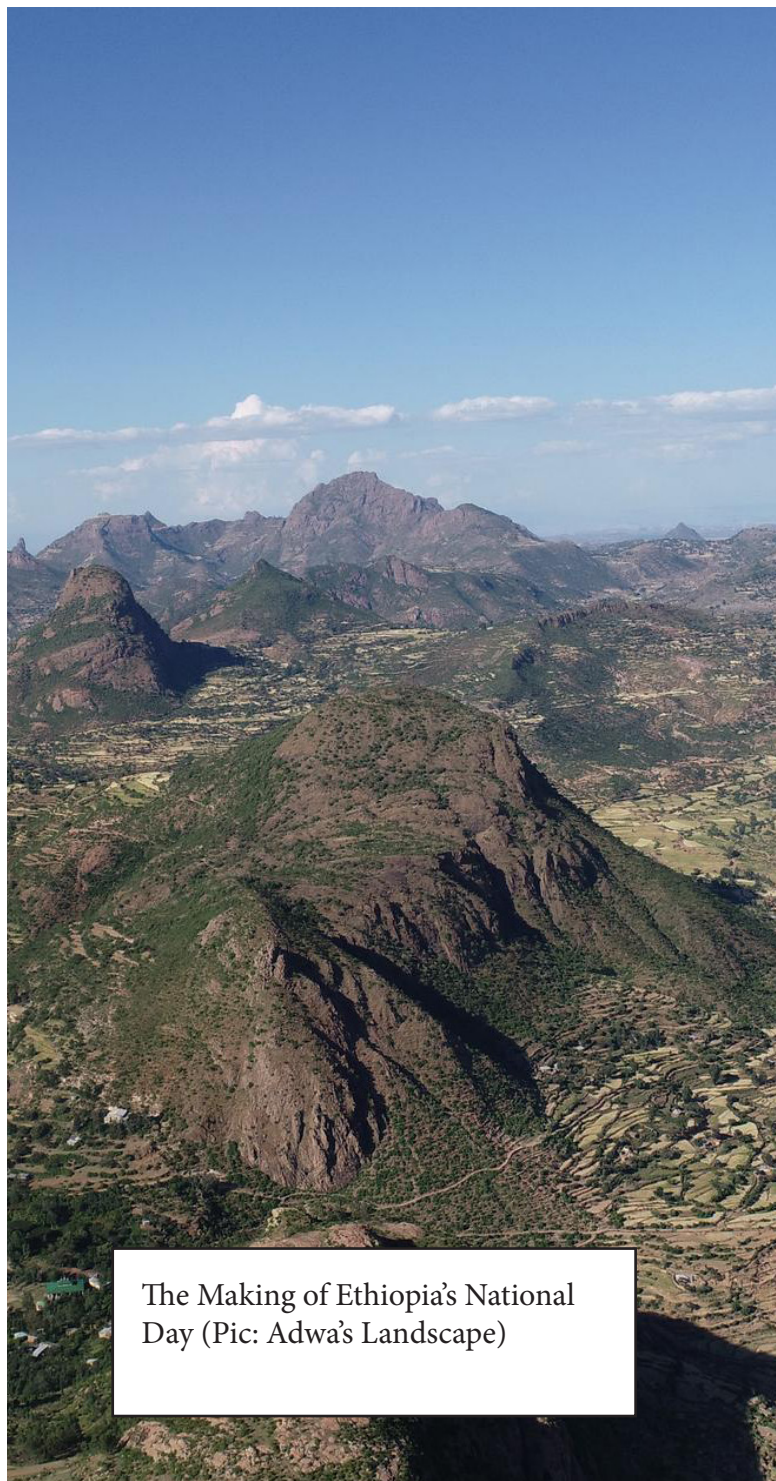
The Brief

SEPTEMBER 2026

The Making of Ethiopia's National Day



CONTENTS



The Making of Ethiopia's National Day (Pic: Adwa's Landscape)

3. NEW YEAR MESSAGE

H.E. Ambassador Biruk Mekonnen on 2018, 2019 and the road ahead

4. BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS & FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Business at the Centre of a Broader Ethiopia UK Partnership

6. NATIONAL DIALOGUE

After the Dialogue, the Real Journey Begins

8. NATIONAL IDENTITY

The Making of Ethiopia's National Day

11. ECONOMY

The Value Along the Way
Ethiopia's leather opportunity beyond the raw material

13. TECHNOLOGY & TRANSPORT

Can Africa Own the Electric Revolution?

2019

New Year Message



As we welcome the Ethiopian New Year 2019, I extend my warmest wishes to all Ethiopians, people of Ethiopian Origin and friends of Ethiopia in the United Kingdom. I am pleased to welcome you to another edition of our magazine, which continues to bring timely perspectives on the national, regional and international issues that shape Ethiopia's economy, society and communities at home and abroad. As we look back on 2018 EC, we can take pride in the progress made and look ahead with renewed confidence and purpose.

The National Dialogue was central to our work throughout the year. The Embassy facilitated consultations in London that helped elect diaspora representatives who went on to participate in the National Dialogue Assembly in Addis Ababa. Their experience now offers an opportunity to deepen the conversation within our community here in the UK. I hope they will help promote understanding, bridge differences and encourage a stronger culture of dialogue. Ethiopia needs voices that bring people together, and the diaspora can lead by example.

We also continued to strengthen our services to Ethiopians across the United Kingdom. By taking consular outreach services beyond London and expanding online services, we made it easier for our community to access the support they need. We will carry this work forward in 2019, reaching more people and making our services more responsive and accessible.

The year also saw strong momentum in economic and educational engagement. The Ethiopia-UK Trade Forum in London drew significant interest from businesses and investors and resulted in the signing of investment agreements and other bankable projects. In 2019, we aim to organize a follow-up Trade and Investment Forum in Addis Ababa and give UK businesses an opportunity to see the changes on the ground. We have also strengthened links between higher education institutions, opening new possibilities for knowledge exchange and technology transfer. These are partnerships with real potential, and we intend to deepen them with greater energy in the year ahead.

Our relationship with the United Kingdom is also gaining fresh momentum. High-level visits and exchanges between our two governments, together with the UK's renewed engagement with Africa, point to growing opportunities for cooperation. In 2019, we will work to turn this momentum into practical results, deepen our economic and people-to-people ties, and create more opportunities for Ethiopians and British partners alike.

As we enter the New Year, I invite our community to remain engaged, constructive and ambitious about what we can achieve together. May 2019 bring peace, prosperity and renewed hope to Ethiopia and to all Ethiopians at home and abroad.

**H.E. Biruk Mekonnen, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of
the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the United Kingdom of
Great Britain and Northern Ireland**



Business Partnership

At the Centre of Broader Ethiopia–UK Relations



By H.E. Ambassador Biruk Mekonnen

The timing of two recent developments in the Ethiopia–UK relationship is worth noting. On 21 August, Ethiopia and the United Kingdom signed a bilateral market access agreement under Ethiopia's long-running process of accession to the World Trade Organization. Five days later, Kirsty McNeill, the UK Minister for International Development and Africa, was in Addis Ababa for talks that ranged well beyond trade. The two developments were not part of the same event, but together they offer a useful view of where Ethiopia–UK relations stand today.

The agreement was signed by Dr Kassahun Gofe, Minister of Trade and Regional Integration and Ethiopia's Chief WTO Negotiator, and Darren Welch, the British Ambassador to Ethiopia. For Ethiopia, it marks another completed step in bilateral negotiations on the road to WTO membership. For the UK, it reflects its stated support for Ethiopia's accession and comprehensive economic reform programmes. More importantly, the agreement adds a specific economic commitment to a relationship that has long rested on diplomatic and development ties.

That economic dimension deserves attention. WTO accession is a demanding process, but its importance for Ethiopia ultimately lies in what membership can mean for trade, investment and participation in the international trading system. The bilateral agreement with Britain does not itself create new exports or investment. Its value will depend on whether Ethiopian businesses can make use of market opportunities, whether British companies see greater scope to invest and trade, and whether the wider economic reforms

create both the confidence and the conditions for those opportunities to grow.

This is also why McNeill's visit is relevant to the broader relationship. Her discussions in Ethiopia covered development cooperation, investment, climate and regional affairs as well as the broader bilateral relationship. Trade was therefore not an isolated issue. It formed part of a much wider conversation about how Ethiopia and the UK can work together at a time when economic questions are closely tied to development and regional stability.

The regional dimension cannot be separated from that relationship. Ethiopia and the UK continue to work closely on peace and security in the Horn of Africa, including developments in Sudan and Somalia. The discussions are taking place against the backdrop of conflicts that have humanitarian, political and economic consequences well beyond their immediate borders. McNeill's meeting with African Union Commission Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf on 26 August also focused on Sudan, Somalia, African peace efforts and the wider partnership between the UK and the African Union. The emphasis was on peace, civilian-led political processes and support for African-led peace operations.

For Ethiopia and the UK, this wider engagement matters because economic cooperation does not take place independently of the regional environment. Trade and investment need stability, while development itself is difficult to sustain where conflict continues to disrupt economies and institutions. Keeping these concerns within the same diplomatic conversa-



State Minister Amb. Hadera Abera meets Kirsty McNeill



Dr Kassahun Gofe and Darren Welch sign the agreement



AUC Chairperson Mahmoud Ali Youssouf meets Kirsty McNeill

tion is therefore less a matter of broadening the agenda than recognising how closely the issues are connected.

There is also a forward-looking reason to view the relationship through this wider lens. Ethiopia will host COP32 in 2027, while the UK will hold the G20 Presidency. The two countries will consequently have important international platforms through which climate, development, investment and questions affecting African economies will feature prominently. These global forums will create opportunities for practical cooperation.

For Ethiopia, COP32 can provide a platform for advancing African concerns, particularly around climate finance and development. For the UK, the G20 Presidency offers an opportunity to work with partners on international economic and development issues. The bilateral relationship can provide both countries with a channel to pursue areas where these priorities meet, particularly investment, sustainable development and climate-related finance.

Seen from this perspective, the WTO agreement is more than a standalone trade development, while McNeill's visit is more than a diplomatic engagement. Each belongs to a relationship that is becoming more economically substantive while retaining its political and regional dimensions.

The important question is what comes next. The WTO agreement has been signed. The ministerial discussions have reaffirmed the breadth of the partnership. The opportunities presented by COP32 and the G20 are approaching. What will give these developments lasting significance is turning them into practical co-operation, especially more trade, productive investment and stronger economic links between the two countries.

Ethiopia and the UK already have a long history of engagement. The current moment offers an opportunity to add a stronger economic dimension to that history without losing sight of the political, developmental and regional interests that have long connected them.

This article was written by H.E. Biruk Mekonnen, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Ethiopia to the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland.

After the Dialogue, the Real Journey Begins

The real test may be what comes next.

The closing of Ethiopia's National Dialogue brings an important process to a close, but it also raises a more consequential question. What happens after 4,000 people return to the communities and institutions from which they came?

For Chief Commissioner Professor Mesfin Araya, one of the clearest answers lies in taking the experience of the National Dialogue beyond the gathering itself. The dialogue, he reminded participants, does not end with the closing ceremony. The decisions and agendas that emerged from it will move to the institutions, regions and cities where they belong. More importantly, those who took part will carry something less tangible, but perhaps equally important, with them. They will carry the experience of listening, debating and reaching common ground with fellow Ethiopians whose perspectives may have been very different from their own.

That may prove to be one of the most consequential outcomes of the entire process.

Over 46 days, participants did more than discuss national questions. They experienced what it means to remain in conversation despite disagreement. They saw that differences do not necessarily have to lead to conflicts, and that difficult questions can be approached without turning every disagreement into confrontation.

The challenge now is to make that experience useful beyond the national forum.

Professor Mesfin put this point plainly when he observed that dialogue does not simply begin and end with one gathering. The decisions reached must proceed to the places and institutions responsible for taking them forward. The knowledge gained must also travel with the participants into future consultations, including dialogue among regions and communities.

This gives the post dialogue period a different character. The question is no longer simply what was discussed in Addis Ababa. It is how the habits developed there can in

fluence conversations elsewhere.

FDRE President Taye Atske Selassie offered an important perspective on this when he described the process as an opportunity to strengthen a political culture in which differences can be discussed with calm and respect. Among the lessons he identified was the possibility of replacing heated confrontation with measured engagement and allowing competing ideas to produce better ideas.

That lesson matters because no national dialogue can resolve every question in one sitting. A country as diverse as Ethiopia will continue to have disagreements. New questions will emerge, interests will sometimes collide and political differences will remain part of public life. The lasting value of dialogue therefore lies not in creating a country without disagreement, but in strengthening the ability to handle disagreement constructively.



Professor Mesfin Araya at the closing ceremony of Ethiopia's National Dialogue.

Former President of the Republic of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta captured another dimension of this future when he told the gathering that what Ethiopia was concluding was “just the beginning of a journey.” Speaking as a neighbour and friend, he emphasized that Ethiopia's peace matters beyond its borders. His message was not that outsiders should determine Ethiopia's future, but that the country's partners have an interest in seeing its peace endure.

His image of external partners “to hold a door open while Ethiopians walk through it themselves” offers a useful way of thinking about the next stage. Support from Africa and the international community can be valuable, but the substance of Ethiopia's national conversation must remain Ethiopian owned.

That principle also gives greater importance to those who participated in the dialogue. ►

The 4,000 participants will return to different regions, professions, communities and institutions they represent. Some will return to political life. Others will return to farms, businesses, universities, civic organizations and local communities. Their most important contribution may not be repeating the conclusions of the national forum word for word. It may be demonstrating, in their own settings, the way in which those conclusions were reached.

For dialogue to contribute to Ethiopia's political culture, its experience can be carried forward through continued engagement at the regional, community and institutional levels, particularly where different perspectives need to be brought together.

This is where the idea of interregional dialogue becomes particularly important. Issues that appear national at one level often have local and regional dimensions. Questions concerning resources, development, identity, mobility, trade, security and relations between communities rarely stop at administrative boundaries. The experience of sitting together at the national level can therefore provide a foundation for more informed conversations between regions and communities.

The next chapter may consequently be less visible than the National Dialogue itself. There may be no single hall filled with thousands of participants and no single closing ceremony to mark its progress. Instead, the work may unfold through many smaller conversations, institutional decisions and local engagements. That is also where the true test of the process will lie.

The recommendations emerging from the dialogue must ultimately be reflected in institutions, public policy and the wider life of society. That requires seriousness, transparency and sustained attention. But implementation should not be understood only as the execution of a list of recommendations. It should also mean preserving



President Taye Atske-Selassie at the closing ceremony of Ethiopia's National Dialogue.

the spirit in which those recommendations were developed.

Former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, speaking as an African Union Special Envoy, reinforced this broader responsibility by stressing that there is “no substitute for dialogue for peace.” His message points beyond the conclusion of a particular national process. Dialogue has value only when it becomes part of the continuing search for peaceful solutions.

This is perhaps the most important question facing the post dialogue period. Can the experience of 46 days become a habit of national life?

The answer will not be determined by speeches delivered at the closing ceremony. It will be determined by what happens afterwards, when difficult questions return, when interests diverge and when compromise becomes harder than confrontation.

The National Dialogue has provided Ethiopia with a significant experience. Its participants now have the opportunity to carry that experience outward.

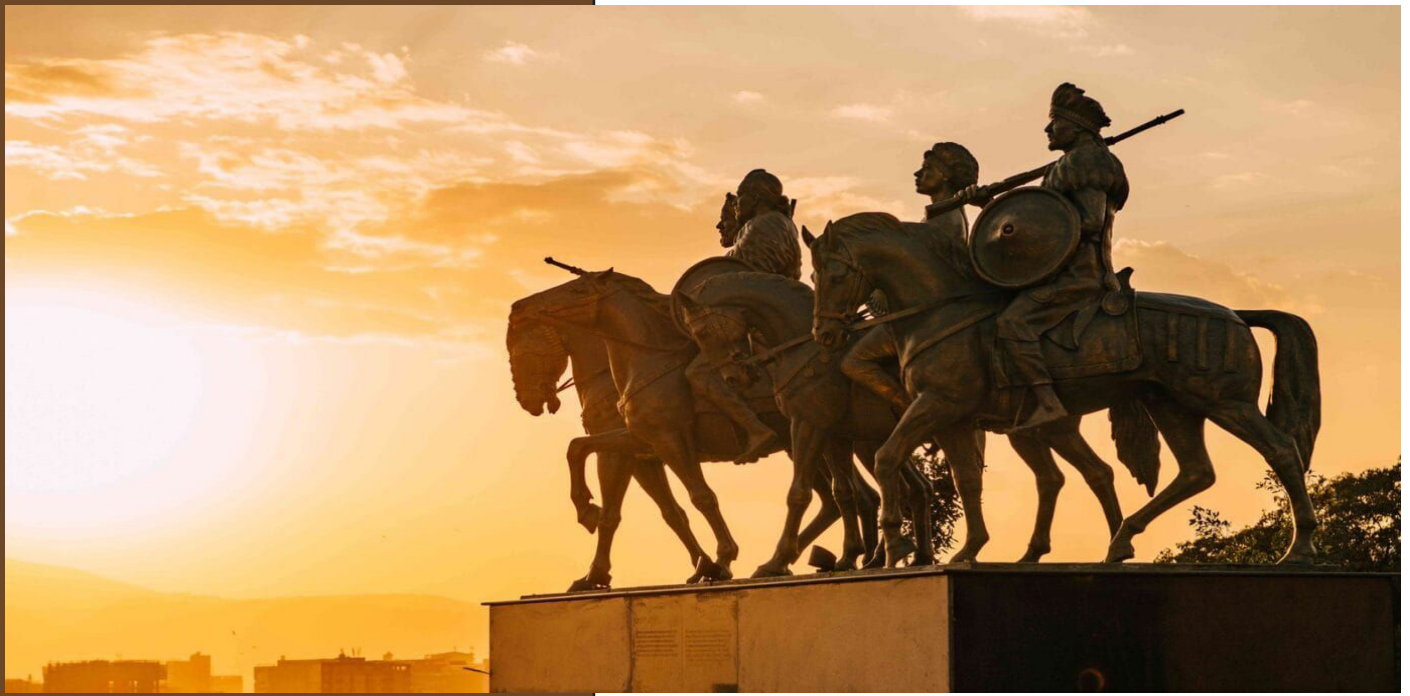
Institutions have the responsibility to give legitimate recommendations serious consideration. Regions and communities have an opportunity to build on the conversations already begun. And Ethiopia's partners can continue to support the process while respecting its national ownership.

The dialogue has therefore ended as an event, but not as an idea.

Its next stage will be measured in places far beyond the hall in which it concluded. It will be measured in the quality of conversations taking place in regions, cities and communities, in the willingness to listen before responding, in the ability to disagree without breaking the relationship, and in the capacity to turn common aspirations into practical decisions.

The 4,000 participants have returned home. What they learned together now has a chance to travel with them.

That may ultimately be where the next chapter of Ethiopia's National Dialogue begins. ■



THE MAKING OF ETHIOPIA'S NATIONAL DAY

On state and official visits to Ethiopia, foreign leaders and dignitaries may be taken to a special place, a memorial in the heart of Addis Ababa, where the story of Adwa is woven into Ethiopia's history. There is no battlefield, no army and no sound of gunfire. A wreath is laid, a moment of silence follows, and the visitor pays tribute to people who fought a war more than a century ago.

The ceremony is brief. Its significance is profound.

For generations, Ethiopians have celebrated the Victory of Adwa. March 2 has long been a public holiday, marked across the country and remembered as one of the defining moments of Ethiopian history. But in 2024, something more was added to its status. The Proclamation to Determine Public Holidays and Celebration of Public Holidays, Proclamation No. 1334/2024, formally recognized the Victory of Adwa as an Ethiopian National Day to be celebrated nationwide.

That distinction deserves attention.

A country can have many national holidays. A National Day carries a different meaning. It is the day a nation places at the centre of its collective memory, a day through which it tells its own people and the world something essential about who it is.

For Ethiopia, Adwa is an unusually powerful answer.

To understand why, we have to return to 1896, to a country without paved roads, motor vehicles or modern military supply systems. Adwa lies in the far north of Ethiopia, more than a thousand kilometres from Addis Ababa by today's roads. For those who travelled there in 1896, the journey was an ordeal of distance and terrain. Soldiers and their families walked for weeks and months through rugged country, many of them barefoot, carrying weapons and provisions that could withstand the journey.

There were no military rations as we understand them today and no regular supply chain carrying provisions from a central depot. Durable traditional foods and other provisions helped sustain those travelling north. Communities along the way, as well as joining the march, also had a responsibility to feed and accommodate the soldiers passing through.

The campaign was therefore sustained not simply by an army but by a society.

That is one of the most important things to remember about Adwa.

The people who gathered in the north came from different parts of Ethiopia.



The striking exterior of the Adwa Museum, honoring the enduring legacy of Adwa.

They spoke different languages, belonged to different communities and faiths, and carried different local identities. Yet when the country's sovereignty was threatened, those differences did not prevent a common national response.

The country itself became the cause.

Italian colonial forces were attempting to extend Italy's colonial ambitions into Ethiopia at the height of the European scramble for Africa. Across the continent, territories were being occupied and African sovereignty was being dismantled. Ethiopia faced the same imperial pressure and refused to accept the same fate.

On March 1, 1896, the Ethiopian forces defeated the Italian army at Adwa.

The victory preserved Ethiopia's independence and immediately acquired a significance beyond the battlefield. At a time when European colonial domination was spreading across Africa, Adwa demonstrated that conquest was not inevitable. For Africans living under colonial rule and for people of African descent around the world, the Ethiopian victory became a powerful symbol of resistance, dignity and self-determination. It would become one of the foundational inspirations of modern Pan-Africanism.

That is why Adwa belongs to Ethiopia and, at the same time, speaks to Africa. But its greatest value for Ethiopia today may lie somewhere else. Adwa offers a national memory that is older than the political divisions of modern Ethiopia.

The country has experienced dramatic changes of government and political order. Each era has had its own commemorations and defining dates. Such dates can be meaningful, but political transitions inevitably carry the identity of the political movements that produced them. What one generation remembers as liberation, another may remember as loss.

A National Day built around political change therefore risks belonging to one political history rather than to the nation as a whole.

Adwa is different.

It does not belong to the Imperial era or the military Derg. It does not

belong to the EPRDF or today's government. It belongs to a moment before all of them.

No contemporary political party created the victory, and no government can claim exclusive ownership of it. Its central meaning is not the triumph of one political group over another. It is the defence of Ethiopia's sovereignty.

That makes Adwa unusually well suited to become a day that Ethiopians can claim together.

This does not mean that Adwa should be used to erase the difficult chapters of Ethiopian history. A mature nation does not build unity by forgetting. Ethiopia's past contains achievements and challenges, moments of solidarity and periods of conflict, and histories that remain deeply contested.

But a shared national symbol does not have to settle every historical argument. It can simply provide common ground.

The Adwa Victory Memorial in Addis Ababa gives that common ground a physical form. Opened in 2024, the memorial has become a prominent place of remembrance in the capital, presenting the victory not as a distant episode but as part of Ethiopia's living national memory.

Its location is significant.

Addis Ababa has grown into one of Africa's principal diplomatic centres and is home to the headquarters of the African Union. Leaders from across Africa and the wider world regularly come to the city to discuss the continent's future. Increasingly, they also visit the Adwa memorial to pay their respects.

When a visiting head of state lays a wreath there, the gesture connects today's international diplomacy with a struggle over sovereignty that took place in Ethiopia 130 years ago.

The memorial therefore does more than preserve history. It gives Adwa a place in the present. And perhaps that is exactly what a National Day should do. It should not simply tell us what happened. It should ask what the past requires of us now. ►



A glowing dome illuminates the Adwa Museum's interior, creating a space for reflection and remembrance.

The Ethiopians who went to Adwa fought to preserve political sovereignty. The challenge facing the present generation is different. Sovereignty today also depends upon the ability to build economic strength, generate energy, produce food, educate citizens, develop technology and create opportunities for young people.

This is why idea of a modern Adwa has entered Ethiopia's national conversation. The modern Adwa is not another battlefield. It is the determination to build national capacity.

Agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, mining, education, infrastructure and the digital economy can all become arenas in which a sovereign country proves its ability to shape its own future. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam has likewise been presented as an expression of economic sovereignty and national ambition.

The lesson is not that every contemporary project is equivalent to the battle of 1896. It is that the principle underlying Adwa remains relevant.

A country cannot fully exercise sovereignty without the capacity to determine its own future.

That is a lesson large enough for every Ethiopian.

The Ethiopia that gathered at Adwa was diverse. The Ethiopia of today is no less so. Its citizens speak different languages, belong to different communities and faiths and hold profoundly different political opinions. National unity cannot mean pretending these differences do not exist.

It can mean finding something worth sharing despite them.

Adwa offers such a possibility because the victory itself was a shared national experience. The soldier who fought, the family that followed, the farmer who supplied food and the community that sustained those travelling north were all part of the same effort.

The victory was made possible long before the battlefield.

It was made on the roads, in villages and in homes across the country.

That is why the word "national" fits Adwa so naturally.

It was not merely a victory won in Ethiopia.

It was a victory made by Ethiopia.

The decision to recognize Adwa as an Ethiopian National Day therefore did not create a new tradition. The tradition was already more than a century old. What changed was its place in the official national story.

Adwa was given a status that reflects something many Ethiopians have

understood for generations. It is not simply one holiday among many. It is a moment through which the country can recognize itself.

There are other dates in Ethiopia's history that deserve remembrance. There are religious festivals, commemorations of political change, days of mourning and days that honour other forms of sacrifice. They all have their place.

But a National Day should ideally be something different.

It should be a day that does not require citizens to decide which political history they belong to before they can participate in it.

Adwa offers that rare possibility.

It does not ask an Ethiopian to celebrate a government.

It asks an Ethiopian to remember a country.

The people who walked north in 1896 could not have imagined the Ethiopia of today. They could not have imagined Addis Ababa as the diplomatic capital of Africa, the African Union headquarters, the modern memorial standing in the centre of the city or a generation debating economic and technological sovereignty.

They knew only that their country was threatened and that its future depended upon them.

They walked through difficult terrain. They carried what food they could preserve. They depended upon communities along the way. They endured hardship before they ever reached the battlefield.

And they stood together.

The political systems have changed since then. The governments have changed. The challenges have changed. But the central question remains.

What does it mean for Ethiopia to determine its own future?

That is the question Adwa can place at the heart of a National Day. It transforms memory into responsibility. It connects the Ethiopia that defended its sovereignty in 1896 with the Ethiopia that must build its capacity in the present.

Most importantly, it offers the country something that political commemorations rarely can.

A day that belongs neither to a regime nor to a political generation.

A day that belongs to the country itself.

That is why Adwa deserves to be Ethiopia's National Day. ■

The Value Along the Way

On a London runway, a piece of Ethiopian leather can tell a story that begins thousands of kilometres away.

This August, Ethiopian designers were among those presenting their work at Africa Fashion Week London, bringing Ethiopian craftsmanship, handwoven textiles and leather into one of the world's most influential fashion cities. Their appearance was more than a showcase of individual designers. It offered a glimpse of a much larger possibility, one in which Ethiopia's natural resources and traditions are transformed into products that compete in global markets.

That raises a question that reaches far beyond fashion. How much of the value created from Ethiopia's resources can remain in Ethiopia?

The question is particularly important for leather.

Ethiopia has Africa's largest livestock population and a long tradition of working with hides and skins. The country therefore possesses something many manufacturing economies spend decades trying to establish, a substantial domestic resource base. Yet having the raw material is only the beginning. Much of the real value is created afterwards.

Think of everything that has to happen between an animal and a finished leather product. The hide must be collected and preserved properly, processed and finished to the required quality, and then turned into something a customer wants to buy. That may be a pair of shoes, a handbag, a jacket, a glove or a specialised industrial product. Around all of this sits a much wider network of designers, technicians, manufacturers, suppliers, laboratories, transport companies, marketers and skilled workers.

Each stage adds value. Each stage can also create jobs and keep more economic activity at home.

This is the space Ethiopia is increasingly seeking to develop. ►



Leather design by Mastewal Alemu

For years, one of the industry's most persistent difficulties has been that the country's livestock advantage has not consistently translated into high-quality leather and competitive finished products. Damage to hides and skins can occur before they reach a tannery, while weaknesses in preservation, processing, manufacturing efficiency and supply chains can reduce their potential further. International markets, meanwhile, increasingly expect producers to meet demanding standards for quality, environmental performance and traceability.

These challenges are real, but they also reveal where the opportunity lies.

Better animal husbandry and handling can improve the quality of the raw material. Modern equipment and stronger technical skills can improve processing. Better manufacturing can turn leather into higher value products. Reliable certification and environmental practices can open doors to demanding markets. Design and branding can take the final step, turning a material into something that commands a much higher price because of what it is, how it is made and what it represents.

For investors and businesses, this is important because an emerging value chain creates opportunities at many points, not only in large factories. There is room for technology providers, manufacturers of components and machinery, specialised service companies, sustainable processing solutions, designers, brands and businesses that can connect Ethiopian production with international buyers. The opportunity is not simply to enter an existing industry, but in many cases to help build parts of the industry that are not yet fully developed.

The opportunity, then, is not simply to produce more leather. It is to build more of the industry around it.

That distinction matters. A stronger leather industry can connect Ethiopia's livestock economy with manufacturing in ways that reach far beyond the tannery. A shoe factory creates demand for soles, machinery, packaging and transport. A leather goods industry needs designers, pattern makers, technicians, quality specialists and marketers. International production requires testing facilities, certification and environmental expertise.

What emerges is not one industry, but an ecosystem.

The London fashion story helps make that possibility visible. When Ethiopian designers bring local materials and craftsmanship into an international fashion market, they demonstrate how value changes when a material is combined with design, skill and a route to the consumer. A hide is one thing. A well-designed product made from that hide,

carrying a distinctive identity and reaching a global customer, is something very different.

The lesson extends beyond fashion. Economies become stronger when they are able to develop capabilities around the resources they already possess. Ethiopia's opportunity is to bring together its livestock base, manufacturing potential, technical institutions, entrepreneurs, investment and access to international markets.

There is already a foundation. Ethiopia has leather manufacturers, research and testing institutions, technical expertise and a policy direction that places manufacturing and value addition at the centre of economic transformation. The ambition is increasingly to build a fuller chain, from better hides and skins through modern tanning and into footwear, fashion, leather goods and specialised industrial products.

The journey will require continued investment and improvement. Natural resources alone do not create internationally competitive industries. Quality has to be consistent, production has to be efficient, and businesses have to understand demanding markets. Environmental responsibility is no longer an optional addition either. It is increasingly part of the definition of competitiveness itself.

That is why the opportunity is best understood not as something Ethiopia already possesses, but as something it can build.

The All-Africa Leather Fair, expected to take place in Addis Ababa in November, comes at an important moment. Its expanded gathering of manufacturers, buyers, designers, technology providers and investors can help bring different parts of the value chain into the same conversation. For Ethiopia, the significance goes beyond the exhibition floor. It is an opportunity to connect the people who produce the material with those who can transform, market and sell it.

There is a pleasing symmetry in the journey. In London, Ethiopian designers are showing what local materials can become when craftsmanship meets contemporary design and a global audience. In Addis Ababa, the leather industry is working on the less visible but equally important task of building the production chain that can make such transformation possible at scale.

The future of Ethiopian leather will not be determined by the size of the country's livestock population alone. It will be determined by what happens after the hide leaves the farm and before the finished product reaches the customer. That space in between is where the greater value lies.

And it is where Ethiopia's next opportunity is being built. ■



Adama Wind Farm, Ethiopia, harnessing wind to power a cleaner future.

CAN AFRICA OWN THE ELECTRIC REVOLUTION?

In September, an electric bus is expected to leave Nairobi for Addis Ababa. It will travel about 1,600 kilometres across East Africa, following a corridor already tested by a fully electric convoy in 2025, as preparations are under way for the Nordic Africa EV Summit. The journey is more than a demonstration of a new kind of transport. It offers a glimpse of the questions that will shape Africa's electric future.

Where will the bus charge along the way? Will the systems in different countries work together? Can the electricity supply meet growing demand? Who will finance the infrastructure? And as electric vehicles become more common, who will build the businesses and industries that support them?

These questions are at the heart of the conversation coming to Addis Ababa in September. They are not entirely theoretical. On 5 October 2025, the Road to Addis expedition set out from Nairobi with a fully electric convoy bound for Addis Ababa, covering roughly 1,600 kilometres and testing the corridor in real conditions. The journey highlighted practical challenges around charging, power availability, border procedures and coordination between Kenya and Ethiopia.

The electric bus journey this September takes that experiment a step further, testing the same corridor with a different form of electric transport. The summit brings together African and European governments, businesses, investors, researchers and development partners to look beyond the vehicle itself and con-

sider the systems that will make electric mobility work at scale. That wider view is important. Africa's transition to electric mobility should not be seen simply as a change from petrol and diesel to electricity. It is also an opportunity to build industries, develop skills, strengthen regional markets and make better use of the continent's energy and mineral resources.

Africa has many of the minerals needed for the technologies behind electric mobility. Yet the economic value of those resources depends on what happens after extraction. Processing, battery production, vehicle assembly, charging infrastructure, software, maintenance and recycling all offer opportunities for African businesses and workers.

The choice is therefore not only whether Africa adopts electric vehicles. It is whether African countries can take a meaningful place in the industries being created around them.

Ethiopia has made that choice part of its national development agenda.

The country has moved rapidly to encourage electric mobility, including restrictions on the import of petrol and diesel vehicles and the introduction of its E Mobility Strategy and Implementation Plan for 2025 to 2030. The strategy brings together transport, energy, infrastructure, investment, public transport and technical capacity within a single framework. ►

There are strong reasons for this direction. Ethiopia has a relatively low level of motorisation, a large and increasingly urban population, and an electricity system based largely

on renewable generation. At the same time, imported petroleum has placed a long-standing demand on the country's foreign exchange. Expanding electric mobility therefore has implications for transport, energy security, economic development and the country's efforts to build a more productive industrial base.

The opportunities are considerable, but the work is equally clear.

Electric vehicles need dependable charging systems and suitable depots. Electric motorcycles need practical charging and battery swapping networks. The country will need trained technicians, reliable standards, appropriate financing and infrastructure capable of supporting a growing fleet.

These are not challenges unique to Ethiopia. They are continental challenges.

If every African country develops separate charging systems, technical standards and payment arrangements, electric mobility will remain fragmented. If countries can make their systems compatible, the possibilities become much greater. Vehicles can travel further. Manufacturers can serve larger markets. Infrastructure becomes more useful. Investment becomes easier to justify.

This is how African countries can realize the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade area (AfCFTA) and regional cooperation becomes more than an institutional ambition. It becomes an economic necessity.

The same principle applies to manufacturing. Africa has an opportunity to develop local assembly, components, battery services and recycling rather than remaining primarily a market for products manufactured elsewhere. Localisation will not happen overnight, and imported technology will remain an important part of the transition. But the long-term objective should be to build African capacity alongside the growth of the market.

The Nordic experience can contribute valuable lessons. Several Nordic countries have already built strong electric mobility markets and learned difficult lessons about infrastructure, taxation, procurement, regulation and consumer behaviour. Africa does not need to reproduce that experience exactly. Its cities, transport systems, energy resources and economic conditions are different. The value lies in adapting what has worked elsewhere to African circumstances.

For Britain, this is an emerging area of practical cooperation

as well. British International Investment has already supported Ethiopia's electric mobility sector through financing for Dodai, an Ethiopian company expanding electric motorcycles and battery swapping networks. Such partnerships demonstrate how British capital and expertise can contribute to African businesses developing solutions for African markets.

But the most important question is still the simplest one. Who will own the value created by this transition?

Who will manufacture the vehicles and their components? Who



Dilla, Ethiopia. A warm welcome for the electric convoy on the road to Addis Ababa.

will process the minerals? Who will build the charging networks? Who will develop the software? Who will train the people who maintain the vehicles? Who will repair and recycle the batteries?

The answers will determine whether electric mobility becomes

mainly a story about cleaner transport or something much more significant for African economies.

When the electric bus travels from Nairobi to Addis Ababa, its most important achievement may not be that it completes the journey without diesel. Its significance will lie in what the journey reveals about whether the lessons of the first electric crossing can be turned into a functioning regional corridor. It will be that the journey makes visible what must happen next.

Africa needs transport systems that are cleaner and more efficient. But it also needs the industries, skills, infrastructure and regional connections that can support them.

That is the larger opportunity behind the electric transition. Ethiopia's decision to host this conversation in Addis Ababa comes at a time when the country is itself putting many of these ideas into practice.

The electric revolution is coming to Africa. The real question is how much of its future Africa will help build. ■

SHOULD YOU REQUIRE ANY OF THE EMBASSY'S SERVICES, FIND THE NAMES AND CONTACT DETAILS OF OUR DEDICATED STAFF MEMBERS HERE.

STAFF MEMBERS	TITLE IN THE EMBASSY	EMAIL	PHONE NUMBER
H.E. Ambassador Biruk Mekonnen Demissie	Head of Mission	london.embassy@mfa.gov.et	02078383887
H.E. Ambassador Lelisa Birhanu Geleta	Deputy Head of Mission	deputy.head@ethioembassy.org.uk	02078383878
Mr. Mesfin Demessie Gebeyehu	Minister Plenipotentiary (Public Diplomacy Head)	public.head@ethioembassy.org.uk	02038159251
Mr. Dawit Akraha Wondaya	Second Secretary (Public Diplomacy Section)	public.officer@ethioembassy.org.uk	02078383884
Mr. Gidella Sahlemikaël Desta	Minister (Political Section Head)	political.head@ethioembassy.org.uk	02078383871
Mrs. Samrawit G/Meskel W/Medhin	Second Secretary (Political Section)	political.officer@ethioembassy.org.uk	02078383874
Mr. Mintesnot Rafael Fersha	Second Secretary (Political Section)	political_diplomacy@ethioembassy.org.uk	02078383884
Mr. Bekahil Lisanework Inermu	Counselor I (Business Section Head)	businesshead@ethioembassy.org.uk	02078383870
Mrs. Sophia Abdulmalik Hussein	Second Secretary (Business Section)	business@ethioembassy.org.uk	02078383896
Mrs. Mistre Dereje Gebreslassie	Second Secretary (Business Section)	business.officer@ethioembassy.org.uk	02078383886
Mr. Alemayehu Wagari Deressa	Minister Consulor I (Finance Head)	alemayehu.wagari@mfa.gov.et	02078383876
Mrs. Hana Birhanu Yadeta	Minister Counselor (Finance Section)	finance.officer@ethioembassy.org.uk	02078383881
Mr. Nebiyou Solomon Tesfamichael	Minister Counselor (Diaspora Affairs Section Head)	diaspora.head@ethioembassy.org.uk	02078383872
Mr. Dagnachew Worku Debela	Second Secretary (Diaspora Affairs Section)	diaspora.officer@ethioembassy.org.uk	02038466682
Mr. Gezahegn Mekonnen Mersah	Counselor I (Consular Affairs Head)	ca@ethioembassy.org.uk	02078383889
Mr. Menawyelet Melaku Folla	Second Secretary (Consular Affairs Section)	ca@ethioembassy.org.uk	02078383898
Mrs. Haimanot Abeje Negatu	Consular Attache	ca@ethioembassy.org.uk	02078383877
Mrs. Edom Negussie Alemu	Minister Counselor II (Human Resources Admin.)	hadmin@ethioembassy.org.uk	02078383875
Mr. Bereket Getachew Altaye	ICT (System Administration)	ict@ethioembassy.org.uk	02038159250
Mrs. Tersit Ginityslew Fekru	Executive Secretary	ca@ethioembassy.org.uk	02078383887



Follow us on:



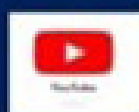
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/ethioembassyuk/>



@ethioembassyuk



@ethioembassyuk



@EthioEmbassyUK



@ethioembassyuk