

THE BRIEF

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WHEN THE FENCE FALLS, OUTSIDERS BENEFIT

PM Abiy Ahmed on
Division, Dialogue,
and Ethiopia's
Future



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WHEN THE FENCE FALLS, OUTSIDERS BENEFIT

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed reflects on Ethiopia's challenges, the lessons of history, and the choices that will shape the country's future in a two-part interview with Amhara Media Corporation.

In Ethiopian wisdom, a fallen fence carries a warning. When the barrier that protects a community collapses, the danger does not wait to ask who built it or who caused it to fall. The opening becomes an opportunity for those waiting outside.

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed returned to this image near the conclusion of his two-part interview with Amhara Media Corporation, using it to describe what he sees as one of Ethiopia's central challenges. A country divided against itself, he suggested, becomes vulnerable not only to internal conflict but also to forces that may seek advantage from those divisions.

The interview came at a time when Ethiopia continues to wrestle with some of the most difficult questions of its recent history. The armed conflict in some areas of the Amhara Region, unresolved debates over identity and boundaries, the aftermath of the Tigray war, competing interpretations of Ethiopia's past, and the future direction of the post-2018 political transition formed the background to his responses.

The different subjects raised during the interview ultimately led back to one question. How Ethiopia can manage its differences without allowing them to become sources of permanent conflict. Ethiopia's differences, in the Prime Minister's view, cannot be solved



by force or by one group seeking victory over another. They require dialogue, institutions, reconciliation, and a political framework that allows different communities to coexist within one country.

Discussing the armed conflict in some area of the Amhara Region, the Prime Minister framed the issue around a question he believed deserved careful examination. Whether the path of armed struggle has delivered the security and protection that were originally promised.

He acknowledged that many who joined armed movements did so believing they were responding to serious threats, including questions of security, identity, and territorial disputes. But he argued that the reality experienced by many communities has been insecurity, displacement, disrupted education, damaged property, and fear among ordinary citizens.

The question, he suggested, is whether these outcomes represent the future that people hoped to create.

The Prime Minister also addressed reports of alliances between some armed groups and forces that many Ethiopians regard as historic adversaries of the country. To explain his concern, he recalled a story by the Ethiopian writer Kebede Michael.

The story tells of a young mouse that quarrels with its mother and leaves home, convinced that it can find independence elsewhere. During its journey, it sees a cat and mistakes it for a possible friend. But before it can approach, a hawk appears from above. Terrified, the mouse escapes and returns home.

When the mouse tells its mother what happened, she explains that both the cat and the hawk are predators. One approaches from the ground and the other from the sky, but both represent danger.

The Prime Minister used the story to argue that political alliances must be judged not only by immediate convenience but also by their long-term consequences. In his view, cooperation with forces whose interests conflict with Ethiopia's national interests and even its very existence may appear beneficial during a political struggle, but it can pose far greater dangers in the future.

He connected this warning to Ethiopia's own history, arguing that moments when internal disputes opened the door to external influence had produced conse-

quences that lasted for generations.

His strong advice was that disagreements among Ethiopians should be settled among Ethiopians through discussion and reconciliation rather than through partnerships that deepen national divisions.

The same concern shaped his discussion of identity-based violence. He argued that Ethiopia's recurring conflicts cannot be understood only through narratives that permanently define one group as a victim and another as an aggressor.

According to the Prime Minister, violence often begins with narratives that portray communities as enemies, destroyers, or threats. Hate speech, misinformation, and political propaganda can transform local disputes into wider communal conflicts.

He placed particular emphasis on the role of social media, where false information can spread rapidly and create anger before facts are established.

His position was that individual crimes should be investigated through legal institutions rather than immediately interpreted as conflicts between entire communities. Ethiopia, he said, must avoid a political culture where every incident is transformed into an ethnic confrontation.

He repeatedly returned to Ethiopia's long history of coexistence. Communities have lived together, intermarried, shared cultures, and contributed collectively to the country's development. In his view, historical narratives that focus only on conflict while ignoring these connections provide an incomplete picture of Ethiopia's past.

The Pretoria Peace Agreement was one of the major focus of the interview. Responding to concerns that the agreement had harmed Amhara interests, the Prime Minister rejected that interpretation and presented the agreement as a necessary framework for ending war, restoring constitutional order, and creating conditions for reconstruction.

He said representatives from the Amhara Region participated in relevant government discussions and maintained that the agreement did not contain provisions intended to undermine the interests of the Amhara people.

On unresolved questions such as *Welkait*, an area whose

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Political alliances must be judged not only by immediate convenience but also by their long-term consequences.

”

status remains disputed between the Amhara and Tigray regions, he argued that lasting solutions cannot be achieved by satisfying one side while leaving another with unresolved grievances. Issues involving boundaries, identity, and constitutional arrangements, he said, require dialogue involving all affected communities and processes capable of producing sustainable peace.

The interview also addressed the changing attitudes of parts of the Ethiopian diaspora, including sections of the Amhara diaspora that initially supported the reform but later became critical of the government.

The Prime Minister said political shifts among diaspora communities have occurred for different reasons. Some people, he explained, believed they personally owned the reform and expected it to follow their preferred direction. Others, he said, were driven by personal interests. But he also recognized that some critics raise genuine concerns that require engagement.

His message to those with sincere questions was that reform cannot be achieved from a distance. It requires participation, discussion, and involvement in the process itself.

Throughout the conversation, the Prime Minister returned to *Medemer*, the political philosophy he has associated with bringing together Ethiopia's resources, experiences, and communities.

He described it as an approach rooted not only in politics but also in Ethiopia's own traditions of cooperation and reconciliation. He referred to *Debo*, the culture of collective labour; *Qene*, the tradition of layered communication; reconciliation practices; and *Gadaa* as examples of indigenous knowledge that can contribute to governance.

The underlying argument was that Ethiopia's future cannot be built through competing narratives of exclusion. No community, he argued, can secure lasting peace by defeating another community, and no historical account can become the foundation of a shared future if it ignores the experiences of others.

The challenge before Ethiopia, therefore, is not the absence of differences. It is how those differences are managed.

Near the end of the interview, the Prime Minister returned to the image of the fallen fence. His message was that Ethiopians must recognize their shared responsibility, repair internal divisions, and strengthen one another's weaknesses.

Through the story, the Prime Minister drew a broader lesson about the dangers of alliances that may appear useful in the short term but create deeper vulnerabilities over time. A broken fence creates an opening for danger. The task before Ethiopia, as presented in the interview, is to repair the fence together before the opening becomes too wide to close. ■

THE OTHER DIALOGUE

By H.E. Ambassador Biruk Mekonnen



Every national dialogue has two audiences. One sits inside the conference hall. The other watches from a distance.

The first audience speaks, listens, questions and reflects. The second interprets. It forms opinions through headlines, short video clips, conversations with friends and an endless stream of commentary on social media. In an age when information travels faster than understanding, these two conversations do not always move at the same pace.

Ethiopia's National Dialogue has reached a historic stage. Thousands of representatives from across the country have come together after years of public engagements and preparation to deliberate on issues identified through an extensive agenda setting process. Yet alongside the dialogue taking place inside the conference rooms, another dialogue is unfolding across the country. It is a dialogue about the dialogue itself.

That second conversation deserves just as much attention.

Many Ethiopians are following the proceedings with hope and curiosity. Others watch with understandable caution. Questions naturally arise. What exactly is happening inside the conference? Does every statement made by a participant represent the position of the dialogue? Is every proposal a final decision? Who decides what happens next?

These are not small questions. They influence how the public understands the process and what expectations it places upon it.

One of the most striking features of the National Dialogue has been the amount of attention given not only to the issues under discussion but also to the process itself. Over the past four years, the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission has repeatedly explained how representatives were selected, how

agenda items were collected, how moderators were prepared and why communities from every corner of the country were invited to participate. That persistent emphasis suggests an important lesson. The credibility of a national dialogue depends not only on what is discussed but also on whether people understand how the discussion unfolds.

Public discussions often move quickly from a participant's remarks to conclusions about the entire process. Yet a national dialogue is designed to do something quite different. It creates space for ideas to be expressed before they are weighed, challenged, refined or rejected through deliberation. The purpose of bringing together people with different histories, experiences and perspectives is not to produce identical opinions. It is to create an opportunity for disagreement to be explored through conversation rather than through confrontation.

That distinction matters.

When a participant raises an issue, it does not become national policy. When a difficult subject appears on the agenda, it does not become a national decision. Discussion is not the same as endorsement, just as listening is not the same as agreement. The conference exists precisely because Ethiopia's most important questions deserve careful examination rather than immediate conclusions.

This understanding also helps explain why the Commission has consistently described its own role with restraint. Its responsibility is to facilitate dialogue, safeguard the integrity of the process and ultimately present recommendations. The dialogue itself is not a legislative institution. It is not a court. It is not an executive body. Its strength lies in creating a structured national conversation whose outcomes can inform the country's future through recommendations built upon broad participation. ►



Top and bottom: Scenes from the launch of Ethiopia's National Dialogue on July 15, 2026

That may seem like a technical distinction, but it is essential to appreciating what the process is designed to achieve.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the National Dialogue is not found in any single agenda item. It is found in the act of bringing together people who might never otherwise have shared the same room. Farmers and pastoralists, religious leaders and academics, women and youth, elders and people with disabilities, representatives of political parties, professionals, community leaders and members of the Ethiopian diaspora all entered the process through different paths but with the same invitation to speak and to listen.

One participant expressed this beautifully by saying that for generations women watched history unfold from a distance while others spoke on their behalf. Standing before the conference, she reflected that for the first time her country had invited her to speak. Her words captured something larger than personal experience. They reminded us that inclusion is not measured only by the number of chairs in a conference hall. It is measured by whether people believe their voice belongs there.

Another participant offered a simple observation after meeting people from different parts of Ethiopia. He realized that many misunderstandings had grown not because people knew each other too well, but because they had not known each other enough. In that reflection lies one of the quiet ambitions of every genuine dialogue. It is not merely to exchange opinions but to reduce the distance between citizens.

This is also why patience matters.

National dialogue unfolds differently from the rapid rhythm of public debate. It asks participants to pause before responding, to hear unfamiliar perspectives and to wrestle with difficult questions whose answers may not emerge in a single meeting. In a world where public conversations are often compressed into brief clips and instant reactions, dialogue follows a slower rhythm. That slower pace should not be mistaken for weakness. It is often the very condition that allows thoughtful consensus to develop.

There is another idea that has appeared repeatedly throughout the dialogue process. Many participants have spoken not only about solving today's disagreements but also about shaping how future generations will resolve theirs. They speak of building a culture in which differences are addressed around a table instead of across a battlefield. One participant captured this hope with memorable simplicity. If fire could build a house, Ethiopia would have completed that house generations ago. A house is built when hands work together, when hearts understand one another and when people truly listen.

That image deserves to endure beyond the conference itself.

The lasting success of a national dialogue will not be measured only by the recommendations it produces. It will also be measured by whether Ethiopians continue the habit that the process has tried to cultivate. A habit of asking before assuming. A habit of listening before judging. A habit of understanding the difference between a conversation and a conclusion. A habit of discussion rather than confrontation. And a habit of avoiding pre-judging the outcome, without examining the whole process.

Perhaps that is the other national dialogue taking place today. It is the conversation that helps citizens understand not only what is being discussed, but also how a nation chooses to discuss its future. That understanding may prove to be one of the most valuable outcomes of the entire process. ■

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



STRATEGIC AFRICA

The Addis Ababa moment signals Africa's changing global role



the Union to use multilateral platforms and partnerships to advance Africa's priorities and strengthen its role in global affairs.

In his opening remarks, Ethiopia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Gedion Timothewos described this period as one requiring "a new African paradigm." He argued that the African Union must strengthen its ability to act as a strategic institution capable of advancing Africa's priorities and offering solutions to global challenges. "Our Union must serve as the institution through which Africa articulates its priorities and advances its interests," he said.

The message from Addis Ababa was not simply about the future of one organization. It reflected a broader conversation about Africa's evolving position in the world. The continent's economic growth, demographic importance and expanding role in

As African foreign ministers and diplomats arrived in Addis Ababa for the 49th Ordinary Session of the African Union Executive Council, they entered a city experiencing a period of visible transformation. New public spaces, improved corridors and expanding urban connections have reshaped parts of Ethiopia's capital as it continues to host one of the continent's most important diplomatic institutions. Beyond its changing landscape, Addis Ababa remains a place where Africa's political conversations have unfolded for decades, from the founding of the Organization of African Unity in 1963 to the work of the African Union today.

The gathering took place at a moment when the international system itself is changing. Geopolitical competition, technological disruption, climate pressures and growing interest in strategic resources are creating new realities that will influence Africa's future. The central question before the continent is no longer only how to respond to global changes, but how to participate in shaping them.

African Union Commission Chairperson Mahamoud Ali Youssouf noted that the session was taking place amid heightened global uncertainty, emphasizing the need for



global affairs have created new opportunities, but realizing those opportunities requires institutions that can translate ambition into action.

Ambassador Édouard Bizimana, Burundi's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairperson of the AU Ex-▶



African foreign ministers and delegates pose for a group photograph during the 49th Ordinary Session of the African Union Executive Council in Addis Ababa

ecutive Council, emphasized that Africa must continue strengthening its voice in international affairs. “Global governance without Africa is incomplete and therefore ineffective,” he said, pointing to the continent’s increasing engagement in global platforms and the importance of defending common African positions.

The discussions also highlighted a practical foundation for Africa’s ambitions, financial sustainability. Leaders stressed that an institution expected to implement continental decisions must have the resources needed to fulfill its responsibilities. The closing session recognized Burundi’s commitment to implementing the 0.2 per cent levy and welcomed Angola, Ethiopia and Kenya among the Union’s Tier One contributors. These steps were described as important progress toward strengthening the financial independence of the African Union.

The question of resources was also central to discussions about Africa’s future development. Dr. Gedion emphasized that Africa’s resources should be managed through African institutions, African frameworks and African led solutions. The objective, he said, should be to ensure that shared resources become sources of co-operation, integration and prosperity.

Another major focus of the session was water security. The African Union’s 2026 theme on sustainable water availability and safe sanitation systems reflects a challenge that connects directly to development, public health, climate resilience and economic growth. Ensuring reliable access to water is increasingly recognized

as a foundation for achieving the broader goals of Agenda 2063, Africa’s long-term vision for transformation.

The Executive Council also reviewed progress on strengthening AU institutions, advancing continental integration and implementing Agenda 2063. Discussions on health cooperation, regional coordination and Africa’s representation in international organizations reflected a common priority among member states, building stronger mechanisms for collective action.

For Ethiopia, hosting the meeting carried historical significance, but the discussions in Addis Ababa extended far beyond national boundaries. The city once again served as a meeting point for conversations about Africa’s place in a rapidly changing world. Its role as the home of the African Union has made it a symbol of continental dialogue and cooperation.

The 49th Executive Council session offered a reminder that Africa’s future influence will depend not only on its natural wealth, population and economic potential, but also on the strength of the institutions it builds. The challenge ahead is to ensure that Africa’s growing importance is matched by the capacity to make decisions, implement priorities and contribute confidently to global solutions.

The Addis Ababa moment was therefore about more than a two-day meeting. It was about a continent examining how to turn its aspirations into strategic capability and how to build the foundations for a stronger role in shaping the future. ■



THE NEW TRIANGLE

From Addis Ababa to the Gulf, a New Economic Map Is Taking Shape

For centuries, the narrow waters of the Red Sea connected Africa and Arabia through commerce, migration, culture and ideas. Colonial trade routes later redirected much of Africa's economic orientation toward Europe, while the rise of oil transformed the Gulf into one of the world's most influential financial regions. Today, the tide is turning again. What is emerging is not simply a new investment story, but a new economic geography in which Gulf capital, African markets and Ethiopia's strategic position are converging to reshape one of the world's oldest commercial relationships.

This was the central message that emerged from the first African regional convening of the Gulf Africa Strategic Partnership Initiative, held on 22 July 2026 in Addis Ababa. The event formed part of a collaborative effort involving ODI Global Advisory, the Institute of Foreign Affairs, Gravitas Sovereign & Strategic Advisory and the Embassy of Ethiopia in London, serving as the first regional dialogue on the road to the GASPI Summit in Abidjan in March 2027. In his keynote address, State Minister at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Ambassador Hadera Abera underscored Ethiopia's commitment to strengthening Gulf-Africa ties and called for deeper cooperation to translate shared aspirations into practical outcomes.

The gathering brought together policymakers, diplomats, researchers, investors and development practitioners to examine a question that is becoming increasingly important in global economic affairs. How can two regions with deep historical connections build a modern partnership based on investment, industrial transformation and shared growth?

The discussions in Addis Ababa highlighted a central reality. The future of Gulf Africa cooperation will not be defined



only by the amount of capital moving between regions. It will be defined by how effectively that capital is transformed into productive industries, stronger trade links and opportunities for people.

Dr Max Mendez Parra, Principal Research Fellow at ODI Global, described the relationship as one of the fastest growing economic connections in the world. He noted that Gulf Africa integration has expanded significantly across trade, investment and migration, with the Gulf becoming an increasingly important economic partner for the continent. Gulf countries have moved beyond traditional investment destinations in North Africa and are increasingly engaging across the wider African continent.

This shift reflects a changing global landscape. Gulf economies are seeking new opportunities as they diversify beyond hydrocarbons, while African economies are looking to accelerate industrialization, improve infrastructure and create jobs for a rapidly growing population. The interests of both regions are increasingly aligned.

Yet the discussions also revealed that the next stage of cooperation requires a different approach. Investment alone is not enough. The quality of institutions, the preparation of projects and the ability to deliver results will determine whether partnerships create lasting economic transformation. That message echoed Ambassador Hadera Abera's keynote call for stronger institutions, innovative financing and bankable projects capable of delivering industrial transformation, job creation and long-term resilience.

"The outcomes are not determined by volume," Dr Mendez Parra said in his presentation. "They depend on the conditions."

That idea became one of the strongest themes throughout the forum.

The Gulf investment model has distinctive characteristics. Unlike traditional financing approaches that have often focused on lending, Gulf investors are increasingly using equity investment, strategic partnerships and long-term commercial arrangements. Companies linked to Gulf economies have become major players in African logistics, ports, energy and food systems.

Melina Proia from the European Council on Foreign Relations explained that the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Qatar each approach Africa differently. The UAE has developed one of the broadest commercial footprints through logistics, ports, aviation, energy and finance. Saudi Arabia's engagement is closely connected to its Vision 2030 transformation agenda, including food security and industrial diversification. Qatar has maintained a more selective approach, particularly through energy and liquefied natural gas investments.

This diversity matters because Africa is not negotiating with one Gulf actor. African countries are engaging with different partners with different capabilities and strategic priorities. ►



Ethiopia's role in this emerging relationship was a major focus of the dialogue. The country presented itself not simply as an investment destination, but as a potential bridge between Gulf capital and Africa's continental market.

Samuel Gizaw from Ethiopia's Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration highlighted the country's economic reforms aimed at improving the investment environment. These include reforms in investment regulations, customs modernization, digital trade systems, financial services and the opening of previously restricted sectors.

The strategic opportunity lies in connecting Ethiopia's resources and production capacity with Gulf technology, finance and market access. Ethiopia's agricultural potential provides one example. Speakers pointed to coffee, sesame, pulses, fruits and vegetables as sectors where investment in processing and value addition could create greater economic returns than exporting raw products.

A bag of Ethiopian coffee beans represents more than a commodity. It represents a potential global value chain involving processing, packaging, branding and technology. The same principle applies to minerals, agriculture and manufacturing across Africa.

This was a recurring message from Duncan Onyango, Chief Executive Officer of Trade Catalyst Africa. He argued that the key question is not how much capital reaches Africa, but how that capital is structured.

"Capital is designed to do transformation," he said, explaining that successful investment requires preparation, risk sharing and commercially viable projects.

He pointed to Ethiopia's emerging electric transport ambitions along the Djibouti corridor as an example of how policy, infrastructure and investment can come together. A national objective to modernize transport creates opportunities but turning that ambition into reality requires carefully prepared projects that can attract larger pools of capital.

This focus on implementation was perhaps the most important conclusion of the forum. Speakers repeatedly returned to the gap between announced investments and completed projects. The challenge for Africa and the Gulf

is not a lack of ambition. It is building the systems that turn ambition into delivery.

That requires better project preparation, stronger regulatory frameworks, efficient trade systems and closer cooperation between governments, investors and businesses.

The private sector emerged as a central partner in this process. Businesses understand the practical challenges of moving goods across borders, accessing finance and building supply chains. For investment partnerships to succeed, companies must be involved not only after agreements are signed, but during the design of strategies and projects.

Regional integration was another essential part of the discussion. The African Continental Free Trade Area was highlighted as a major opportunity because it can transform Africa's fragmented markets into a larger economic space. For investors, scale matters.

A project connected to regional markets is more attractive than one limited to a single country.

Ethiopia's geographic position gives this discussion particular significance. Located between Africa's interior markets and the Red Sea, the country has long been shaped by its connection to surrounding regions. Today, its ambitions are linked not only to national development but also to conti-

ental trade routes.

The future of Gulf Africa cooperation will therefore depend on building connections that are practical and measurable. Ports must connect to factories. Factories must connect to markets. Investments must connect to communities. Economic growth must connect to employment and opportunity.

The journey toward the GASPI Summit in Abidjan in March 2027 will be an opportunity to translate these ideas into a broader framework for cooperation. The Addis Ababa dialogue showed that the foundation already exists. Geography has created the connection, capital has created the opportunity, and institutions will determine the outcome.

The new triangle across the Red Sea is not simply about where money flows. It is about how regions with shared histories can build a shared economic future. ■



Beyond Duty Free



For Ethiopian exporters, the biggest barrier to the United Kingdom is no longer a customs duty. Under the United Kingdom's Developing Countries Trading Scheme, almost all eligible Ethiopian products can enter the market tariff free. The harder question is whether businesses on both sides can turn this access into lasting commercial partnerships built on quality, reliability, innovation and shared growth.

That question shaped discussions in Addis Ababa in July 2026, when Ethiopian businesses, government officials, UK trade representatives and development partners gathered to explore how the DCTS can translate from a policy opportunity into practical business outcomes. The workshop, organised by Ethiopian and UK embassies, was not simply about explaining a trade scheme. It reflected a broader shift in Ethiopia UK relations towards deeper commercial engagement and a stronger role for the private sector.

The DCTS places Ethiopia among the countries receiving the highest level of trade preferences from the UK. Under the scheme, approximately 99.8 percent of Ethiopian goods can access the UK market without tariffs. For British businesses

and consumers, this creates opportunities to source new products and build relationships with emerging suppliers. For Ethiopian companies, it creates a more competitive pathway into one of the world's largest consumer markets.

Yet successful trade relationships are built on more than tariff advantages. British buyers are looking for suppliers who can consistently meet expectations on quality, standards, delivery and sustainability. Ethiopian exporters are increasingly recognising that accessing the UK market requires understanding not only trade rules, but also the commercial priorities of buyers.

The potential is visible across several sectors. Ethiopia's coffee industry, already internationally recognised, has opportunities to move beyond exporting raw commodities towards more value added products. The DCTS rules allow businesses to use inputs from a wider network of countries while maintaining preferential access, creating possibilities for regional production. One example discussed during the workshop showed how Ethiopian coffee could be combined with milk powder from Kenya to produce instant coffee for export to the UK while still qualifying under the scheme. ▶



The textile and apparel sector offers another example of how trade preferences can support industrial development. Ethiopian manufacturers can benefit from more flexible rules of origin that allow greater freedom in sourcing materials while producing garments for international markets. For UK brands seeking diversified supply chains, Ethiopia offers an opportunity to develop partnerships with a country that is building manufacturing capacity and improving production capabilities.

Agriculture remains another area where closer cooperation can create value. Ethiopia's horticulture, food and agricultural products have strong potential in the UK market, but exporters must meet requirements related to food safety, plant health and product standards. These requirements are not obstacles unique to Ethiopia; they are part of the quality framework that enables trust between producers, importers and consumers.

The experience of the DCTS so far also offers important lessons. Some Ethiopian exports that qualify for preferences have not always claimed them, often because of challenges related to documentation, customs procedures or awareness of the scheme. In the garment sector, for example, UK imports from Ethiopia worth millions of pounds were eligible for DCTS benefits, but a portion entered without using the available tariff preferences. Improving knowledge and strengthening export support systems can help businesses capture more of the opportunities already available.

The scheme also connects with a wider African economic transformation agenda. Through regional cumulation arrangements, Ethiopian businesses can increasingly work with suppliers across Africa while maintaining access to UK preferences. This supports the ambition of the African Continental Free Trade Area by encouraging companies to build regional value chains rather than operating in isolation.

For the UK, deeper trade with Ethiopia represents an opportunity to engage with a growing economy, access new sources of products and support more resilient global supply chains. For Ethiopia, the DCTS provides a platform to expand exports, attract investment and encourage the move towards higher value production. The benefits are strongest when both sides approach the relationship as a partnership rather than simply a market transaction.

The next phase of Ethiopia UK trade will depend less on opening doors and more on building connections. Ethiopian exporters need to understand the expectations of British buyers, while UK businesses need to recognise the potential of Ethiopian suppliers beyond traditional perceptions. The success of the DCTS will ultimately be measured not only by the tariffs it removes, but by the businesses, products and partnerships it helps create. ■

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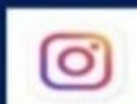
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