

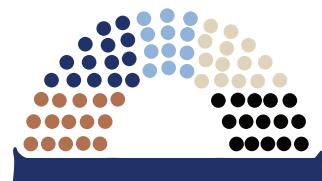
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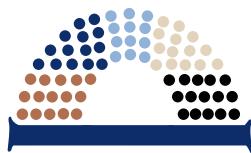
*Ethiopian Parliamentarians,
Monthly Digest*



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BRIDGE Profile

Bridge Research and Innovation for Democratic Governance and Enhanced Peace (BRIDGE) is an independent, non-profit think tank based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Registered under the FDRE Civil Society Organization Proclamation No. 1113/2019, which specializes in parliamentary affairs, peace, and development in the IGAD region.



Mission

To advance democratic governance and enhance peace through evidence-based research and innovative policy analysis.



Vision

To be a leading research hub and trusted source of analysis on parliamentary affairs, peace, governance, and development in the IGAD region.



Core Values

- ◆ Rigor: Delivering high-quality, evidence-driven research.
- ◆ Innovation: Pioneering creative and adaptive solutions for governance and peace challenges.
- ◆ Trust: Upholding credibility through transparent and reliable analysis



Objectives

It aims to strengthen legislative institutions in federal and local parliaments in Ethiopia and the IGAD region by:

- ◆ Conducting evidence-based research.
- ◆ Providing capacity-building support to enhance the performance of parliamentarians.
- ◆ Monitoring parliamentary activities to ensure accountability and effectiveness.



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In May 2017, the Ethiopian House of Representatives carried out a range of its constitutional responsibilities. These included enacting or amending laws, overseeing executive agencies, engaging in parliamentary diplomacy, and conducting field visits to various federal institutions. In addition to these core duties, the House conducted a self-review of its nine-month performance, provided capacity-building training for its members, and summoned the Minister of Foreign Affairs to appear before the plenary to discuss a range of foreign affairs issues. Our May publication offers a detailed overview of these activities and a concise Bridge's observational insights on one law enacted during May.

Regular Sessions of the House



Legislative Activities of the House

During the month of May, the House of Peoples' Representatives approved four proclamations and referred three draft laws to the relevant standing committees for detailed deliberation. In addition to its legislative work, the House also convened one explanatory forum during the reporting month.



Laws Ratified

On May 12, 2017, during its 30th regular session, the House approved the Urban Land Tenure and Land-Related Property Registration Proclamation. This law aims to modernize the national land information management system. Hon. Dr. Eshetu Temesgen, Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Urban, Infrastructure and Transport Affairs, presented the committee's report and recommendations. He emphasized that the proclamation is essential for creating a standardized and modern framework to manage land tenure data across all cities. As he noted, the law is expected to help secure land ownership rights, eliminate illegal land occupation, reduce corruption, and promote equitable land use. During deliberations, the parliamentarians highlighted the importance of clearly defining the distinctions and relationships between federal city administrations and regional cities within the legal framework. The House passed the proclamation, designated as Proclamation No. 1381/2017, with two votes against and three abstentions.

The second law approved by the House during May was the Watershed Identification, Development, and Conservation Proclamation. Hon. Dr. Aweke Amzaye, Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Water, Irrigation, Lowland, and Regional Development, presented the draft to the House, explaining

that the law will enhance water ecosystem services and provide socio-economic benefits by promoting the sustainable development and protection of watersheds. According to him, the proclamation outlines regulations for the use and management of watersheds, lakes, dams, aquifers, springs, and groundwater. It also allows existing developments near protected water bodies to continue operations if verified not to cause environmental harm. The House unanimously approved the proclamation as Proclamation No. 1382/2017.

The third law ratified in the reported month is that of the Solid Waste Management and Disposal Proclamation. Dr. Aweke Amzaye, Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Water, Irrigation, Lowland and Regional Development, introduced the law, which aims to mitigate environmental damage and safeguard public health. Aweke noted that the penalties outlined in the proclamation primarily target single-use plastic products. He also emphasized that the federal regions and the two federal city administrations have the discretion to issue localized regulations and guidelines tailored to their specific contexts. Lawmakers stressed the importance of public education campaigns to raise awareness and prevent the public from incurring penalties due to a lack of sober understanding. The proclamation was unanimously adopted as Proclamation No. 1383/2017 (please consult our concise observational insights on page 14).

At its 34th regular session held on June 5, 2025, the House of Peoples' Representatives ratified the Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Proclamation, which had been introduced two months earlier. Hon. Dr. Fatih Mahdi, Deputy Madam Chair of the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs, presented the draft to the House, explaining that the proclamation promotes a homegrown, capacity-driven disaster risk management system. She emphasized that it represents a strategic shift away from dependency and passive attitudes, offering a framework rooted in local resilience. Dr. Fatih urged the House to adopt the bill, highlighting its uniqueness and noting that it draws on the experiences of nine federal countries. Notably, during deliberations, one controversial provision, requiring mandatory contributions from government and private sector employees to a disaster risk response fund, was removed to prevent an undue financial burden on workers. The remaining provisions specify alternative funding sources for the fund, including levies on telecommunications services (voice and data), digital banking, flight ticket sales, passport and visa fees, business license issuance and renewal, and charges on loans from banks and microfinance institutions. Organizations that fail to collect and transfer the required funds to the designated Disaster Risk Response Fund account will face a ten percent interest penalty in addition to the owed amount. Finally, the House unanimously ratified the law as Proclamation No. 1386/2017.

Draft Laws

During its session on May 12, the House of Peoples' Representatives introduced a draft proclamation regulating the ownership and occupancy of real estate by foreigners in Ethiopia. Chief Government Whip, Hon. Dr. Tesfaye Beljige, presented the rationale behind the draft. He explained that increasing urbanization, foreign investment, rural-to-urban migration, and population growth have created a significant demand-supply gap in housing. As part of the government's broader policy response to address this gap, the draft law proposes allowing foreigners to own or occupy real estate under certain conditions, he noted. While some lawmakers supported the proposal, suggesting it could help Ethiopia build foreign exchange reserves, attract investment, and facilitate technology transfer, others voiced strong concerns. Critics warned that such a law might jeopardize domestic homeownership, raise housing

prices, and pose potential national security risks. A few members also questioned the constitutionality of the proposal and argued that the timing was inappropriate. The draft also grants the Ministry of Foreign Affairs authority to issue directives restricting citizens from certain countries from acquiring property in Ethiopia. Additionally, it empowers the ministry to designate special and border areas off-limits to foreign ownership. Subsequently, the draft was referred to the Standing Committee on Urban, Infrastructure and Transport Affairs and, in cooperation, to the Standing Committee on Law and Justice Affairs, with three votes against and a majority in favor.

At its 32nd regular session held on May 19, the House of Peoples' Representatives introduced two draft proclamations and referred them to the relevant standing committees for further consideration. The first draft discussed was the Environmental Services Payment Proclamation. Chief Government Whip, Hon. Dr. Tesfaye Beljige, presented the bill and emphasized its importance for sustainable ecosystem management. He noted that Ethiopia is endowed with diverse ecosystems that play a crucial role in supporting both the environment and the national economy. However, these ecosystems face significant degradation due to unsustainable natural resource use. To address this, the proclamation proposes a legal framework for payment for ecosystem services, thereby aligning ecological preservation with economic incentives. The House referred Draft Proclamation No. 18/2017 to the Standing Committee on Water, Irrigation, Lowland Areas, and Environmental Development as the primary reviewing body and to the Standing Committee on Planning, Budget, and Finance for joint review.

The second draft considered on the same day was the Multi-Agency Agricultural Extension Services and Management Proclamation. Once again, Dr. Tesfaye Beljige introduced the bill, noting that the legislation aims to improve the quality, capacity, and effectiveness of Ethiopia's agricultural extension services. He emphasized that the proclamation would establish a legal foundation for a more integrated system involving not only government actors but also NGOs, the private sector, and cooperatives in agricultural development and natural resource management. The House unanimously agreed to refer Draft Proclamation No. 19/2017 to the Standing Committee on Agricultural Affairs for detailed consideration.



Explanatory forum

During the reported month, the House of People's Representatives also held an explanatory forum focused on the draft proclamation regarding foreign ownership and occupancy of real estate in Ethiopia. This forum was co-organized by the Standing Committee on Urban, Infrastructure, and Transport Affairs and the Standing Committee on Legal and Justice Affairs. Dr. Tadesse Kassa, an advisor minister at the Ministry of Justice, delivered a detailed presentation on the draft's content and legislative rationale. He explained that the new bill aims to revise a provision in the Justice Act, enacted 65 years ago, which prohibits foreign nationals from owning real estate in Ethiopia.

Minister of Justice H.E. Hana Araya Selassie explained that the proposed law aims to provide legal certainty for foreign investors, thereby boosting investment confidence. She emphasized that the draft allows foreigners to purchase real estate only through transactions conducted in foreign currency. Additionally, prospective foreign buyers must meet a minimum capital requirement of USD 150,000. H.E. Helen Debebe, Minister of State for Urban and Infrastructure Development, argued that opening Ethiopia's real estate market to foreign investors, especially in the high-end segment, could help alleviate the country's severe housing demand-supply imbalance while generating resources that can benefit low-income groups. Hon. Isa Boru, Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Law and Justice, added that the proposed law would support the expansion of Ethiopia's real estate sector, increase foreign currency inflow, and boost the country's economic growth. Prof. Mohamed Abdo, Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Urban, Infrastructure, and Transport Affairs, concluded by emphasizing that the proclamation should clearly articulate the country's strategic objectives when opening real estate ownership to foreigners.



Oversight and Monitoring of Executive Institutions

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One of the main constitutional duties of the House of Peoples' Representatives of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is overseeing executive institutions. As discussed in this edition, Members of Parliament carried out this duty through various activities, including reviewing institutional reports, conducting site visits, and engaging directly with public sector actors through their respective standing committees.



Institutional Reports

Throughout May, various federal executive agencies submitted their nine- to ten-month performance reports to the standing committees they are accountable to.

The Ethiopian Federal Police Commission submitted its nine-month performance report to the Standing Committee on Law and Justice. The committee praised the Commission for its efforts in maintaining peace and order during national and international events, religious celebrations, and public holidays. The report recognized that the Commission had made a significant contribution to conflict prevention and resolution. Hon. Isa Boru, Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, highlighted new initiatives such as the Heroes Center and improvements in the welfare of former police personnel and active members of the Federal Police. He stressed the ongoing threat from anti-peace elements and urged the police to strengthen their preventive operations in collaboration with relevant agencies. However, he also expressed concerns about the Commission's budget execution rate, which was only 65%. The Standing Committee urged for better financial planning and execution moving forward. Commissioner Demelash Gebremichael explained that the Commission deployed substantial manpower to protect

613 major infrastructure sites and federal institutions across the country, including 24/7 security operations in Addis Ababa. The Commissioner also stated that the Commission has actively taken legal action against anti-peace groups as part of its mandate to ensure citizens' safety.

The Standing Committee also reviewed the nine-month performance report of the Federal Law and Justice Institute. The report was presented by Director General H.E. Ambassador Degfe Bula, who highlighted the Institute's research and policy advisory work in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. He emphasized that the Institute is working to strengthen the credibility and functionality of justice sector institutions. Deputy Director General H.E. Mitku Mada explained that ongoing programs focus on professional development for judges, prosecutors, and investigators, aiming to improve the justice system's efficiency and integrity. Justice Abebe Solomon, Head of the Office of the Deputy President of the Federal Supreme Court, noted that the Institute's new accountability structure, under the Federal Supreme Court as per a recently approved proclamation, would strengthen its institutional alignment with national judicial priorities. Deputy Chairperson Hon. Isa Boru stressed the importance of swift implementation of the new proclamation ▶



Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee of Law and Justice Institute Isa Boru,

to ensure the Institute fulfills its expanded mandate effectively. Ambassador Degfe confirmed that, in collaboration with regions and other bodies, efforts are underway to raise public trust in the justice system through targeted capacity-building initiatives.

The Ministry of Tourism also submitted its nine-month performance report to the Standing Committee on Trade and Tourism Affairs. The Committee emphasized the sector's strategic importance, as tourism is one of the five key economic pillars in the national reform agenda. Hon. Aisha Yahya, Madam Chair of the Committee, urged the Ministry to boost efforts to develop both existing and new tourist destinations, helping Ethiopia fully utilize its rich cultural and natural heritage. Minister of Tourism, H.E. Selamawit Kassa, reported that two heritage sites had been registered with UNESCO and that several existing sites had been renovated. She also noted that over 942,000 tourists visited Ethiopia during the reporting period and that the sector created more than 85,000 jobs. The Ministry has focused on developing value-added tourism products to increase visitor engagement and encourage longer stays.

At the end of the month, the House Standing Committee on Agricultural Affairs held a session with the Ministry of Agriculture to evaluate the implementation of its ten-month plan. Minister Dr. Girma Amente reported that agricultural export revenue had exceeded \$3 billion over the past ten months, with

coffee alone contributing \$2 billion through the export of over 400,000 tons. Additional export earnings came from fruits, flowers, spices, livestock, and related products. The Standing Committee advised other government agencies to address ongoing challenges such as logistics bottlenecks, power outages, and governance issues affecting producers to sustain and build on the year's export achievements. Committee Chair Hon. Solomon Lale noted that land preparation and input supplies for the upcoming planting season are progressing well but emphasized the urgent need for timely distribution of imported fertilizers. He also called for faster implementation of recently adopted proclamations to promote growth in the agricultural sub-sector. The Minister informed the Committee that the procurement of 24 million tons of fertilizer had been completed on schedule, with 12 million quintals already distributed to regional states. He also highlighted the ongoing Green Legacy reforestation initiative, noting that over 7 billion seedlings have been prepared, 500 million of which have already been planted, while 3.5 billion are classified as multipurpose species.

In May, the House also reviewed the 2018 fiscal year budget proposals for democratic institutions under its jurisdiction. The Standing Committee on Planning, Budget, and Finance met with senior officials from the Federal Supreme, Federal High, Federal First Instance, and Federal Sharia Courts. Discussions focused on how these institutions had utilized their current budgets,



Law and Justice Institute Institute During a Session

the justifications for requested adjustments, and the budget limits set by the Ministry of Finance. Committee Chair Hon. Desalegn Wedeje emphasized the need for all operational and capital budgets to be realistic, evidence-based, and aligned with institutional strategic plans. He stated that each part of the request must be quantified and justified. Deputy President of the Federal Supreme Court, Justice Abba Abdi, noted that recent reforms to the national subsidy framework and the court's internal restructuring had increased their budget requirements.

How was the foreign trajectory?

As part of its oversight role, the House also heard from two key ministers in May: Minister of Water and Energy Dr. Habtamu Itefa and Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Gedion Timotheos. The latter addressed various concerns raised by MPs during the 34th regular session of the 4th year of the House regarding Ethiopia's foreign relations, especially with neighboring countries. Dr. Gedion reaffirmed Ethiopia's longstanding diplomatic principle of prioritizing peaceful relations with neighboring states. On the issue of Eritrea, he clarified that while Ethiopia has avoided rhetorical escalation, it continues to face provocations—militarily and diplomatically—from the Eritrean regime. Nonetheless, Ethiopia remains committed to a peaceful resolution and seeks dialogue whenever possible. He acknowledged the active role of citizens, representatives, and former officials in raising concerns over foreign policy matters and said they should pay attention. Emphasizing the sensitive and strategic nature of ongoing diplomatic efforts, the Minister urged careful and timely handling of cross-border and territorial issues.

Regarding the strategic issue of port access, Minister Gedion noted that some regional actors become agitated whenever Ethiopia raises its core national interests. Referring to the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) as a precedent, he emphasized that the country is undeterred by external opposition and will pursue its sovereign interests. "They once said the

dam couldn't be built without their blessing; we proved them wrong. We will do the same with other projects," he stated. Gedion highlighted that the port issue will be addressed through internationally recognized diplomatic frameworks and in accordance with the principle of reciprocity. He pointed out that the matter has already gained international attention due to successful diplomatic efforts and reaffirmed Ethiopia's commitment to advancing its interests in ways that respect international law and mutual benefits.

The Minister also addressed Ethiopia's ongoing border demarcation challenges, unresolved Border Issues. He pointed out that less than half of the nation's international borders are formally marked. He explained that the government is preparing to institutionalize the border demarcation process and carry out a systematic effort to resolve disputes with neighboring countries. While he did not specify any countries, he made it clear that these issues require comprehensive and sustained engagement.

Institutional and Field Visits

In May, the House of Representatives not only passed legislation and received reports from executive agencies but also carried out institutional and field visits. Through its various standing committees, the House visited more than a dozen federal agencies and conducted over thirty field visits.

Institutional Visits

Among the federal institutions visited, the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) stands out. On May 14, 2017, members of the Standing Committee on Democracy Affairs visited NEBE and shared several observations. Deputy Chairperson of the standing committee, Hon. Azmera Andemo, emphasized the urgent need for institutional reform at the Board to successfully deliver the upcoming national election. Key challenges included inadequate staffing, budget constraints, and logistical gaps. The committee also recommended that



NEBE expand its support for civil society organizations and the media, as well as work to deepen democratic culture and practices. Committee members also stressed the importance of preparing and distributing civic education materials in multiple local languages, enabling citizens to better understand their democratic rights and responsibilities. NEBE officials, in turn, noted that due to limited branch offices, some citizens have to travel over 600 kilometers to file election-related complaints. They requested the committee's support in expanding access through additional regional offices. Preparations for the upcoming 2018 national elections," officials added, "are already underway.

Another institution visited in May was the Ethiopian Statistical Service (ESS). Members of the Standing Committee on Planning, Budget and Finance reviewed reforms and improvements at the agency headquarters. According to the House's report, the Committee Chairperson, Hon. Desalegn Wedeje, commended the ESS for meaningful institutional reforms, particularly in human capacity development and work environment improvements. He noted that these actions could serve as a model for other public institutions. Deputy Chairperson Hon. Dr. Abraham Alemayehu also acknowledged the dedication of ESS leadership and staff in implementing changes following recommendations from a previous operational audit. Director General Dr. Beker Shale told committee members that their feedback from past visits had been taken seriously and had informed the reforms. He added that these improvements would be extended to ESS's regional branches.



Visit on Ethiopian Statistical Service (ESS)

The House also visited Addis Ababa University (AAU) during the reported month. The visit was led by Dr. Bethlehem Lakew, Deputy Chair of the Standing Committee on Human Resource Development, Employment, and Technology Affairs. The committee visited to assess the university's progress since gaining autonomy in 2016, as stipulated by federal proclamation. The committee met with AAU's president and senior officials to discuss the university's institutional trajectory, particularly the opportunities and challenges experienced since becoming autonomous. Discussions covered topics such as admissions, academic quality, research output, financial management, and administrative restructuring. University President Dr. Samuel Kifle provided a detailed account of activities undertaken since autonomy, including the introduction



of new regulations and operational directives. Committee members asked several questions, which were answered in detail by the university leadership.

Field Visits

In early May, members of the House Standing Committee on Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs traveled south to assess the peace process in Gurage Zone and Kebena Liyo Woreda of the Central Ethiopian Regional State. Deputy Chairperson Dr. Fatih Mahdi noted that, although the Ministry of Peace had previously reported the resolution of conflicts, complaints from local communities indicated that peace was not yet sustainable. The committee conducted on-site investigations to verify the reported claims, she added. Committee members emphasized the importance of enabling displaced citizens to return to normal life and stressed that federal support must continue for long-term stability. Local officials, including Gurage Zone Chief Administrator Lacha Garuma and Kebena Liyo Woreda Administrator Musa Idosua, presented detailed reports outlining peace-building efforts, existing challenges, and pending priorities.

Another major visit focused on the Gidabo Irrigation Development Dam, located along the border of Sidama and West Guji Zones. Built at a cost of 1.6 billion birr, the dam was reviewed by the House Standing Committee on Water, Irrigation, Lowland Areas, and Regional Development. Although the dam was finished in 2011, large parts of the irrigation canals are still incomplete. On the Sidama side, only 2.5 km of the planned 12.8 km canals have been constructed; on the Oromia side, 8.6 km of the planned 12.2 km are completed. Regional

officials pointed out that the dam is expected to benefit over 5,000 local farmers and university graduates. Committee Chairperson Hon. Khalid Abamecha raised concerns about Oromia regional ownership, calling for cooperation between the two regions to ensure mutual benefits and to operate the costly dam.

During May, the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs visited Jawi Refugee Camp in Gambella, a border region. Committee members assessed the quality of basic services provided to refugees and emphasized the need to strengthen institutional capacities to serve them better. Committee Chairperson Honorable Dr. Dima Negewo praised the ongoing peace and security efforts but noted that services in education and health still require significant improvement. He also highlighted the geopolitical factors behind forced displacement and Ethiopia's cooperation with international partners to protect refugees. The Head of the Gambella Branch of the Refugee and Returnee Service, Ntoke Work Gebre Mariam, warned that the humanitarian response is under strain due to U.S. sanctions on aid organizations, which has led to a decline in services. The committee also visited other refugee camps in the region, including Bekulie refugee camp. Refugees, especially those from South Sudan, voiced concerns about sharp reductions in food rations—from 13.5 kilograms to 7 kilograms of flour per person per month. Camp Director Tia Deng Mar echoed these concerns, warning that if the situation continues, there may be no food or non-food supplies available within two to three months. The committee expressed concern and called for immediate international and domestic coordination to prevent a humanitarian crisis.

Parliamentary Diplomacy

In the reported month of May, the House of Peoples' Representatives of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia conducted four major parliamentary diplomacy activities.

One of the most notable events was Ethiopia's engagement with a parliamentary delegation from Zambia, which visited the country to learn from Ethiopia's experience in declaring and managing a state of emergency. During this exchange, members and officials of the House explained to the Zambian delegation the legal and procedural framework through which a state of emergency is declared, ratified, and implemented in line with the Ethiopian Constitution. Honorable Isa Boru, Deputy Chairperson of the House Standing Committee on Law and Justice, emphasized that a state of emergency is declared in circumstances of serious natural or man-made crises that cannot be addressed through regular law enforcement procedures. He further noted that, even under such emergency conditions, the Parliament maintains its oversight role to ensure that government actions are consistent with human rights and constitutional safeguards. After the Ethiopian officials shared insights from its most recent state of emergency declaration, the Zambian delegation reportedly found the experience to be valuable. As the Council's report indicated, the Zambian delegates emphasized that such mutual exchanges contribute to strengthening inter-African cooperation and legal culture, noting that Ethiopia's legal approach to crisis governance is commendable.

Another notable diplomatic event this month was the meeting between the Speaker of the House, His Excellency Tagesse Chafo, and the Vice President of the European Parliament, Mr. Younous Omarjee. The delegation discussed bilateral and regional issues, with the Speaker emphasizing Ethiopia's interest in strengthening its cooperation with the European Parliament, especially in promoting democracy and peace. In response, Vice President Omarjee voiced the European Parliament's desire to see Ethiopia's recent port access issue resolved through peaceful and diplomatic means in line with international legal standards. He also reaffirmed support for Ethiopia's ongoing National Dialogue process, highlighting the European Parliament's commitment to peace and stability in the Horn of Africa.

The Speaker also hosted an Indian parliamentary delegation during the month. In their discussions, both parties addressed economic, political, and social issues affecting their respective countries and explored ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation. Honorable Speaker Tagesse highlighted the long-standing diplomatic ties between Ethiopia and India and praised ongoing collaboration on mutual interests in international forums. Honorable Ambassador Dina Mufti, a member of the House Standing Committee on Foreign Relations and



Speaker Of The House Tadesse Chafo With The Indian Parliamentary Delegation



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Peace Affairs, mentioned that Ethiopian-Indian cooperation has yielded results in education, counter-terrorism, and investment promotion. The Indian delegation, led by MP Supriya Sule, reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening people-to-people and economic relations.

The fourth major diplomatic event was the Speaker's participation in a continental meeting hosted at the African Union Headquarters: the 20th International Labour Organization (ILO) Work-Based Investment Program. Held under the theme "Resilient Communities and Healthy Environments: Achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Africa," the meeting brought together African policy experts. Speaker Tadesse, in his address at the opening ceremony, emphasized the importance of job-creating innovations for tackling poverty and adapting to climate change. He reaffirmed Ethiopia's commitment to sustainable development, highlighting the country's focus on equitable job creation, poverty reduction, and environmental resilience. The Speaker concluded by calling for a united continental effort to eradicate poverty, underdevelopment, and unemployment in Africa.

Internal Evaluation and Women's Empowerment Activities

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long with fulfilling its constitutional duties throughout May, the House of People's Representatives of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia wrapped up the period with an internal performance review and a series of capacity-building initiatives, especially focusing on its female members.



According to the House report, the House convened a joint session of its Advisory and Coordination Committee to assess its nine-month performance under the 2017 Ethiopian fiscal year budget. During the review session, Honorable Speaker Tagesse Chafo emphasized the importance of strengthening public participation in lawmaking. He asserted that legislation must directly respond to societal concerns and that this can only be achieved if citizens are engaged at all stages of the legislative process, from drafting to ratification. To this end, the Speaker called for continued integration of digital technologies to facilitate direct citizen involvement in the House's affairs.

Deputy Speaker Honorable Lomi Bedo also addressed the forum, emphasizing that public feedback collected during parliamentary oversight missions often uncovers issues of non-responsiveness and negligence by various actors. She stressed that the House must collaborate more closely with relevant institutions to ensure accountability and address these failures. Similarly, Chief Government Whip, Honorable Dr. Tesfaye Beljige, recommended that the institution establish clear evaluation mechanisms to gauge progress in its main responsibilities, namely, legislation, oversight, representation, and parliamentary diplomacy. He noted that these mechanisms would be crucial in improving the House's overall performance. Meanwhile, Dr. Nigusse Meshesha, Deputy Secretary General of the House Secretariat, presented a comprehensive nine-

month performance report. His report showed that the Standing Committees surpassed their planned targets, and the Secretariat achieved an overall performance score of over 86 percent. Based on these results, the leadership acknowledged that efforts would be made to consolidate and build on existing strengths.

In addition, the House arranged the 2nd General Assembly of the Women's Caucus in May. Deputy Speaker and Caucus Supervisor, Honorable Lomi Bedo, reiterated the caucus's commitment to advancing women's empowerment and enhancing their role in national political processes. She underscored the vital importance of peacebuilding, urging the caucus members to align themselves with the federal government's ongoing efforts to negotiate with armed groups. "Peace is our first and last priority," she avowed, calling on the caucus to champion peace as a national imperative.

At the assembly, the Caucus reviewed and unanimously approved the progress report on the implementation of its three-and-a-half-year plan. Complementing the General Assembly, members of the Caucus also participated in a gender-focused training program organized by Plan International Ethiopia. Honorable Kumia Jundi, Madam Chair of the Caucus, noted that the awareness campaigns conducted in collaboration with Plan International had produced tangible results in promoting gender equality and women's participation in governance.

What Did Ethiopia Agree To?

The House of Representatives spent the month of May approving the country's loan agreements with various countries and international institutions.



The House of People's Representatives, during its 29th regular session held this month, approved two loan agreements, according to the House's report. The Deputy Government whip in the House, Hon. Meseret Haile, presented a motion regarding the draft loan agreements, and the House of Representatives approved the agreements after requesting that they be moved directly to the second reading for discussion and approval. Members submitted several questions and comments regarding the loan agreements, and the State Minister of Finance, Dr. Eyob Tekaleng, provided responses and explanations, the House report noted. Accordingly, Draft Proclamation No. 1377/2017, the loan agreement between the Ethiopian Federal Government and the Italian Government for the implementation of budget support for the development of the environment and the green economy, was unanimously approved. Similarly, Draft Proclamation No. 1378/2017, the loan agreement between the Ethiopian Government and the International Development Association for implementing the Education Sector Transformation Program, was also unanimously approved, according to the same House report.

Along with these loan agreements, Draft Proclamation No. 1379/2017, which proposed establishing the African Finance Corporation, was approved by a majority vote with three abstentions. Finally, the House of Peoples'

Representatives unanimously approved Draft Proclamation No. 1380/2017 on the Air Transport Agreement signed between Ethiopia and the Federal Government of Austria during its 29th regular session.

The House of People's Representatives also approved two other loan agreements at its 33rd regular session. First, the Chief Government Whip, Dr. Tesfaye Beljige, explained the draft proclamation to approve the loan agreement between Ethiopia and the Arab Bank for African Economic Development for the implementation of the Integrated Efficient Agricultural Industrial Park Development and Youth Employment Creation Project. The chief whip noted that the loan agreement aims to expand agricultural industrial parks, build professional capacity, increase irrigation networks and agricultural productivity, and enable youth to participate in the agricultural sector. At the same 33rd regular session, Dr. Tesfaye briefed the lawmakers on the draft proclamation approving the proposed loan agreement between the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the International Development Association to improve integrated and technology-enabled service delivery for women and girls' health. In his explanation, the whip noted that the agreement aims not only to address the challenges affecting women's antenatal care but also to build adequate health facilities and expand access to the health sector.



Bridge Research & Innovation's Observational Insight

Regarding Proclamation No. 1383/2017

The 6th House of Representatives, during its 33rd regular session held on June 3, 2025, in the 4th year of its term, amended Proclamation No. 513/1999, which had been in effect for eighteen years. The amended law, now titled the Solid Waste Management and Disposal Proclamation, was unanimously approved and reissued as Proclamation No. 1383/2017. Our institution has chosen to briefly review this Proclamation among the four laws approved in May.

Why was the amendment necessary?

The explanatory document submitted to the House outlined several reasons why it was necessary to revise the current proclamation on solid waste management and disposal, including issues related to penalties and enforcement. According to the explanation, the legal framework needed to be amended to effectively address growing challenges in waste management and to establish mechanisms for holding violators legally accountable.

One key issue raised was that the current law was insufficient for regulating domestic manufacturers of plastic products. The previous regulation only covered plastic items with a thickness of less than 0.03 mm, which made enforcement difficult because they were hard to distinguish. Additionally, the fact that licenses for plastic production are issued collectively under the categories of plastic and rubber added further regulation challenges.

The proclamation also noted that the current legal framework only regulated the production or import of plastic waste without adequately covering its use or management, making the regulation mostly ineffective. Although the original proclamation had been in effect for over thirteen years, it lacked a comprehensive legal structure to oversee and enforce responsibility in solid waste-related activities. Officials argued that the previous law did not give clear guidance for individuals and large industries on how to responsibly manage and dispose of solid waste. The amendment was therefore necessary to address these legal gaps and improve accountability, according to the relevant officials.

According to the authorities, supported by research, the revised proclamation addresses issues such as single-use plastic bags, the roles of residents and factories in waste management in their local areas, and the law's limited focus on rural communities, which had previously been overlooked. Additionally, urban sprawl and the rise in urban population were cited as reasons for the amendment. The previous proclamation could not keep up with the increasing waste produced by urban growth; therefore, a more current and effective legal response was needed. It was also stressed that the new proclamation aims to reduce environmental damage caused by single-use products that greatly contribute to pollution.

The new proclamation, aimed at correcting the flaws of its predecessor, bans the production, marketing, import, sale, storage, or use of single-use plastics. It defines a plastic bag as a low-density, non-biodegradable item used to carry goods. The proclamation refers to plastic bags commonly known as festal, as mentioned in the explanatory document submitted with the amendment.

Key Points

The amended proclamation details criminal liability for individuals and institutions involved in producing or using plastic bags. For example, possessing a single-use plastic bag, commonly used for carrying bread, pastries, and other items, can result in a fine ranging from 2,000 to 5,000 birr. Additionally, anyone who produces, imports, offers for sale, stores, or owns such plastic bags for commercial purposes faces a fine between 50,000 and 200,000 birr and up





to five years in prison. Although the proclamation covers all solid waste, its primary focus is on plastic waste, addressing the entire lifecycle — from product design to final disposal. Comprising six sections and twenty-eight articles, the proclamation sets out three guiding principles: charging for waste; reducing waste at the source, reusing, recycling, and proper disposal; and increasing public participation.

The previous proclamation only banned the marketing of plastic bags without a biodegradability label. In contrast, the new law bans the production, marketing, import, sale, storage, or use of single-use plastics entirely. Although it addresses the collection and disposal of solid waste, the proclamation excludes plastic shoes, water bottles, and thick plastic products from its restrictions. The Environmental Protection Authority is responsible for ensuring compliance with the law's rules on single-use plastics and taking corrective actions if violations occur. The Authority also has the power to issue regulations related to the production, import, and use of single-use plastic products.

The new proclamation mandates that every individual must clean solid waste within at least twenty meters of their residence. Likewise, service providers and commercial establishments are required to clean solid waste within fifty meters of their premises. Concerning plastic manufacturers, the law obligates them to establish a collection system for used plastic products at the end of their lifecycle for reuse or recycling and to bear the costs of recycling. The proclamation also bans the import of solid waste into Ethiopia, with exceptions only for raw materials authorized by the relevant authority. Additionally, producers, importers, or distributors of food, beverages, hygiene, and cosmetic products in bottles, cans, or plastic containers are mandated to create systems for collecting and disposing of those containers after use.

It was reported that, a few months before the proclamation's ratification, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed publicly addressed the issue. While inspecting the second phase of the Addis Ababa corridor development project, he announced that his government was preparing legislation on plastics. The Prime Minister stated that the goal was to block plastic products from entering the country and to prohibit the use of plastic

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in visible public areas, such as plastic balconies or structures along major roads. He further emphasized that using plastic for balconies or coffee stalls should be criminalized, noting, "It starts as plastic, and then it looks like a legal house," and insisted that such usage must not be tolerated.

Benefits of the Proclamation

Ethiopia is not alone in banning plastic bags, as shown by its May 2019 solid waste disposal directive. Several African countries, from Kenya to Morocco, have already enforced similar bans on plastic bag use. In this context, as Bridge agreed, the main strength of the new law is its environmental goal to protect the ecosystem from pollution by banning non-recyclable plastic bags, with specific exceptions outlined in the law.

Environmental experts widely agree that plastic products are among the most difficult pollutants to manage. Their wide availability, combined with inadequate disposal practices, makes them particularly harmful. The proclamation's most significant contribution is its effort to prevent the use of plastic bags that cannot be reused in other production processes. This can meaningfully contribute to environmental preservation. Even when examined in the light of current national developments, the importance of this measure remains clear. For instance, the various green development initiatives led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed; including riverbank development, corridor development and the Green Legacy program; demonstrate a broader commitment to environmental sustainability. Thus, the new proclamation complements these efforts and aligns with the nation's broader green economy strategy.

Besides its environmental benefits, the transitional arrangements outlined in the proclamation are commendable. Recognizing the socioeconomic impact on low-income groups, the law provides a six-month grace period for implementation. It also exempts products manufactured or imported before the law's enforcement date, showing sensitivity to economic realities. As the responsible authorities stated, during this transition, extensive awareness campaigns are planned, and national coordination mechanisms will be established to ensure consistent implementation; and we hope, this period is also used effectively to promote



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collaboration between government agencies and industries affected by the ban. Notably, stakeholders in the plastic manufacturing sector have already been approached and informed about pathways for transitioning to alternative products.

From a legal perspective, Bridge Research & Innovation aims to highlight two provisions benefiting society. First, the requirement for every individual to clean an area within twenty meters of their residence promotes civic responsibility and community cleanliness. Second, the obligation for commercial and service institutions to install clearly labeled waste bins in accessible locations is another practical measure that strengthens the legal framework for solid waste management.

Limitations of the Proclamation’s Implementation

Despite the merits of the proclamation, criticism has arisen from various sectors of society. Some of these concerns are also acknowledged by Bridge. A primary issue involves the potential loss of jobs in certain industrial sectors. As the law takes effect, thousands of workers in the plastic and rubber manufacturing industries—many with limited education and skills—face the risk of unemployment. Ethiopia hosts around 1,000 such factories, and the ripple effects of factory closures or transitions could impact entire supply chains. While the proclamation allows for a six-month transition period, it remains uncertain whether this timeframe is enough for such a complex economic change, especially considering Ethiopia’s current economic situation. The fate of these factories and the livelihoods of their workers have not been adequately addressed in the law, public discussions, or by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Water, Irrigation,

and Lowland Development. Bridge believes that the lack of concrete mitigation strategies has caused anxiety and uncertainty among factory owners and employees. Additionally, another concern concerns the fiscal impact. The government has yet to clarify how it plans to replace the direct and indirect tax revenues previously generated by the plastic industry. Although this is not a flaw within the legal text itself, this economic gap is a significant consequence of the law that needs proactive attention.

Among the specific provisions of the amended proclamation, one article warrants scrutiny: the clause that imposes a fine ranging from 2,000 to 5,000 birr for possession of plastic bags. According to Honorable Dr. Aweke Amzaye, Deputy Chairman of the Standing Committee, the penalty was lowered from 5,000 to 2,000 birr to account for the economic status of low-income citizens, such as elderly individuals who may use plastic bags for small purchases. However, as the deputy agreed, even 2,000 birr can be a heavy penalty for someone buying bread worth two birr. In such cases, the lack of alternative social penalties, such as community service, could weaken the enforceability of the law.

Finally, there is concern about how the proclamation intersects with national programs, especially the large-scale tree planting campaign led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. The campaign aims to plant 10–15 billion seedlings each year, many of which are handed out in plastic bags. While the proclamation gives the Environmental Protection Authority the discretion to issue special directives, Bridge suggests it would be wise to establish a clear and practical exemption or procedural guideline to ensure that such national programs can continue smoothly during the transition period.



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