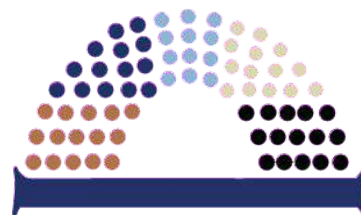




**ETHIOPIAN
PARLIAMENTARY DIGEST**



ENDERASIE

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DIGEST ISSUED BY BRIDGE RESEARCH AND
INNOVATION.





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.



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- ▮ Rigor: Delivering high-quality, evidence-driven research.
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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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THE MONTHLY ACTIVITIES OF ETHIOPIA'S PEOPLES' REPRESENTATIVES IN APR/MAY

The House of Peoples' Representatives of Ethiopia has carried out its various constitutional responsibilities during the month of Miyazia. Among these primary responsibilities, the ratification of laws, hearing reports from executive bodies, conducting parliamentary diplomacy and undertaking institutional and field visits were the major activities of the House for the month. This fifteenth edition of Enderasie has compiled these matters accordingly and includes a BRIDGE's observational insight for the month.

REGULAR SESSIONS OF THE HOUSE CONDUCTED DURING THE MONTH 6TH HOUSE OF PEOPLES' REPRESENTATIVES; 5TH YEAR TENURE

Session	Date	Agendas
15th Regular Session	Miyazia 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Reviewing and ratifying the draft proclamation to amend the Ethiopian Aviation Security Proclamation. * Reviewing and ratifying the draft proclamation on Sports Development and Administration.
16th Regular Session	Miyazia 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Reviewing and approving the appointment of leaders for vacant positions at the Human Rights Commission. * Hearing the 9-month performance report of the Ministry of Irrigation and Lowland Areas for the 2018 fiscal year.
17th Regular Session	Miyazia 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Ratifying the loan agreement between the FDRE and the French Development Agency. * Ratifying the loan agreement between the FDRE and the European Investment Bank Association. * Hearing the responses of the Minister of Tourism, Honorable Selamawit Kassa, to questions raised by the Members of Parliament

		<p>(MPs).</p> <p>* Reviewing the draft Cyber Security Proclamation and referring it to the relevant Standing Committee.</p>
18th Regular Session	Miyazia 22	<p>* Reviewing four draft proclamations to ratify Air Service Agreements between the FDRE and the Republic of Sierra Leone, the Republic of Angola, the People's Republic of Bangladesh, and the Kingdom of Eswatini, and referring them to the relevant Standing Committee.</p> <p>* Reviewing the draft proclamation to ratify the agreement signed between the FDRE and the Russian Federation to establish a Joint Biological Research Center and referring it to the relevant Standing Committee.</p> <p>* Reviewing the draft proclamation to ratify the agreement signed between the FDRE and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam for the waiver of visa requirements for holders of diplomatic or official service passports and referring it to the relevant Standing Committee.</p> <p>* Reviewing and approving the appointment of Board Members for the Ethiopian Press Agency.</p>
19th Regular Session	Miyazia 28	<p>* Hearing the performance report of the Ministry of Water and Energy for the 2018 fiscal year.</p>

1. THE HOUSE'S LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES

The House of Peoples' Representatives of Ethiopia, during the month of Miyazia, **ratified two proclamations** and referred **several draft agreements** made by the FDRE government with various countries to the relevant Standing Committees. Furthermore, it conducted **three explanatory forums**

1.1 RATIFIED LAWS

Among the regular sessions held by the Members of Parliament (MPs) during the month of Miyazia, two draft proclamations were ratified at the 15th Regular Session. The first proclamation was the draft presented **to amend the Ethiopian Aviation Security Proclamation**; the report and resolution regarding this draft were presented by the Deputy Chairperson of the Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs Standing Committee of the House, the Honorable Dr. Fethi Mahdi.

The Honorable Dr. Fethi stated that the amending proclamation, through the systems and technologies it establishes, would address existing security threats and explained that it enables the construction of a better aviation security system in

accordance with international civil aviation standards and measurements.

It was noted that the Deputy further elaborated that by creating a legal framework to sustain the significant achievements the Ethiopian Airlines Group has been recording as a nation, it would enable the provision of secure, technology-aided, reliable, and efficient air transport services to the international community. Finally, the House ratified the presented draft as Proclamation No. 1412/2018 with a majority vote, including 2 oppositions and 2 abstentions.



The Speaker of the House of Members of Parliament (MPs), the Honorable Tagesse Chafo, and the Deputy Chairperson of the Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs Standing Committee, the Honorable Dr. Fethi Mahdi, during the reading of the draft proclamation;

The second draft proclamation ratified by the Members of Parliament (MPs) during their 15th Regular Session of the month was concerning **Federal Sport Development and Administration**. The report and resolution for this draft

proclamation were presented by the Chairperson of the Health, Social Development, Culture, and Sports Affairs Standing Committee of the House, the Honorable Werkesemu Mamo.

The Chairperson stated that the draft proclamation creates a favorable foundation for establishing an inclusive, participatory, modern, and administrative working system in the sports sector. She further noted that it would resolve good governance issues observed in the sector, encourage the construction of sports infrastructure and training institutions, and support sports equipment manufacturers. The Honorable Werkesemu added that the proclamation would contribute its share to the country's economic growth, enhance social cohesion among citizens, and strengthen diplomatic relations.

According to information obtained from the House, the Minister of Culture and Sports, Shewit Shanka, provided additional explanations on topics she emphasized regarding the necessity of focusing on implementation, beyond just providing comments on the proclamation's importance. She provided clarifications for the ideas raised by members of the House.

The Minister pointed out the importance of the proclamation, stating that to make sports a source of pride for Ethiopians, it is necessary to resolve the bottlenecks hindering the sector through proper

procedures and systems. Finally, the Members of Parliament (MPs) gave their consent to ratify the draft presented to them as Proclamation No. 1413/2018 with a unanimous vote.



The Chairperson of the Health, Social Development, Culture, and Sports Affairs Standing Committee, the Honorable Werkesemu Mamo, while presenting the recommendation of the draft proclamation;

1.2 DRAFT LAWS

Among the draft proclamations referred by the Ethiopian Members of Parliament (MPs) to the relevant Standing Committees during their 18th Regular Session, one was the **agreement signed between the Government of Ethiopia and the Russian Federation** to establish a Joint Biological Research Center.

The Honorable Dr. Mihretu Shanko, State Minister and Government Assistant Whip at the House of Members of Parliament (MPs), explained that the

agreement would assist in strengthening and developing joint scientific and analytical research work between the two countries.

The Honorable Dr. Mihretu noted that it would enable the insurance of mutual benefit for both countries by organizing the construction of research infrastructure for higher education institutions as well as the institutional framework for bringing research results to the market. He further reminded that since fishery development has high significance for accelerating homegrown economic growth, it would help Ethiopia gain the extensive experience Russia has in the sector to go beyond self-sufficiency and export abroad. The House referred the draft proclamation as Proclamation No. 17/2018 to the Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs Standing Committee for detailed review.

It was reported that another draft proclamation considered by the House of Members of Parliament (MPs) during the same regular session concerned the draft **Air Service Agreements made between the Government of Ethiopia and various countries**. Speaking on these drafts, the Honorable Dr. Mihretu, State Minister and Government Assistant Whip, presented to the Members of Parliament (MPs) the significant role these draft proclamations play in Ethiopia's air transport and economic growth.

The first presented was the draft Air Service Agreement proposed for signing **between the Government of Ethiopia and the Republic of Sierra Leone**; he stated that in addition to enabling airlines to land directly at selected destinations and provide convenient aviation services, the agreement creates an opportunity for the countries to import aviation and flight equipment duty-free.

Subsequently, the state minister, who presented the draft Air Service Agreement proclamation **between the Republic of Angola and the Government of Ethiopia** to the House, was heard saying that the agreement creates an opportunity to enhance the long-standing relationship between the countries and to allow them to repatriate profits earned in the sector to their home countries without any restrictions.

The Government Whip, who also presented the draft Air Service Agreement proposed for reaching an agreement **between the Government of Ethiopia and the People's Republic of Bangladesh** to the Members of Parliament (MPs), stated that the draft agreement takes into account the growing air transport flow between the two countries.

The other was the draft Air Service Agreement made **between the Governments of Ethiopia and the Kingdom of Eswatini**. The Honorable Dr. Mihretu told the Members of Parliament (MPs) that since the draft agreement includes performing

cargo flights without frequency limitations and the duty-free importation of equipment necessary for flights, it would reduce flight costs. Consequently, the House unanimously referred all the draft Air Service Agreements made between the countries to the Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs Standing Committee for detailed review.



The state minister and Government Assistant Whip at the House of Members of Parliament (MPs), the Honorable Dr. Mihretu Shanko, while presenting the draft agreements;

1.3 EXPLANATORY FORUMS

According to information from the House, the Ethiopian Members of Parliament (MPs) conducted **three Explanatory Forums** during the month of Miyazia covered in this edition.

The first briefing session in terms of timing was conducted by the Planning, Budget, and Finance Affairs Standing Committee of the House regarding the draft proclamation presented to **re-amend the Customs Proclamation No. 859/2006 for the**

second time. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Desalegn Wedaje, stated during the explanatory Forum that the amendment was made to align the draft proclamation with macroeconomic reforms as well as international and continental provisions, and to modernize customs procedures.

The Chairperson further noted that regarding the seizure of vehicles carrying contraband, if the vehicle owner explains to the Commission that they had no prior knowledge and does not receive a satisfactory response, their right to appeal up to a court of law is protected. The Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Dr. Abraham Alemayehu, reportedly explained that beyond facilitating import and export trade and ensuring consistency with international agreements, the amending draft proclamation would play a significant role in safeguarding national sovereignty.

For his part, the Deputy Commissioner of the Customs Commission, Azezew Chane, indicated that to ensure the amending draft proclamation encourages legally operating traders and transport owners rather than causing concern, the issues raised during the public briefing session should be taken as input.

It was noted that the Deputy Commissioner of the Federal Police, Melaku Fenta, mentioned in turn

that the income generated from the sale of properties seized from contraband trade, beyond building the institution's capacity, should also take into account the stakeholders participating in contraband prevention work.

According to information from the House, Abraham Rega, a senior legal expert from the Ministry of Finance, explained that the reason for amending the proclamation is because the current Customs Proclamation has been in service for many years.

He elaborated that the draft was prepared to align the provisions of the proclamation with the current stage of development in international trade, support the growing manufacturing industry, harmonize it with regional trade agreements, protect borders, and encourage legal trade and investment flows.



The Chairperson of the Planning, Budget, and Finance Affairs Standing Committee, the Honorable Desalegn Wedaje, during the explanatory forum;

Another explanatory forum conducted by the Members of Parliament (MPs) during the month

was held by the Democracy Affairs Standing Committee of the House with officials from the Ethiopian Institution of the Ombudsman regarding **the Freedom of Information Proclamation**. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Ewnetu Alene, officially opened the discussion by indicating that clarifications would be provided by the Ombudsman officials on ambiguous concepts within the draft Freedom of Information Proclamation.

Furthermore, the Chairperson noted that while access to information is a constitutional right of citizens, entities that obtain information must also benefit the public by delivering the accurate information they have received. He also urged that if certain phrases and words within the draft proclamation require definition, the draft should be revisited based on the suggestions made during the discussion.

The Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Azmera Andemo, emphasized that the questions raised by members of the House, the Standing Committee and the Legal Department of the Secretariat of the House are vital for enriching the draft proclamation, and therefore, the draft must be re-examined.

According to information from the House, the Chief Ombudsman of the Ethiopian Institution of the Ombudsman, Mrs. Simenesh Wube, explained that

the draft proclamation was designed to ensure public access to information in accordance with the FDRE Constitution and international provisions. The Chief Ombudsman added that a study was conducted and experiences were drawn from other countries before the draft was prepared to ensure that accurate information obtained from providers is accessible to the public.



The Chairperson of the Democracy Affairs Standing Committee, the Honorable Ewnetu Alene, during the explanatory session;

The third explanatory session of the month, according to the information, was conducted by the Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs Standing Committee of the House regarding the **Critical Infrastructure Cyber Security Proclamation**. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Dr. Dima Noggo, stated that the draft proclamation is a tool that enables the protection of key government and private infrastructures from cyberattacks, noting that the Standing Committee will conduct a deep review and prepare a resolution by engaging stakeholders.

The Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Dr. Fethi Mahdi, explained that in this era where the world is undergoing complex and dynamic technological changes, significant cyberattacks are committed using technology. He indicated that the draft proclamation would have a unique significance in ensuring national sovereignty by protecting critical infrastructures from these attacks.

The Deputy Chairperson further pointed out that the proclamation should clearly indicate that there is no mechanism for collecting funds from individuals. According to the report, he also stated that the Standing Committee would carefully examine the fairness of penalty impositions, consistency with national and international laws, and issues related to human rights.

For her part, the Director General of the Information Network Security Administration (INSA), Tigist Hamid, who was present at the briefing session, mentioned that cyberattacks are increasing over time. She stated that since cyberattacks cause significant damage to the national economy and the daily lives of citizens, the draft proclamation would create enabling conditions to counter these attacks.



The Director General of the Information Network Security Administration (INSA), Tigist Hamid, while explaining the draft proclamation;

The Director General added that the issuance of the proclamation, by providing legal protection for critical infrastructures, would not only enhance the country's competitiveness in the free trade zone but also play a significant role in ensuring digital sovereignty.



2. OVERSIGHT OF EXECUTIVE INSTITUTIONS

During the month of Miyazia covered in this edition, the Ethiopian Members of Parliament (MPs) heard the nine-month budget year performance reports of **twenty federal institutions**.

2.1 INSTITUTIONAL REPORTS

Among the institutions whose reports were heard by the Ethiopian Members of Parliament (MPs) during the month of Miyazia, the foremost was **the oral report of the Minister of Tourism**. The House reviewed the performance of the Ministry of Tourism during its 17th Regular Session of the 5th Year Tenure.

In this regard, questions were presented to the Minister concerning what is being done to protect and develop the country's tourism resources, particularly regarding the repair and maintenance of historical heritages damaged by man-made and natural causes. Additionally, the House requested explanations regarding the activities the Ministry is undertaking to develop and register new tourist destinations.

While providing answers and clarifications to the questions, the Minister of Tourism, Selamawit Kassa, stated that the necessary protection and care are being provided to ensure the country's historical

heritages are passed down to the next generation. Recalling that the tourism sector is one of the five economic pillars set by the government, the Minister explained that damaged heritages are being repaired and infrastructure is being completed to bring about tangible change in the sub-economic sector.

The Minister further explained to the Members of Parliament (MPs) that regarding the development of new tourism destinations, more than 800 tourism attractions have been registered in various parts of the country. Among these, a study has identified that no fewer than 300 can be developed within a short period at a reasonable cost.



The Speaker of the House of Members of Parliament (MPs), the Honorable Tagesse Chafo, and the Minister of Tourism, Selamawit Kassa, during the report;

The second institution to present its nine-month performance report for the 2018 budget year during the month of Miyazia was **the Authority for Civil Society Organizations**. The report was heard by the Law and Justice Affairs Standing Committee of the House, covering key areas such as civil society operations, registration processes, volunteerism,

financial management of organizations, and election preparations.

The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Mrs. Etsegenet Mengistu, emphasized that the focus should shift beyond the mere number of civil society organizations to ensuring their quality and substance meet Ethiopia's standards. She noted that continuous monitoring and support are essential to verify that these organizations are operating effectively according to their established goals and to ensure that funds collected from various sources are utilized strictly for their intended purposes.

Additionally, the Chairperson highlighted the significant role civil society plays in ensuring the 7th national election is peaceful, fair, and credible. She stressed the need to strengthen capacity-building for organizations involved in election-related work and to maintain strict oversight so they operate independently, free from any outside influence.

The Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Issa Boru, added that the efforts of civil society organizations to benefit the public should be integrated with the government's development plans. He remarked that the Authority must conduct its monitoring and evaluation at all levels, supported by field observations, to ensure that the work of these

organizations is linked to the country's development goals and expands public benefit.

For his part, the Director General of the Authority, Samson Biratu, stated that the role of organizations working on elections is crucial for the democratic, fair, and credible conclusion of the upcoming national elections. He noted that preparations are underway to ensure that participating civil society organizations understand their immense national responsibility and contribute effectively to the building of the democratic system. (Based on this report from the Authority, you can find the observational insight prepared by Enderassie on page 42).



Members of the Law and Justice Affairs Standing Committee, while listening to the report of the Authority;

The third institution to present its nine-month performance report for the 2018 budget year during the month of Miyazia was the **Ministry of Education**. This report was reviewed by the Human Resource Development, Employment, and Technology Affairs Standing Committee of the House, which offered evaluative feedback on critical

areas. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Dr. Negeri Lencho, noted the successful implementation of three previously ratified proclamations as a primary strength, particularly highlighting the positive steps taken toward granting universities autonomy.

He also identified the education assessment and examination service sector, alongside the rollout of new curricula, as areas showing significant progress. However, he stressed that performance disparities in the Education for Generations national movement must be addressed and directed that thorough preparations be made for the 2018 national examinations by evaluating the specific conditions of schools.

The Chairperson further underscored several priorities, including resolving challenges related to the professorship title, building the capacity of teaching hospitals, and shifting university budgets from vehicle rentals toward purchasing. He also insisted on the completion of pending projects to ensure they serve students effectively. Supporting this, the Deputy Chairperson, the Honorable Dr. Bethlehem Lakew, emphasized that the education policy must remain modern and relevant, as it serves as the essential foundation for all other sectors.

During the session, the Minister of Education, Professor Berhanu Nega, observed that the

performance of private universities in exit exams has been notably low. He remarked that while these institutions previously cited the quality of incoming students as a challenge, the new Grade 12 examination system would now provide a true measure of educational quality.

The Professor highlighted that technology-assisted efforts in Grade 12 leaving exams are proving successful, and while organized cheating attempts persist, they are declining due to rigorous enforcement. He concluded with a stern warning that decisive, irreversible action will be taken against anyone complicit in undermining the integrity of the educational system.



The Minister of Education, Professor Berhanu Nega, while presenting his institution's report;

The Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority was the fourth institution to present its nine-month budget year performance report this month to the Urban, Infrastructure, and Transport Affairs Standing Committee of the House. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Prof.

Mohammed Abdo, noted that while the Authority serves as the backbone for the growth of the country's aviation sector and the success of Ethiopian Airlines, there are gaps in promoting its activities to the public.

The Chairperson further stated that the institution must build a regulatory system and institutional stature that considers the Bishoftu International Airport, which is expected to become operational in 2030, to sustain the airline's competitiveness.

For his part, the Director General of the Authority, Yohannes Abera, mentioned that digitalization efforts are underway to make customer service more efficient and accessible, adding that the institution has recorded encouraging results in airspace safety, technology transfer, and revenue collection over the past nine months.



The Chairperson of the Urban, Infrastructure, and Transport Affairs Standing Committee, the Honorable Prof. Mohammed Abdo, during the report;

In the same month of Miyazia, the fifth federal institution selected to be heard by the Law and Justice Affairs Standing Committee was **the Federal Courts**, which presented its nine-month performance report for the current year to the committee members. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Mrs. Etsegenet Mengistu, emphasized the need to work hard to address the issue of overdue decisions, noting their significant impact on the public. She also raised concerns regarding complaints related to circuit and division courts, stating that these problems should be resolved by establishing improved procedures.

The Deputy Chairperson of the Law and Justice Affairs Standing Committee, the Honorable Issa Boru, remarked that the steps taken in issuing and implementing directives, as well as addressing good governance issues, have been encouraging. He further stressed the importance of strengthening the coordination between Federal Courts and Regional Courts to narrow the performance gaps observed in their execution.

For his part, the President of the Federal Supreme Court, Tewodros Mihret, indicated that the dedication and effectiveness of judges is a matter of high priority for the Federal Courts. He stated that criteria are being developed in a way that involves the public to ensure that employee incentives do not focus solely on output levels in a manner that could be counterproductive.



The Chairperson of the Law and Justice Affairs Standing Committee, the Honorable Mrs. Etsegenet Mengistu, during the report;

The House of Peoples' Representatives of the FDRE, in its 16th regular session held this month, heard the performance report of the **Ministry of Irrigation and Lowlands** as the sixth institution in the sequence, with the report presented by the Minister, the Honorable Dr. Abraham Belay. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Fethiya Ahmed, highlighted as a strength that the Ministry has completed the study and design of six projects that had been lagging for many years.

Additionally, the Chairperson noted the handover of four irrigation infrastructure construction projects as a further strength, while emphasizing that focus must be given to projects with low performance regarding irrigation study and design. Furthermore, she stated that it is necessary to work attentively to provide a fair response by including resources from various regions in the plan and addressing projects

whose study and design are complete but whose construction has not yet commenced.

For his part, the Minister, Dr. Abraham, mentioned that work is currently being done according to the plan to complete existing projects. He added that efforts will be made in the future to provide responses as much as capacity allows by identifying projects with multifaceted benefits.



The Minister of Irrigation and Lowlands, the Honorable Dr. Abraham Belay, while presenting his report;

In the month of Miyazia, the seventh institution to present its nine-month performance report for the 2018 budget year was the **Ethiopian Artificial Intelligence Institute**, which was heard by the Law and Justice Affairs Standing Committee of the House. The Director General of the Institute, Dr. Worku Gachena, presented the report, stating that the institute has significantly enhanced Ethiopia's digital sovereignty by operationalizing a

sophisticated infrastructure triple-threat that includes a 15-story headquarters building, a 5-story building dedicated to the start-up ecosystem, and a modern Artificial Intelligence Unipod innovation center.

The Director General further explained that effective data collection and analysis work has been carried out in the agricultural, educational, and financial sectors over the past nine months. To boost the creative abilities of youth in the fields of artificial intelligence and robotics, the institute is currently providing organized workspace and resource support to 200 start-ups. Additionally, nine software applications, including the Mesob One center service, have been developed and are in the phase of becoming operational.

The report also noted that alongside the data collection work for applications capable of converting speech to text and translating five indigenous languages, an indigenous artificial intelligence system named Mela has been developed. The Chairperson of the Law and Justice Affairs Standing Committee, the Honorable Mrs. Etsegenet Mengistu, described the institute's nine-month performance as effective and exemplary, indicating that it represents a transition from theoretical capacity to tangible and practical impact.



The Director General of the Ethiopian Artificial Intelligence Institute, Dr. Worku Gachena, while presenting his institution's report;

The Law and Justice Affairs Standing Committee also heard the nine-month performance report of **the Documents Authentication and Registration Service** as the eighth institution in the sequence. The Standing Committee noted that the activities carried out by the institution to provide technology-supported, digitalized, and efficient services are encouraging. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Mrs. Etsegenet Mengistu, stated that the work performed to link regions through digitalization and create a unified national database serves as a model for other institutions, adding that the collaborative efforts to exchange information with over 41 government and financial institutions are commendable.

The Chairperson further emphasized that the reduction of forged documents by 95 percent demonstrates that the technological efforts are encouraging and should be strengthened. According to information from the House, she also noted that

work aimed at digitizing long-standing documents within the institution must be pursued with focus.

For his part, the Director General of the Service, Hamid Keniso, stated that the agency served more than 1.4 million citizens and collected over 3 billion Birr during the nine months of the budget year. He added that seven regions have entered the system in a way that enables the creation of a national database. The Director General further reported that work has been done to integrate the service into the Mesob One center, allowing citizens to access services from wherever they are located.



The members of the Law and Justice Affairs Standing Committee, while listening to the report of the Documents Authentication and Registration Service;

The State-Owned Enterprises Affairs Standing Committee of the House also reviewed the nine-month performance report of the **Ethiopian Railways Corporation** for the 2018 budget year during this month of Miyazia. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Melese Mena, who heard the report of the corporation as the ninth presenter of the month, indicated that the evaluation primarily focused on project

performance, financial management, and debt repayment strategic plans.

Furthermore, the Chairperson emphasized that technology transfer efforts and professional capacity-building activities aimed at managing the railway sector independently must be strengthened. According to information from the House, he also stated that the responsibility of ensuring that constructed railway lines, trains, and related assets are protected from damage and provide long-term service must be met, along with maintaining infrastructure safety through regular maintenance.

For his part, the Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Dr. Engineer Sileshi Kore, remarked that the corporation must enhance its leadership and technical capacity to fulfill the responsibility entrusted to it for modernizing the country's transport sector. The Chief Executive Officer of the corporation, Engineer Hilina Getachew, stated during her report that work is being done in coordination with various stakeholders, ranging from the Federal Police to regional security structures, to protect the railway line; a national asset, from theft and accidents.



The Chief Executive Officer of the Ethiopian Railways Corporation, Engineer Hilina Getachew, while presenting her report;

The tenth presenter of the month to deliver the nine-month performance report for this budget year was the **Ethiopian Maritime Authority**, and it was noted that the report was heard by the Urban, Infrastructure, and Transport Affairs Standing Committee of the House. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Prof. Mohammed Abdo, besides mentioning that the Authority has carried out effective activities in streamlining, monitoring, and controlling maritime logistics services over the past nine months, indicated that the construction of the Modjo Dry Port in a modern and digitalized manner to handle numerous shipments is encouraging.

On the other hand, the Chairperson added that the impact of the global situation on the ability of ships to transfer cargo as desired was evaluated as a

shortfall. The Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Dr. Eshetu Temesgen, for his part, noted that the sector is an institution that has shown better performance with national attention, stating that the Authority's work in expanding diplomacy based on studies to broaden import and export options is encouraging.

The Deputy Director General of the Ethiopian Maritime Authority, Firaol Tafa, explained that work is being done to increase private sector participation in the logistics sector to expand multimodal coverage, adding that they are working closely with maritime associations based on international law to ensure maritime safety and prevent accidents.



The Deputy Director General of the Ethiopian Maritime Authority, Firaol Tafa, while presenting his institution's report;

The Director further informed the committee members that the Authority is focusing on integrating its activities with the Ministry of Logistics and Transport to streamline overall import

and export services, digitalizing the system to prevent brokers and reduce price hikes.

The Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs Standing Committee of the House held an event where it was emphasized that focus must be given to early warning activities to reduce disaster risk, during the evaluation of the **Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Commission's** nine-month performance report for the 2018 budget year. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Dr. Dima Noggo, who heard the report of this institution as the eleventh presenter of the month of Miyazia, noted that the institution has overcome previous challenges and performed effectively over the past five years by focusing on its institutional organization and mission, stating that it is registering significant change.

The Chairperson added that human-made and natural disaster risks are increasing in our country and across the world, and that efforts being made at the institutional and governmental levels must continue to be strengthened to provide a commensurate response. For his part, the Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Dr. Fethi Mahdi, pointed out that the institution has carried out many effective activities over the past nine months and should continue to strengthen them.

The Commissioner of the Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Commission, Ambassador Dr. Shiferaw Teklemariam, mentioned that a Disaster Risk Management Fund has been established with accounts opened at the National Bank and the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, and is currently in the fund-collecting phase. He stated that through this fund, which began collection on yekatit 1, 2018, more than 1.7 billion Birr was collected in a single month. Furthermore, information from the House indicates that he noted more than 10 billion Birr has been collected in the regions over the past nine months.



The Commissioner of the Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Commission, Ambassador Dr. Shiferaw Teklemariam, while presenting his institution's report;

The Ethiopian Federal Police Commission was among the federal institutions that appeared before the House of Peoples' Representatives in the month of Miyazia to present their performance reports for

the current budget year. The report of this institution, which was the twelfth presenter of the month, was heard by the Law and Justice Affairs Standing Committee. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Mrs. Etsegenet Mengistu, stated that the ongoing institutional building has made the organization competitive at both continental and international levels, and urged the institution to further strengthen its successful initiatives.

The Chairperson noted that the work done to protect institutions and infrastructure, as well as ensuring that religious festivals are well-guarded so the community can observe its culture, traditions, and religious rites without fear and return home in peace, must be sustained. She added that the measures being taken against anti-peace forces, lawbreakers, smugglers, and human traffickers should be encouraged, and work must be strengthened in coordination with relevant institutions to ensure they receive instructive punishment for their actions.

For his part, the Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Issa Boru, remarked that the office's efforts in criminal investigation regarding human trafficking are commendable and should be further intensified.

The Commissioner General of the Ethiopian Federal Police Commission, Demelash Gebremichael, stated

that over the nine months, the institution has built the capacity to uphold law and order by addressing those engaged in terrorism and organized crime with high responsibility.

The General added that the institution has played its part in building the country's image by proving in practice that Ethiopia can host public festivals and international events without security issues. According to information from the House, he also mentioned that various activities are underway, supported by manpower and technology, as part of a plan to ensure the national election is concluded peacefully.



The Commissioner General of the Ethiopian Federal Police Commission, Demelash Gebremichael, while presenting the commission's report;

The Urban, Infrastructure, and Transport Affairs Standing Committee of the House reviewed the nine-month performance report of the **Construction Management Institute** under the Ministry of Urban and Infrastructure, making the institute the thirteenth reporting organization of

the month. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Prof. Mohammed Abdo, provided direction that the institute's performance in addressing gaps in the construction sector through knowledge-based solutions must be strengthened.

Furthermore, it was noted that the Chairperson emphasized the need for research and study efforts aimed at substituting imported construction materials with local alternatives to be translated into practice, thereby saving foreign currency.

For his part, the Director General of the Institute, Engineer Tamrat Mulu, explained to the committee members that integrated work with domestic and international universities and institutions to modernize the construction sector and realize technology transfer is showing tangible results. He added that the institute is carrying out institutional reforms and regular operations side-by-side in a responsible manner.



The Director General of the Construction Management Institute under the Ministry of Urban and Infrastructure, Engineer Tamrat Mulu, while presenting his report;

The fourteenth reporting institution of the month was the **Ethiopian Chemical Industry Corporation**, whose nine-month performance report was heard by the State-Owned Enterprises Affairs Standing Committee of the House. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Melese Mena, noted that the corporation was established with the aim of filling the market gap in the country's chemical sector and contributing to its growth through its major factories, including Mughher Cement, Adami Tulu Pesticide, Awash Melkassa Chemical, and Batu Caustic Soda.

The Chairperson added that key points such as ensuring healthy resource utilization, increasing profitability by reducing costs and foreign currency earnings, conducting timely audits, and taking swift corrective measures on audit findings were evaluated in depth.

For his part, the Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Dr. Engineer Sileshi Kore, stated that the corporation should work to achieve a better leap forward in its future endeavors by considering the country's overall development and utilizing work supported by study and research.

In his report, the Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation, Dr. Engineer Hundessa Dessalegn, mentioned that the corporation managed to secure 4.6 billion Birr in revenue and 725.28 million Birr in gross profit during the first nine months of the 2018 budget year. The CEO noted that corporate revenue showed a 6.40% growth compared to the same period last budget year, explaining that the results achieved; despite various challenges, represented 77.27% of the plan.

According to information from the House, the CEO added that the shortage of inputs and foreign currency, electric power interruptions, and the rising cost of fuel and inputs associated with the war in the Middle East were the primary challenges encountered.



The members of the State-Owned Enterprises Affairs Standing Committee, while listening to the corporation's report;

The Plan, Budget, and Finance Affairs Standing Committee of the House reviewed the nine-month performance report of the **Ministry of Finance**, making the Ministry the fifteenth reporting

institution of the month. In his comments, the Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Desalegn Wedaje, emphasized that the Ministry's efforts to cover the national budget deficit through internal capacity and to stabilize inflation must continue to be strengthened.

The Chairperson stated that activities being carried out to restructure debt and reduce the debt burden, as well as maintaining good relations with development partners, should be further intensified. He added that challenges observed in relation to capital budget utilization and project performance still require focused attention.

According to information from the House, the Minister of Finance, the Honorable Ahmed Shide, provided explanations regarding the focus on major macroeconomic reform programs. He highlighted the achievement of bringing inflation down to a single digit, the efforts to cover the budget deficit using domestic capacity, the positive relations established with development partners to ease the debt burden, and the implementation of fiscal policy.

The Minister further noted the activities undertaken to ensure the health of the overall financial system. He stated that tax revenue collected during the first nine months of the budget year showed a 7.8% growth compared to the same period in the

previous budget year, adding that these efforts will be sustained and strengthened.



The Minister of Finance, the Honorable Ahmed Shide, while presenting his report;

The sixteenth federal institution to present its report in the month of Miyazia was the **Ministry of Health**, and it was noted that the Ministry's nine-month performance report for this budget year was heard by the Health, Social Development, Culture, and Sport Affairs Standing Committee of the House.

The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Werkesemu Mamo, stated that the Ministry of Health is coordinating work relations from regional health bureaus to accountable institutions, and she urged that focus must be given to building institutional systems and modernizing the digitalization process. The Chairperson added that by focusing on institutional system building, the Ministry can sustain the results achieved in its core functions so far.

The Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Dr. Tadele Buraka, for his part, noted that the health policy's focus on prevention contributed significantly to fully controlling the Marburg outbreak. He emphasized that the success achieved in controlling the outbreak serves as a highly educational experience for other countries and the international community.

The Minister of Health, Dr. Mekdes Daba, stated that work is being done to support health facility projects under construction at both regional and federal levels to ensure they are completed on time and with quality.

For his part, the State Minister of Health, Dr. Dereje Duguma, explained to the committee that the preventive treatment provided to infants born to mothers with HIV reached only 73%, despite a plan of 88%. He attributed this shortfall to interruptions in the supply of inputs and gaps in proper reporting.



The Minister of Health, Dr. Mekdes Daba, while presenting her ministry's report;

The Ethiopian Industrial Inputs Development Enterprise was also among the reporting institutions of the month. The nine-month performance report of this organization, which was the seventeenth presenter in chronological order, was heard by the State-Owned Enterprises Affairs Standing Committee of the House.

The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Melese Mena, stated that the organization's nine-month plan performance is transparent, credible, and demonstrates leadership coordination.

According to information from the House, the Chairperson noted that the enterprise had previously been in severe difficulty but has emerged from that situation following leadership changes and is now performing in a much better capacity.

For his part, the Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Dr. Engineer Sileshi Kore, remarked that the organization is working for change in closer collaboration with the Standing Committee. He also stated that the studies conducted through the Policy Studies Institute to resolve problems fundamentally, sustainably, and reliably are commendable.

The Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Ethiopian Industrial Inputs Development Enterprise, Dawit Adane, explained that by building an operational

system supported by qualified manpower and technology, as well as a strong supply and marketing chain, the enterprise is significantly contributing to the increased effectiveness of the country's manufacturing sector and market stabilization through the development and supply of quality industrial inputs.



The Honorable Melese Mena, Chairperson of the State-Owned Enterprises Affairs Standing Committee, during the presentation of the institution's report;

In this month, where the Ethiopian representatives extensively evaluated the nine-month performance of federal institutions, the **Development Bank of Ethiopia** was called as the eighteenth organization to present its report. The bank's report was heard by the State-Owned Enterprises Affairs Standing Committee of the House.

The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Melese Mena, reportedly stated that the bank is not only a backbone of the country's economy but also leaves its mark on national

development, as the loans it provides stimulate regional growth.

The Chairperson highlighted several strengths, noting that the bank's income has been improving because it has revised bottleneck policies to facilitate future operations, maintained a better loan repayment rate, and performed well in areas such as foreign currency earnings.

For his part, the President of the Bank, Dr. Isayas Kassa, mentioned that they are working with a designed strategy to fill gaps starting from the loan disbursement process. He pointed out that to address the bank's fundamental problems, a new board was established, approximately 23 policies were approved, and efforts are underway to create a permanent fund mobilization system with development partners through specialized monitoring.



The President of the Development Bank of Ethiopia, Dr. Isayas Kassa, while presenting the bank's report;

The Ministry of Revenues was highlighted for showing significant transformation in revenue collection, operational procedures, and technology utilization during another executive institution monitoring session this month. It was noted that the Ministry of Revenues, the nineteenth reporting institution of the month, had its nine-month performance report for this budget year heard by the Plan, Budget, and Finance Affairs Standing Committee of the House.

The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Desalegn Wedaje, stated that the Ministry could serve as a role model for other institutions in terms of accepting and implementing feedback previously provided by the Standing Committee.

The information cited the Chairperson further mentioning that the revenue collected this year showed an increase of 449 billion Birr compared to the same period last year. He attributed this improvement to the work done since the preparation phase, the commitment of leadership and staff, and the motivation created by the recognition and incentive awards given to taxpayers.

For his part, the Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Dr. Abraham Alemayehu, noted that the Ministry of Revenues stands out among other institutions by fully

achieving its plan. He added that legislative amendments made by the House have yielded great results and the institution's implementation of these laws has played a major role.

The Minister of Revenues, Mrs. Aynalem Nigussie, mentioned that the Standing Committee has been providing extensive monitoring and support to help the Ministry reach its current level in revenue collection, operations, and technology use. She further pointed out that the Ministry is an institution currently carrying out a great national mission in the 2018 budget year.



The Minister of Revenues, Mrs. Aynalem Nigussie, while presenting her institution's report;

The Ministry of Water and Energy was the twentieth and final reporting institution in the month of Miyazia, and it was noted that the Ministry's nine-month performance report for this budget year was heard by the Water, Irrigation, Lowland, and Environment Development Affairs Standing Committee of the House.

The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Mrs. Fetiya Ahmed, highlighted several strengths, including the steady improvement of the country's water coverage, the expanded monitoring of transboundary rivers, the increase in the number of rural and urban clean drinking water users, and the growth of solar energy coverage in areas without access to the electric grid.

According to information from the House, the Chairperson added that the performance of wastewater disposal projects, clean water projects in certain towns, and activities in drought-affected areas remains low.

For his part, the Minister of Water and Energy, Dr. Engineer Habtamu Itefa, explained to the committee members that while clean drinking water coverage is growing over time, the Ministry is working focus to resolve clean water shortages raised in certain areas. The Minister mentioned that the Ministry is working to address issues regarding electricity accessibility and interruptions in some regions; however, he noted that the theft of electrical infrastructure in various areas remains a significant challenge.



The Honorable Mrs. Fetiya Ahmed, Chairperson of the Water, Irrigation, Lowland, and Environment Development Affairs Standing Committee, during the report presentation;

2.2 INSTITUTIONAL AND FIELD VISITS

The House of Peoples' Representatives did not conclude the month of Miyazia only by enacting laws and hearing institutional reports; beyond that, it conducted visits to numerous institutions through its various standing committees and carried out numerated field observations.

2.2.1 INSTITUTIONAL VISITS

In the early days of Miyazia, the first institution to be visited by the representatives was the **Ministry of Transport and Logistics**, with the field observation conducted by the Urban, Infrastructure, and Transport Affairs Standing Committee of the House. During the visit, the Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Prof. Mohammed Abdo, stated that economic growth is

unthinkable without modernizing the transport and logistics sector; therefore, the government has reorganized the sector with this in mind.

The Chairperson noted that this reorganization prepares the Ministry to meet future transport and logistics demands, adding that the work currently being undertaken in this regard is promising. For their part, members of the Standing Committee remarked that the digitalization efforts made by the institution to improve services; including its accountable wings and its fulfillment of responsibilities regarding institutional building and reform are commendable.

The Minister of Transport and Logistics, the Honorable Dr. Alemu Sime, noted that the transport sector has faced challenges due to the current global situation affecting fuel supply. The Minister further explained to the Standing Committee members that the Ministry has established a special command post and is working extensively to ensure that transport services are not interrupted.



The Standing Committee, during its visit to the Ministry of Transport and Logistics;

Another activity of the month was the institutional visits conducted by the Trade and Tourism Affairs Standing Committee of the House of Peoples' Representatives at the **Ethiopian Capital Market Authority**. The Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Yohannes Mesfin, stated that the ongoing efforts to promote financial inclusion and sustainable economic growth must be further strengthened.

The Deputy Chairperson added that the institution's use of technology, its adherence to government laws and systems, its work on women's empowerment, and its collaboration with other institutions are positive steps that should continue.

For her part, the Director General of the Ethiopian Capital Market Authority, Hana Tehelku, pointed out that activities to control illegal movements are being carried out through modern systems, whistleblowing mechanisms, and various assessments.

The Director General further explained that work is underway to ensure that capital market activities in the 2018 budget year are guided by a strong legal framework and regulatory system, that modern market infrastructures are fully operational, and that licensed capital market service providers actively participate while new providers are encouraged to obtain licenses.



The Standing Committee, during its visit to the Ethiopian Capital Market Authority;

Another institution that serves as an example of those visited by the members of parliament (MPs) in the month of Miyazia is the **Ethiopian Public Service University**. The Human Resource Development, Employment, and Technology Affairs Standing Committee of the House, which visited the university, emphasized that the institution must strengthen and continue the institutional reforms it has initiated.

The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Dr. Negeri Lencho, stated that the university leadership must work with commitment to ensure the reform achieves its intended goals.

According to information from the House, the Chairperson added that the reform should be expedited to ensure the university gains national and international recognition.



The Honorable Dr. Negeri Lencho, Chairperson of the Human Resource Development, Employment, and Technology Affairs Standing Committee, during the institutional visit;

For his part, the President of the University, Dr. Nigussie Tadesse, explained that the university is undertaking rigorous reform work to resolve previous challenges. The President further noted that the university is working with a major mission to make government service and administration effective, adding that favorable conditions exist to successfully realize the reform.

In the same month of Miyazia, members of the State-Owned Enterprises Affairs Standing Committee of the House reached the **Ethiopian Toll Roads Enterprise** and reportedly conducted a tour to observe the enterprise's current status.

The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Melese Mena, emphasized that state-owned enterprises must formulate and implement strategic plans to properly fulfill their roles in

accelerating national growth and ensuring public benefit from development.

Beyond this, the Chairperson noted that the enterprise is expected to provide modern services by updating and digitizing its operations to make them contact-free. He further pointed out the need to correct malpractice by properly managing government resources and assets and following modern financial procedures.

For his part, the CEO of the Ethiopian Toll Roads Enterprise, Mustofa Abasimel, explained to the visiting committee members that the institution is properly fulfilling its mission by streamlining the country's transport and ensuring road safety. He added that expressways are making a significant contribution to the country's economic growth by facilitating the movement of national import and export products.



The Standing Committee, while visiting the Ethiopian Toll Roads Enterprise;

According to the FDRE House of Peoples' Representatives information, the House Standing

Committee on Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs conducted an oversight visit to the **Immigration and Nationality Service office**. During the visit, the Standing Committee reportedly confirmed that the headquarters of the Immigration and Nationality Service provides quality and efficient VIP and urgent passport services.

The Honorable Dr. Fethi Mahdi, Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, stated that through the institutional reforms undertaken, the Immigration and Nationality Service has been liberated from its previous multifaceted challenges and has managed to register tangible success. The Deputy Chairperson further urged that additional awareness should be created for the public through various media options regarding the appropriate services being provided by the institution across its more than 30 branches nationwide.

On her part, Selamawit Dawit, Director General of the Immigration and Nationality Service, recalled that the Standing Committee's support was not light in amending laws and fulfilling other essential requirements when the institution was executing its reforms, and the report quoted her as saying that the institution is currently providing services that meet international standards.

In his turn, Deputy Director General Gosa Demissie was also reported to have mentioned that the

institutional reform has enabled the organization to bring about a radical change.



When the Standing Committee conducted an institutional oversight visit to the Immigration and Nationality Service office;

The Ethio-Engineering Group, which was visited by the Government Expenditure, Administration and Control Affairs Standing Committee of the House of Peoples' Representatives of the FDRE, was another institution visited that served as an indicator for the month. It was mentioned that the Honorable Dereje Debela, member of the Standing Committee and chairperson of the group, stated that the main objective of the oversight was to verify whether the recommendations mentioned in the audit report had been implemented and to ensure that institutional system reforms were put into practice.

On her part, the Honorable Mrs. Sumeya Desalew, member of the Standing Committee, stated that there were 19 points that were worked on by taking a sample from the performance audit conducted from 2013 to 2016; and it was reported that she noted the institution currently has a better performance compared to what existed at the time

the audit was conducted, and this should be encouraged. The MP added that the House should re-establish this institution by proclamation.

On his part, Yadenu Tirfesa, General Manager of the Power Equipment Manufacturing Industry of the Ethio-Engineering Group, reportedly indicated that, regarding the performance audit finding, a customer satisfaction study is studied by internal and external researchers. Raising that work is being done on the gaps identified from a study previously conducted by a third party, the House information quoted the manager as saying that since products are manufactured according to international standards and customers can use them only in this manner, the previous operational system problem has been resolved.



When the Standing Committee visited the Ethio-Engineering Group;

The event where it was stated that the extensive reform works started by **Kotebe University** of Education to ensure education quality and modernize student services are at a promising stage

was another institutional visit indicator of the month.

The visit was conducted by the Human Resource Development, Employment and Technology Affairs Standing Committee of the House and it was reported that the Honorable Dr. Negeri Lencho, Chairperson of the Standing Committee, mentioned that Kotebe University of Education is an institution with a great historical responsibility in terms of restoring the country's education quality, and stated that the reform works it has started to make this a reality are encouraging.

On her part, the Honorable Dr. Bethlehem Lakew, Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, mentioned that the prominent university is a higher education institution that is fulfilling its national mission by passing through many challenges, and it was heard that she noted stakeholder bodies must exert concerted efforts to sustain and continue this success.

In his turn, Dr. Teshome Neka-Tibeb, President of the University, explained to the members of the Standing Committee they met that the university is fulfilling its national mission while resolving the internal and external bottlenecks it previously faced.

Dr. Tewodros Mulugeta, Vice President of the University, also presented the transformation works of the university, and it was reported that he indicated the university is on a high transformation journey to ensure education quality.



When the Standing Committee visited Kotebe University of Education;



When the Standing Committee conducted a field visit in Sheger City;

It was reported that the Chairperson announced that the main focus of the sector is for the works done in the agricultural sector to ensure food security, to create job opportunities for citizens, and also to increase domestic revenue and foreign exchange. On his part, Girma Hailu, Deputy Mayor of Sheger City and Coordinator of the Agricultural Development Cluster, reportedly stated that they accepted the recommendation given to them from the Standing Committee and will sustain and continue the development plans started in the agricultural sector in the future.

Another notable field visit of the month was conducted at the **Awash Tannery**, and it was mentioned that the field visit was carried out by the Water, Irrigation, Lowland and Environmental Development Affairs Standing Committee of the House. It was reported that the Honorable Dr. Aweke Amzaye, Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, stated that the activities being carried out to protect the environment by utilizing

2,2,2 FIELD VISITS

In the month of Miyazia which we covered in this edition, the field visit conducted by the Agriculture Affairs Standing Committee of the House in **Sheger City** can be mentioned as the leading one in terms of the daily proportion among the field visits the MPs conducted. The Honorable Solomon Lale, Chairperson of the Standing Committee, indicated that by evaluating the works done in the agricultural sector, work must be done to sustain strong areas and to improve matters where limitations are observed.

byproducts from the factory are encouraging and must be sustained and continued.

Adding that it is good that liquid waste is also discharged by properly treating it, the Deputy Chairperson indicated that by conducting a study in collaboration with relevant bodies in the future, the necessary work must be done to reduce the problem observed regarding odor.

On his part, Ermias Wesenu, Manager of the Awash Tannery, mentioned that as a company, a strategy has been prepared and is being worked on to operate in an environmentally protected manner, and it was reported that he explained to the members of the Standing Committee he met there that various activities are being carried out to protect the environment by utilizing byproducts from the factory for organic fertilizer, for chemical inputs, and for other purposes as well.



When the Standing Committee visited the Awash Tannery;

The FDRE MPs also conducted a field visit to **Ethiopian Airlines** during this same month of

Miyazia. The field visit was carried out by the Government Development Organizations Affairs Standing Committee of the House, and it was reported that during the oversight, a briefing was given to it by the Chief Executive Officer of the Ethiopian Airlines Group, Mesfin Tasew, regarding the overall status of the new Bishoftu International Airport project.

The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, Melesse Mena, mentioned that the new Bishoftu International Airport project builds Ethiopia's image and stated that it enables the country to transition to the next chapter of growth by carrying its huge potential in the aviation, trade, and economic sectors. Adding that the plans designed to rehabilitate the farmers relocated from the site match the stature of the institution, it was heard that the Chairperson urged close follow-up and support should be provided to them until the farmers are settled in the new area.

On his part, the Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, Dr. Engineer Seleshi Kore, raised that the airline is an elevated institution and described it as an example of Africa and prosperity. In his turn, the Chief Executive Officer of the Ethiopian Airlines Group, Mesfin Tasew, stated that the new international airport project being built around Bishoftu has started its construction process after receiving 3,808 hectares of land. The information obtained from the House quoted him as saying that

when the project is completed, it will significantly increase the passenger capacity of Ethiopian Airlines and will further elevate Ethiopia's position as an aviation hub in Africa.



***When the Standing Committee conducted its visit to
Ethiopian Airlines;***



3. PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY

Among the parliamentary diplomacy activities that the FDRE MPs carried out during this same month of Miyazia, one was the regional discussion that the **members of the Ethio-IGAD and East African Countries Parliamentary Diplomacy Group of the House held with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Somalia and the Ambassador of Somalia.** The discussion between the two countries regarding public diplomacy, peace, and culture was held at the Somali Embassy, and it was explained that an extensive discussion was conducted to strengthen the Ethio-Somalia people-to-people relations.

The Honorable Mesfin Erkabe, Deputy Chairperson of the Parliamentary Diplomacy Friendship Group, indicated that they discussed the Ethio-Somalia relations as well as the people-to-people relations that the two countries maintain through their IGAD membership regarding peace and security. On his part, the Ambassador of Somalia to Ethiopia, Abdullahi Warfa, reportedly praised the measures taken by the Ethiopian Defense Forces against the terrorist Al-Shabaab militants to ensure the peace and security of the Somali people, and raised that the military paid sacrifices for the Somali people.

In connection with this, it was mentioned that this same parliamentary group went to the IGAD branch office located in Addis Ababa and conducted an extensive discussion regarding the parliamentary

diplomacy of IGAD member countries with the **IGAD's Head of Mission to Ethiopia, Abebaw Bihonegn.** During the discussion, conditions that enable the strengthening of public diplomacy, peace, and culture, as well as the people-to-people relations of IGAD member countries, were reportedly explored. The IGAD's Head of Mission to Ethiopia, Abebaw Bihonegn, explaining in detail the activities carried out among member countries since the time IGAD was established, reportedly emphasized that based on public diplomacy, this activity will continue to strengthen people-to-people relations in the future as well.



When the members of the Ethio-IGAD and East African Countries Parliamentary Diplomacy Group held a discussion with IGAD's Head of Mission to Ethiopia, Abebaw Bihonegn;

The forum where **Ethiopia and Nigeria conducted an experience sharing that enables the transferring of the legislative parliamentary diplomacy** and holistic relations they share to an elevated level was the second parliamentary diplomacy event of the month. The MPs received and held discussions with

a high-level delegation that came from the National Assembly Service Commission of Nigeria, and it was reported that the objective of the forum focused mainly around the structure, power, and functions of the House of Peoples' Representatives of the FDRE as well as legislative processes.

It was mentioned that the Honorable Dr. Dima Noggo, Chairperson of the Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs Standing Committee of the House, raised that the young segment of society is Africa's greatest wealth and stated that investments focused on youth are critical for the continent's future prospects. Beyond this, describing that parliamentary diplomacy helps to jointly counter continental challenges, it was reported that the Chairperson assured that the two countries will work in coordination for sustainable prosperity.

On his part, the Honorable Dr. Negere Lencho, Chairperson of the Human Resource, Employment and Technology Affairs Standing Committee, mentioning that Ethiopia is working by giving focus to education and skill development, explained to the delegation that a new education roadmap that enables the repairing of the fracture encountered in the education system over the past years and ensures education quality has been prepared and put into practice.

The House information quoted the Honorable Ambassador Dr. Yeshimebrat Mersha, member of

this same Standing Committee, as explaining to the delegation in her turn that the representation of women in the House reaching 44 percent and the growth of their leadership participation within the executive is a result of the governmental reform carried out by the government.

On his part, Commissioner Lawan Mahmoud Mana, leader of the Nigerian delegation, explained the significance of strengthening the parliamentary diplomacy relations of the two countries to create continental integration.

Raising that experience sharing conducted around legislative and management systems are primary activities that help to build strong and modern democratic institutions, it was reported that the Commissioner stated that a close cooperation created between the two countries will create a great capacity to solve common continental challenges.



When the two Standing Committees held a discussion with the National Assembly Service Commission of Nigeria;

The event where it was stated that the **diplomatic relations between Ethiopia and Djibouti** will continue to be strengthened was another parliamentary diplomacy activity of the month. Members of the Ethio-IGAD and East African Countries Parliamentary Diplomacy Group of the House of Peoples' Representatives went to the Djibouti Embassy located in Addis Ababa and held an extensive discussion with the Ambassador's representative and Djiboutian diplomats regarding the public diplomacy, peace, and culture existing between the two countries, as well as around strengthening the Ethio-Djibouti people-to-people relations and parliamentary diplomacy.

The Honorable Mesfin Erkabe, Deputy Chairperson of the group, gave an explanation regarding the cultural, economic, and political relations and cooperation of the two countries. It was reported that in his explanation there, the Deputy Chairperson raised that Ethiopia especially supplies the people of Djibouti with electricity services, clean drinking water supply, and products such as vegetables and fruits, and above all, the Ethio-Djibouti railway transport connection that has linked the countries for over a century is a primary manifestation.

The information released by the House quoted the Ambassador's representative Mohamed Abdi, Osman Ali, as well as Amina Moussa on the part of

the Djibouti Embassy as saying that Ethiopia is a partner and friend country to Djibouti.



When the Ethio-IGAD and East African Countries Parliamentary Diplomacy Group held a discussion with the Djibouti Ambassador's representative and Djiboutian diplomats;

The event where the Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs Standing Committee of the House of Peoples' Representatives held a **discussion with the Ambassador of South Africa to Ethiopia** regarding the bilateral relations of the two countries was the final parliamentary diplomacy activity of the House for the month. The Honorable Dr. Dima Noggo, Chairperson of the Standing Committee, explained that Ethiopia follows a parliamentary democratic system and that the House of Peoples' Representatives is a crucial institution holding the supreme power to designate the Prime Minister and approve the appointment of ministers.

Stating that as one of the countries with an emerging democracy, Ethiopia will continue to further strengthen this system, the Chairperson reportedly indicated that since South Africa follows a similar parliamentary democracy and a system where it elects its President, experience sharing can be conducted through parliamentary diplomacy.

On her part, Nonceba Losi, the Ambassador of South Africa, recalled that the special historical relationship of the countries has a strong foundation starting from the era of Nelson Mandela and the Pan-Africanism movement, and it was reported that she assured they will work to further strengthen parliamentary diplomacy and conduct experience sharing, in addition to growing economic diplomacy.



When the South African Ambassador and the Honorable Dr. Dima Noggo held a discussion;

4. THE MPS' ON THEMSELVES, BY THEMSELVES

The primary internal activity of the month was the Ethiopian MPs' evaluation of their House Secretariat's 9-month performance report for the 2018 fiscal year this past month of Miyazia. The report was presented by Kereyu Banata, Representative of the Secretariat's Secretary General, who indicated that the Secretariat is undertaking realistic, impact-driven activities centered on planning and is regularly evaluating performance to realize effective parliamentary service delivery.

It was mentioned that the Honorable Melesse Mena, Chairperson of the Reform Committee in the House of Peoples' Representatives, stated that the Secretariat's plan performance over the past nine months has been effective in many aspects. Adding that the work being done to strengthen the Secretariat's effective service delivery by hiring additional manpower based on the institutional reform has significant value, the Chairperson indicated that timely fulfillment of necessary inputs to strengthen the ETV Parliament Channel, providing training for professionals in the department, and special leadership support for the television channel are highly required.

Beyond this, the information from the House quoted the Chairperson as emphasizing that the

next five-year strategic plan, and the 2019 fiscal year plan derived from it, must be prepared with special focus and completed on time in a manner that considers national realities and logically synchronizes scientific and institutional operations.

On his part, Kereyu Banata, Representative of the Secretariat's Secretary General, pointed out that the Secretariat's capacity to fulfill responsibilities by guiding operations through strategic planning is increasing from time to time, and explained that close follow-up is being conducted even by the senior leadership of the House to ensure that the House's construction-related projects are effective.

On his part, Andinet Adnew, Deputy Secretary General for Government Whip Affairs, noted that it has been possible to observe from regular plan evaluations and tangible outcomes that the Secretariat has registered better performance following the reform.



When Kereyu Banata, Representative of the Secretariat's Secretary General, presented his report;

5. WHAT DID ETHIOPIA AGREE TO?

The House of Peoples' Representatives of Ethiopia approved **two agreements** during its 17th regular session held this past month of Miyazia.

The primary agreement approved by the House during its 17th regular session was the draft proclamation for an 80-million-euro loan agreement signed between the **Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the French Development Agency**. Speaking on the necessity of the loan agreement, the Minister of State for Government Whip Affairs, Dr. Mihretu Shanko, stated that the loan is a concessional loan agreement that helps support the Homegrown Macroeconomic Reform agenda initiated by the government.

The Minister of State added that the money will be used to support the radical economic reform, macroeconomic reform, and energy sector activities that the government is undertaking. It was also reported that the loan flows directly into the government treasury and is intended to ensure comprehensive economic growth and strengthen the government's budgetary capacity.

It was further indicated that the loan agreement carries a low interest rate of 1.1 percent annually, a 0.5 percent service fee, and is to be fully repaid within 15 years, including a 5-year grace period. The

MPs approved the agreement unanimously as Proclamation No. 1414/2018.

The other agreement approved by the MPs during this same regular session was the draft proclamation for a 110-million-euro loan agreement signed between the **Government of Ethiopia and the European Investment Bank**. Explaining this agreement to the MPs as well, the Minister of State, Dr. Mihretu Shanko, reportedly stated that the objective of the agreement is to improve livelihoods and reduce poverty by increasing income at the household level and enhancing resilience against natural disasters.

It was also explained that the loan will be implemented through an on-lending loan agreement to be entered into with the Development Bank of Ethiopia, and will be provided to micro and small enterprises and entrepreneurs engaged in the manufacturing, service, trade, tourism, and agriculture sectors by utilizing banks, microfinance institutions, and rural saving and credit cooperative unions.



When the MPs held a discussion around the draft agreements;

It was further reported that the loan is to be fully repaid within 25 years, and the grant support obtained from the European Union and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) was presented in a manner that aligns with Ethiopia's debt management strategy by reducing the repayment cost. The House approved the draft loan agreement proclamation unanimously as Proclamation No. 1415/2018.



6. APPOINTMENTS

Among the constitutional responsibilities carried out by the MPs in the month of Miyazia covered in this edition, the institutional appointments they approved cannot pass without mention.

During its 16th regular session held in the month, the House reviewed and approved the appointments of **leaders to fill vacant positions at the Human Rights Commission**. Accordingly, the information from the House noted that it approved the appointments of Dr. Mizane Abate as Deputy Chief Commissioner of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, Mrs. Ashenefech Abebe as Commissioner for the Women and Children Affairs Sector, Mohammed Ahmed as Commissioner for the Persons with Disabilities and Elderly Affairs Sector of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, as well as Bedasa Lemesa as Commissioner for the Education and Training Sector, passing them with a majority vote and one abstention as Decision No. 9/2018.

In another session; its 18th regular session conducted during the month, the House of Peoples' Representatives also reviewed and approved the appointments of **board leadership for the Ethiopian Press Agency**. Regarding the appointments, it was reported that the Honorable Dr. Mihretu Shanko, Minister of State for Government Assistant Whip in the House, presented the resolution and report.

Ultimately, the MPs approved the appointments with a majority vote and one abstention as Decision No. 10/2018. Information obtained from the House indicates that the appointees are: -

Mrs. Billene Mamo (Board Chairperson), Honorable Fadila Biya (Member), Mr. Tesfaye Zewde (Member), Mr. Mohammed Kassa (Member), Mr. Afework Bedewi (Member), Ms. Asma Redi (Member), Mr. Yonas Bekele (Member), Mr. Haftai Gebreegziabher (Member) and Dr. Esayas Kassa (Member).



When the appointees took their oath of office;

7. BRIDGE EXPLORATORY INSIGHT:- THE TRAJECTORY OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

One of the constitutional responsibilities carried out by the Ethiopian House of Peoples' Representatives during the month of Miyazia was evaluating the performance of federal institutions for this budget year. Among the institutions summoned to the hall of the representatives to present their nine-month performance reports, the Authority for Civil Society Organizations (ACSO) was at the forefront in terms of time allocation.

As reported, the Standing Committee on Legal and Justice Affairs of the House of Peoples' Representatives listened to the institution's report. The Authority presented a report focused on civil society operations, the organization registration process, the utilization of association funds, and preparations for the upcoming election.

Since the role of civil society is paramount for the 7th National Election to be peaceful, fair and credible, it was reported that a strong directive was issued by the Standing Committee to the Authority to ensure that capacity building work for organizations working on election-related issues continues strengthened, and that strict monitoring be conducted so that these organizations operate independently and neutrally without falling under the influence of any party.

Based on this premise, our institution, BRIDGE, presents this weekly Insight by briefly exploring the trajectory of civil society; its journey through the three regimes as well as its current holistic landscape, and by offering related institutional recommendations.

7.1 WHEN THEY SAY CIVIL SOCIETY...

The definition provided for What is Civil Society? reflects significant variations in scholarly discourse. Diverse perspectives are also observed regarding the roles they play within a community. Until the 18th century, civil society was a term used interchangeably with the state. Among the seminal thinkers, the German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel was the first to argue for a distinction between civil society and the state. For him, civil society is an institution that stands between the family and the state, created by citizens who feel marginalized by the political society to protect their interests and gain recognition.

Karl Marx, who in his formative years leaned toward Hegel but viewed all phenomena through the lens of class struggle, seemed to agree with Hegel's definition to some extent. However, as with everything else, he presented civil society as an arena where individual interests and class-based demands are contested and where the outcome of

this struggle plays a role in overthrowing the central government through revolution.

The perspective of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci is considered superior to Marx's definition of 'extracting the state from society.' According to Gramsci's view, as he wrote in his collection of essays 'The Prison Notebooks,' civil society should be defined as a collective of institutions, such as religious organizations, political parties, professional associations, and educational institutions, through which citizens represent themselves and their ideas thereof.

Although the specific criteria to be used remain a source of difference among scholars and civil society actors, the consensus view suggests that institutions organized by the full voluntarism of citizens, outside the state apparatus and without a profit-making motive, can be designated by this name. This definition encompasses various indigenous or externally supported institutions that strive to fulfill the interests of their founding citizens through legal means, seek to influence government policies, and exert a positive impact on socio-economic development, the expansion of the political space, and the building of democratic institutions.

Scholars writing on the acceleration of the democratic process and the role of civil society argue that there is a direct correlation between the

two. A strong civil society has the capacity to foster the expansion of pluralism and ensure that democratic values are entrenched within the country's institutions. They also make a significant contribution to achieving social justice by representing marginalized segments of society whose voices have been suppressed. These institutions possess institutional characteristics that allow them to monitor the political system according to its laws, curb the expansion of corruption, encourage transparency in governmental decision-making, and facilitate conditions that increase citizens' political participation. Among many writers, the proliferation of such institutions signifies the strengthening of democratic processes, while conversely, the weakening of these organizations, as clearly evidenced by at least the past three decades, indicates the entrenchment of an authoritarian political system.

7.2. THE IMPERIAL ERA

The civil society movement during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie was a period of transition from traditional and community-based self-help associations to modern and formal organizations. However, much has been written about how the overall landscape fell under the palm of the Emperor and was subject to strict control.

For centuries, Ethiopia has maintained strong traditional civic institutions, among which *Iddir*, *Equb*, and *Debo* are notable examples. In the 1950s and early 1960s, however, modern civil society organizations, including labor unions, other professional associations, and charitable organizations, began to emerge. These formal organizations were registered under the Ministry of Interior in accordance with Proclamation No. 321/1959.

The Emperor's policies of modernization and the expansion of education helped create the educated workforce and the middle class that formed the foundation for the creation of civil societies. Among these scholars of the era, a movement emerged that followed Japan's lead and strove to modernize the country. At the end of the reign, however, a radical student movement emerged, advocating land tenure reform and the establishment of democracy; it was in open opposition to the regime. Additionally, the drought and famine that occurred in 1966 did more than expose the government's weaknesses; they led to the establishment of early relief organizations such as the Christian Relief and Development Association (CRDA).

Even though modern civil societies were created in this manner, their ability to operate freely was limited, as the government exercised strict oversight over them. Just as political parties and overt protests were banned, the fate of other

indigenous civil societies that were striving to become institutionalized was the same. Even those civil society structures that did emerge mostly benefited the urban dweller rather than the farmer. This voluntary movement, which began under the Emperor, was completely transformed following the 1966 revolution by the Derg regime, in which independent associations were replaced by government-led mass organizations.

7.3. DERG: THE ANTI-CIVIL SOCIETY REGIME

The Derg, which ruled Ethiopia from 1966 to 1983, was known for widespread political oppression and strict control imposed on civil society. It is recalled that the military government, led by Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam, implemented a socialist ideology based on leftist principles. Although the regime aspired to create a society with economic equality by transferring land and industries to state ownership, its policies instead led to economic collapse, food shortages, and severe poverty. This sparked significant grievance among the populace and later ignited armed struggle.

During this era, the civil society movement was paralyzed due to the extreme restrictions and repression it faced from the government. By banning civil society organizations, the Derg imposed strict control over public gatherings, the media, and dissident voices. Human rights violations were widespread, with citizens suspected of

opposing the regime subjected to beatings, extrajudicial killings, and forced disappearances.

Active civil society actors from the Imperial era, such as student groups, labor unions, and religious organizations, faced immense persecution and suffering. Numerous civic leaders were imprisoned, killed, or forced into exile. This repression weakened the capacity of civil society to the point where it became impossible to challenge the regime through peaceful means. Beyond leaving deep scars on Ethiopia's social fabric, this era of oppression caused a long-lasting climate of fear and lack of trust even after the fall of the regime.

By dismantling independent civil societies, the Derg established mass organizations led by the government and the party (WPE) in their place. Among these were the Revolutionary Ethiopia Youth Association (REYA), the Revolutionary Ethiopia Women's Association (REWA) and the All-Ethiopia Trade Union (AETU).

However, the establishment of these organizations was not intended to reflect the interests of citizens but rather to serve as appendages for controlling society, conducting military mobilization, and executing government policies; recall that even membership was mandatory. In this manner, even traditional institutions like *Iddir*, which the Emperor had left untouched, were utilized for political purposes during the Derg era. Beyond burial and

social support, *Iddirs'* were pressured to serve as conduits for government messages and even as tools for monitoring dissenters.

The only civil society movement that could be considered somewhat independent during the Derg era was seen in the humanitarian aid sector. Especially during the catastrophic famine of 1977, as the government was forced to accept international aid, it permitted numerous international non-governmental organizations to enter the country. This laid the foundation for the history of modern and aid-dependent Ethiopian NGOs. However, because their activities were restricted to hunger and food support, and they were strictly prohibited from participating in politics and human rights, it stunted the growth of a modern civil society that Ethiopia could have achieved.

7.4. THE THREE PHASES OF EPRDF

Following the end of the Cold War, the global community was compelled to view the world through the lens of liberal values. Consequently, the rulers who came to power during that era were forced to accept the role of civil societies, which is one of the pillars of a liberal political system. This is exactly what happened in Ethiopia: the EPRDF, which came to power following the fall of the Derg, had no alternative in the era but to accept the democratic role of civil society. Primarily due to this

external pressure, a period that is remembered positively in the history of Ethiopian civil societies commenced. From this perspective, looking extensively at the various facets of this era will likely provide a broader picture for the subsequent period we are currently in.

Analysts who have studied the subject argue that the relationship EPRDF had with civil society consisted of three phases. These writers call the first phase the era overshadowed by cloudy hostility, which encompasses the process between the Front and civil society that lasted until the beginning of the Ethio-Eritrean war in 1993. They note that this is linked to the character the party exhibited from its armed struggle history. As a guerrilla insurgent group and a front that tuned its ideology with leftist teachings, it viewed independent institutions with high suspicion. Even in the years following its seizure of power, it did not detach itself from this spirit of suspicion. Although some non-governmental organizations had been providing support to the party during the armed struggle, its perception of organizations outside of its control as forces competing for power was one of the primary reasons for the low number of NGOs at the time. It appears to be this suspicious approach of the party that is frequently cited as a point of argument for why the opportunity for the number of NGOs to increase in Ethiopia; as

happened in other African countries after the end of the Cold War, remained narrow.

The second phase raised by researchers is the one they labeled as Slow, which encompasses the period from the late 1980s to the post-1997 election. In this phase, which the writers called Slow, the interaction of civil society with the government exhibited three fundamental facets.

The first facet was the increase in the number of organizations and the diversity of the sectors in which they were engaged. During this time, NGOs moved beyond traditional relief and development work and began to emerge extensively into the public square in areas of human rights protection, democratic building and good governance. This opened the way for civil society to begin gaining recognition as an independent systemic actor and a force for change.

The second facet was the participative inclination observed in policy formulation and decision-making processes. During this period, a high level of interest was observed on the part of the central government to include the voice and input of civil society in national policies such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy. This granted organizations the opportunity to use their proximity to the people to challenge the government's development directions and present alternative ideas. This, in turn, sparked hope for a transition to a formal culture of

consultation by easing the long-standing suspicion that existed between the two entities.

The third facet of this phase was the structural linkage created between the House of Peoples' Representatives and representatives of civil society. During this time, a formal communication agreement was made between members of the House and NGOs, which enabled civil societies to participate in the House's legislative drafting process and provide professional support through standing committees. Although this relationship was severed following the 1997 election, it provided a rare and historical opportunity; one not repeated since, for a few NGOs to lobby the government and influence the law-making process.

It is also imperative to look at the perspective through which the ruling party evaluated the country's political system following the post-1997 election. During this period, referred to as the third phase, after the party failed to achieve its expected election results, it was led to the conviction that the NGOs; which it had previously permitted to educate voters and evaluate the election out of its own goodwill; had “worked with the opposition.”

The publication titled “The Struggle to Build a Democratic System,” published by the party in 1999, provides a partial view of how it perceived the NGOs. In this text, which many analysts called an irrational and empty rhetoric, the party analyzes

‘rent-seeking’; according to the party's argument, using power for personal gain and allocating institutional income for matters it termed non-developmental were presented as manifestations of rent-seeking. This same document, which accuses NGOs of utilizing financial sources coming from ‘rent-seeking’ governments or of standing only to protect the interests of the organizations' top leadership, curses the institutions, claiming they are “rent-seekers” by their very nature.

The ruling party, believing that systems of thought outside the ideology of Revolutionary Democracy would have no useful contribution to the country's development or the building of democratic institutions, viewed institutions engaged in good governance, human rights protection and the provision of alternative policy ideas as entities challenging the party's dream of omnipresence and total control; this compelled it to enact laws following the post-1997 election that undermined the spirit of the Constitution.

To put it briefly, the party understood civil societies as entities that should serve as instruments for political indoctrination and propaganda to maintain the supremacy of Revolutionary Democracy. Outside of this view, it caused civil societies, which were committed to the institutional vision for which they were established, to vanish from the public square, through both repressive laws and the political and security apparatus. As many who have

studied the matter point out, one of the events that birthed the system change in 2010 was the crushing of the promising growth of civil society in this manner, which facilitated the ignition of the observed popular uprising.

In general, while the Imperial era was a time when the foundations of modern civil societies were laid and guided by state-led modernization, the Derg era was a dark period in which power was concentrated in a single center, and the flicker of independent civil society movements was extinguished. The subsequent post-Derg era, upon which much hope was placed, was marred by the EPRDF's longing for totalitarianism.

This brief historical process shows that the fate of civil society in Ethiopia has always had a direct correlation with the nature of the political system. Based on these historical facts, we believe that looking at the current Prosperity-era landscape in comparison will provide a valuable lesson for our democratic journey tomorrow.

7.5. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AUTHORITY

Following the fall of the Derg government, from 1983 to 1987, it was the government institution known as the Ministry of Interior that held the power and function of registering associations. In 1987, through Proclamation No. 4/1987, which

established executive bodies, the FDRE Ministry of Justice was legally granted the power and function to register religious organizations, non-profit organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and associations. Subsequently, as Proclamation No. 471/1998 continued to grant the Ministry of Justice the same power to register associations and religious organizations, the Ministry of Justice continued to perform the registration work until 2001.

Based on the Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) study conducted by the Ministry of Justice in 1999 and taking into account the growth recorded in the sector, an independent government executive body named the Charities and Societies Agency was established through Proclamation No. 621/2001 to enable the registration and administration of associations and non-profit organizations, excluding religious organizations. Although it operated with the mission of ensuring the greater benefit of the public by registering, licensing, monitoring, and supporting charities and societies to play their part in the country's holistic growth, development, and democratic system building according to Proclamation No. 621/2001, it has been estimated by the government that it did not adequately fulfill its mission as it did not fully respect the right to organize and had numerous gaps in its execution.

In particular, because the proclamation restricted the scope of activities and income sources of

organizations and associations, it was a proclamation against which significant grievances were filed. Therefore, following the change that came at the national level, as it was believed that the proclamation administering the sector and its execution had gaps, Proclamation No. 621/2001 was completely repealed and replaced by the new Proclamation No. 1113/2011. The Authority was then reorganized and established through Proclamation No. 1113/2011 as a federal government office with its own legal personality.

7.6. HAS HOPE FADED?

The coming to power of the Prosperity Party was an event that brought a historical transition to the landscape of civil society in Ethiopia. The legal reforms and democratic hopes initially undertaken by the government created strong motivation among actors in the sector to work closely with the government and bring about extensive changes. Civil society organizations began to play significant roles in expanding democratic values, advocating for human rights, and providing basic services to marginalized communities.

In particular, as the proclamation issued in 2019 No. 1113/2011) lifted the restrictions previously placed on foreign financial support, it enabled organizations working on human rights and peacebuilding to revive. Consequently, between 2011 and 2014 alone, nearly 250 new peacebuilding

organizations were established, demonstrating their partnership in the building of democracy.

Currently, of the 4,938 organizations registered with the Authority for Civil Society Organizations, more than 4,395 are indigenous organizations, while the remaining 543 are foreign organizations. The Authority's website indicates that more than 415 civil society organizations are professional associations organized based on various professions, and more than 165 civil society organizations are organizations working for persons with disabilities. These organizations range from small indigenous associations to international institutions, which shows the existence of diverse work approaches in civil society movements, from the grassroots level of society to broad international cooperation.

Furthermore, several organizations focusing on human rights and development, as well as organizations focusing on women's issues, are engaged in their chosen civil society activities. BRIDGE has been able to understand through its brief assessment that these organizations often address social, economic, gender, and human rights issues related to conflicts. This indicates that peacebuilding work is a holistic task that includes ensuring the protection of human rights and sustainable development beyond just preventing conflicts.

7.7. A FEW POINTS FROM THE AUTHORITY'S REPORTS

As we mentioned in our introduction, since the basis for this assessment is the nine-month performance report of the FDRE Authority for Civil Society Organizations for this budget year, it is beneficial to look at the key points from this institutional report. It has been reported that the Authority stated that civil society organizations receive registration licenses only after their requests are examined in terms of national security. The Authority announced that it grants licenses to organizations applying for registration after carefully reviewing the matters in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Intelligence and Security Service, particularly from the perspective of national security.



During the Authority for Civil Society Organizations (ACSO) present its report to the Standing Committee on Legal and Justice Affairs

Mrs. Kalkidan Mengiste, the Strategic Affairs Lead Executive of the Authority, who presented the nine-month performance report to the Standing Committee on Legal and Justice Affairs of the House of Peoples' Representatives, reportedly stated that certificates are issued to organizations as long as they fulfill the necessary criteria. Accordingly, in the past nine months, 209 organizations received certificates of recognition, and it was noted that among these, 199 are foreign organizations. Furthermore, the Deputy Director General, Fasika Molla, stated that nearly 600 organizations have not re-registered since the issuance of the new proclamation and whose addresses are unknown; it was indicated that these organizations have lost their legal personality. It was also explained that the limited assets found among these organizations have been transferred to other organizations or to the Civil Society Fund in accordance with the law.

On her part, the Honorable Mrs. Etsegenet Mengistu, Chairperson of the Standing Committee, noted that even though the democratic space has been expanded, since not every organization comes with a healthy mindset, rigorous vetting and strict caution during the registration process must be carried out with focus.



Management of Authority for Civil Society Organizations (ACSO) and the members of Standing Committee on Legal and Justice Affairs of the HoPR

On the other hand, while it was mentioned that among 485 organizations that applied for a license, some had their requests terminated or canceled due to failure to meet the criteria and lack of necessary follow-up, it was stated that 319 organizations are currently in the registration process. Regarding the question raised by the Standing Committee concerning the low number of registered organizations, the Director General of the Authority, Samson Biratu, provided a response. Mentioning that the right of any citizen to organize and register is permitted both by the Constitution and the Authority's proclamation, the Director explained that certain matters are nonetheless viewed deeply from the perspective of national security. The Director announced that, particularly when they are foreign organizations, work is carried out to study their background in collaboration with

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Intelligence and Security Service.

Furthermore, it was stated that the Authority exercises strict control to ensure that the resources obtained by civil society organizations for the services they provide are used only for the intended purpose. Fasika Molla further explained that this control is evaluated through the reports the organizations submit annually in terms of their resource utilization, and appropriate feedback is provided.

Another core issue mentioned in this same report of the Authority was regarding the role civil society organizations are said to have in the upcoming election. According to information obtained from the House, it was noted that the Standing Committee urged that no questions should be raised regarding the independence and neutrality of the activities of indigenous civil society organizations participating in the seventh national election.

The Standing Committee stated that it is necessary to ensure that the organizations exercise strong control over their use of resources only for the purpose for which they were organized. It was reported that it was the Deputy Director of the Authority, Fasika Molla, who mentioned that currently, 212 indigenous civil society organizations have obtained licenses from the National Election

Board of Ethiopia to participate in the election process; it was indicated that this shows a more revitalized movement compared to the sixth national election.

It was also reported that the Standing Committee emphasized that the neutrality of organizations participating in voter education and observation processes is extremely crucial. It urged the Authority to monitor the organizations to ensure they support the election neutrally and do not engage in unnecessary activities.

In light of the hold-and-release interaction between the three regimes and civil society that we have briefly seen above, arguments are heard suggesting that the current movement of associations seems better in comparison. That being said, regarding the upcoming 2018 election, by first mentioning what national responsibilities the current civil societies have, we shall follow with brief recommendatory points on what issues should be properly looked at by the government and relevant government institutions to strengthen civil society.

7.8. ELECTION 2018 AND THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society organizations are the third crucial pillar in the upcoming election process, following the election executors: the National Election Board, the government, and the competing political parties.

Therefore, we believe that the following three primary roles are expected of them in the coming election.

A. INDEPENDENT ELECTION OBSERVATION

As is well known, this is the primary function of civil society. To perform this duty, following the authority granted under Articles 114 and 117 of the Ethiopia Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election Ethics Proclamation No. 1162/2011, as well as Article 7(7) and Article 8(1) of the National Election Board of Ethiopia Establishment Proclamation No. 1133/2011 and in accordance with the Local Election Observers' Accreditation, Operational Procedures and Ethics Directive No. 5/2012; the National Election Board of Ethiopia has registered and accredited 45 domestic civic society organizations to participate in the 7th general election as observers.

While the increased participation of civil society organizations in the seventh national election is a positive step for building democratic space, the organizations must demonstrate in practice that they are free from any political partisanship. As the Standing Committee urged, we wish to state that when organizations engage in election observation or educational activities, they must bring a "healthy mindset" and establish a structure for self-regulation by setting up a monitoring system led by

an independent body to ensure questions regarding their neutrality do not arise.

Beyond this, civil society must properly monitor that the citizens' voting and ballot counting are carried out according to law and procedure by being present at polling stations (especially those outside urban areas). Subsequently, they should strive to make their observations, whether weaknesses or strengths, public to the voting populace and the international community, thereby serving as a standard for determining the credibility of the election.

B. VOTER EDUCATION

The Board has registered and accredited 143 civic society organizations to provide voter education for the next general national election. From this perspective, the role of civic society in providing inclusive, participatory, and transparent education to ensure voters have adequate knowledge is indeed irreplaceable.

It is necessary to remind that the awareness-raising work these accredited civil society organizations provide regarding the election should not only reach all segments of the voting community but also focus on reaching them in all possible languages, particularly emphasizing women and persons with disabilities. It is undeniable that the task of ensuring citizens have sufficient awareness

of their rights and the voting process is primarily expected from civil society. In this regard, we believe they should go beyond encouraging citizens to participate actively in the election and help citizens make truth-based decisions by correcting false rumors circulating during the election period.

C. CREATING FORUMS AND CONFLICT PREVENTION

As has been widely written and observed in our political experience, since elections are inherently competitive, they can spark tensions. In this regard, we wish to remind that during both the pre-election and post-election periods, they should fulfill their civic responsibility by identifying signs that could trigger conflict and working on early warning tasks in collaboration with the government and relevant bodies. In connection with this, BRIDGE strongly requests that they facilitate dialogue forums well in advance to ensure a peaceful flow of ideas among competing political parties.

7.9. BRIDGE'S RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to enable civil society to fulfill these roles in the upcoming election and in their activities thereafter, BRIDGE wishes to present the following brief recommendations to the relevant government structures.

A. INCREASING RESOURCE SUPPLY

It is known that a year has passed since an American charitable organization, which used to be supported by the U.S. government, discontinued the support it was providing to civil society. The occurrence of this on top of the existing financial shortage in civil society has brought about widespread institutional weakening. Therefore, taking this into account, we say that the federal government and governmental development institutions that claim responsibility should prepare a legal framework through which indigenous organizations (especially recently established and newly forming ones) can obtain various domestic supports (for instance, incentives from income tax or other types of taxes) and should facilitate opportunities for capacity-building training and access to international financial sources. Beyond this, it may be necessary to remind that to reduce dependency on foreign aid, fostering a culture of domestic philanthropy and establishing a legal system through which organizations can obtain domestic financial support must not be overlooked.

B. HARMONIZING NATIONAL SECURITY VETTING AND THE RIGHT TO REGISTER

When citizens exercise their constitutional right to organize, it is indisputable that conducting the

registration process in integration with the National Intelligence and Security Service is a guarantee for national security. However, this security vetting process should not serve as an excuse for delays in civil society registration, for the decrease in their numbers or as a bureaucratic obstacle. In this regard, BRIDGE wishes to mention at least three administrative measures that it believes should be taken to ensure institutional transparency and avoid unnecessary disruptions alongside reducing security risks.

The first is the necessity of having clear directives; the criteria for security investigation must be clearly identified and must not be guided by personal decisions that fall outside the legal framework. Secondly, as mentioned, while making the investigation process efficient and supported by a modern digital system, it must respect the registration time limits set by law. Finally, we say that the security vetting must move away from being a red line based on invisible bureaucratic or political desires regarding citizens' fundamental rights and must facilitate conditions where legal organizations can enter into operation without any bureaucratic bottlenecks.

The Denotation of “Enderasie” (እንደራሴ)

The term “Enderasie” is a conceptual expression that holds significant weight in Ethiopia’s ancient and modern political discourse and constitutional history. The etymology and denotation of the word, in a general sense, had/have the following meanings:-

The expression is derived from the combination of two words: “Ende” (እንደ) and “Rasse” (ራሴ). “Ende” signifies likeness, stead, or substitute; “Rasse” reflects the self-calling identity or the owner and when denoted, it reflects the authority. In its connotation, it is said to mean “as me” or “being me.” When referencing its title in Ethiopian constitutional history, the term “Enderasie” had different socio-political interpretations across various eras; to wit: -

A. *The Representative of the Emperor (Regent):* During the monarchical era, if the emperor was unable to lead the state for any reason (not coming of age, illness, or other reasons), the person granted full authority to administer the country was called “Bitwoded-Enderasie.”

B. *Regional or Provincial Governor:* Since the Emperor could not be present in every province personally at all times, the representatives who judged and administered in his name were called “Enderasie”; this grants the full representation of the King.

C. *Representation of the People:* Since the advent of the first Ethiopian Constitution, however, the word took on a new denotation. The people began to call the persons they elected to deliberate and make decisions in their stead in the council “People’s Enderasies” (Rep- resentatives). The denotation of this gave it the meaning of “one who works as the people,” “image of the people,” or “representative of the people.”

Today, it is used interchangeably with the word “Representative” (as in the beginning of Western parliamentary history). However, the word “Enderasie” holds a political and socio-cultural denotation of gravity that goes beyond representation, carrying the full honor and identity-based association of the body it represents.

The Bridge Denotation

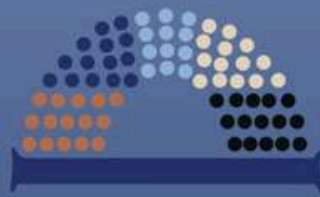
Our institution, Bridge, has utilized this word by denoting it from the past to the present era while maintaining the rules of Amharic grammar. Let us first cite what the noted scholars have established: Desta Tekle Wold defined “Enderasie” as “being me, one who works holding my authority”; Kidane Wold Kifle described it as “standing in the stead, in the substitute”; Tesemma Habte Michael Gitsew, in turn, gave it the definitions of “alternate, representative, plenipotentiary.” Even Mahteme Selassie Wolde Meskel raised that when a person appears not in their own name but in the name of another to perform legal acts, they are called “Enderasie.” As these references show, while the word was initially used only for the representatives of kings, its later application to representatives of the people served to express the supremacy of the people; furthermore, it provides the denotation that the representative appears as the people and is called as the people.

In this context, when we say “Enderasie”: on one hand, we have denoted it in alignment with the constitutional principle of ‘self-determination’ upon which the Ethiopian Federation stands, regarding the word “Ras” (Self). This means we have used a denotative translation to solve the “Rasie” within “Enderasie” through the nations, nationalities and peoples encompassed by the meaning of “Ras” in this principle. Beyond that, just as the elector in the former era was the emperor, in this era of ours, it is the people; therefore, note that when we say “Enderasie,” we use the definition:- one who becomes like the electing people, nation, or nationality. When we align it with the modern electoral system, the individual elector sends the Enderasie to the council to decide on the affairs of their life, saying, ‘speak with my lips, sit on my throne.’ It asserts that if the elected is not as the self to the elector, the elector can strip away their likeness of me (aka the representation).

The expression “Enderasie”:- although Amharic, the national language of the time, was the only working language of the council when the first Ethiopian Council of Enderasies was established; note that the expression is found within the other languages of the nations and nationalities of our country; for example: in Sidama—amaalete mina, in Afaan Oromo—Bakka bu’aa, in Tigrinya—kemay, in Wolaytta—Kal Atiya/Taga ton.

Disclaimer note;

“All pictures whether of personalities or typographies featured in these monthly digests are sourced from the official pages of the House of Peoples’ Representatives Secretariat Office. Likewise, all data presented are drawn from this same source. BRIDGE assumes responsibility for the insightful observations, summaries and any interpretations thereof.”




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