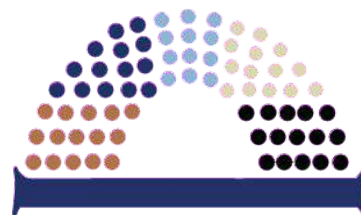




**ETHIOPIAN
PARLIAMENTARY DIGEST**



ENDERASIE

ENDERASIE IS A PARLIAMENTARY MONTHLY
DIGEST ISSUED BY BRIDGE RESEARCH AND
INNOVATION.





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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.



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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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- ▮ Providing capacity-building support to enhance the performance of parliamentarians.
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THE MONTHLY ACTIVITIES OF ETHIOPIA'S HOUSE OF PEOPLES' REPRESENTATIVES IN MAY/JUNE

House of Peoples' Representatives MPs of Ethiopia concluded the month of May by executing its traditional constitutional mandates of lawmaking, executive oversight and conducting public hearings. In addition to these core functions, the House also carried out selected institutional site visits and parliamentary diplomacy initiatives. This May edition of Enderassie has been meticulously prepared to encompass these key thematic areas, along with BRIDGE's observational insight for the month.

REGULAR SESSIONS OF THE HOUSE CONDUCTED DURING THE MONTH

6TH HOUSE OF PEOPLES' REPRESENTATIVES; 5TH YEAR OF TENURE

Session	Date	Agendas
20 th Regular Session	May 12	* Hearing the oral responses of H.E. Dr. Mekdes Daba, Minister of Health, to the questions raised by members of the House.
21 st Regular Session	May 14	* Examining and ratifying the Cooperative Societies Amendment Draft Proclamation.
22 nd Regular Session	May 19	* Hearing the 9-month plan performance report of the Ministry of Innovation and Technology for the 2018 budget year.
23 rd Regular Session	June 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Examining and ratifying loan agreements signed between Ethiopia and the African Development Bank, as well as between Ethiopia and the International Development Association (IDA). * Examining and ratifying the draft proclamations for bilateral air service agreements signed between the Government of the FDRE and the respective governments of the Republic of Sierra Leone, the Republic of Angola, the People's Republic of Bangladesh, and the Kingdom of Eswatini. * Examining and ratifying the draft proclamation for the agreement signed between the Government of the FDRE and the Russian Federation to establish a Joint Biological Research Center. * Examining and ratifying the draft proclamation for the agreement signed between the Government of the FDRE and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on the waiver of visa requirements for holders of diplomatic or official service passports. * Reviewing and referring the following draft proclamations to their respective standing committees for further scrutiny: Federal Tax Administration Amendment, Agricultural Business Corporation, Food System and Nutrition, Ethiopian Carbon, and Ethiopian Statistics.

1. THE HOUSE'S LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES

During the month of Ginbot, Members of the House of Peoples' Representatives ratified **one draft proclamation alongside various international agreements** signed with different nations. Additionally, the House reviewed and referred **five draft proclamations** to their respective standing committees for further scrutiny.

1.2 RATIFIED LAWS

During its 21st Regular Session, held among the regular meetings conducted in the month of Ginbot, House of Peoples' Representatives MPs ratified the Cooperative Societies Amendment Draft Proclamation.

The report and resolution on the draft proclamation were presented to the House by the Honorable Solomon Lale, Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Agriculture Affairs. The Chairperson explained that the amendment proclamation plays a significant role in enhancing the competitiveness of cooperative societies by strengthening their linkages with financial institutions and addressing their financial supply constraints. Furthermore, he noted that it will establish a robust oversight system to safeguard cooperative societies from waste, mismanagement, and embezzlement.

The Chairperson added that the law will help transition scattered cooperative societies into more consolidated and profitable entities, while establishing solid internal leadership and administrative systems. Regarding the leadership participation of women within these societies, the Honorable Solomon pointed out that the provisions will be progressively implemented in cooperatives where the number of registered female members permits. Ultimately, the House unanimously ratified the Cooperative Societies Amendment Draft Proclamation as Proclamation No. 1416/2018.



The Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Agriculture Affairs, the Honorable Solomon Lale, during the ratification of the proclamation;

Information from the House indicates that the 23rd Regular Session of The MPs of the House, held toward the end of the month of Ginbot, examined and ratified **several agreements** signed between Ethiopia and various countries. In this regard, the first draft proclamation ratified by the

House was the one presented to establish a Joint Biological Research Center **between the Government of Ethiopia and the Russian Federation**. The resolution for this draft proclamation was presented by the Honorable Dr. Fethi Mahdi, Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs.

The Deputy Chairperson stated that the agreement to establish the Joint Biological Research Center between Ethiopia and Russia would help enhance joint scientific and academic research activities between the two nations. He further noted that since fishery resource development has a significant role in accelerating homegrown economic growth, the draft proclamation would help Ethiopia draw from Russia's extensive experience in the sector to meet its own needs and eventually export products. The MPs subsequently ratified this draft proclamation unanimously as Proclamation No. 1421/2018.

Another draft agreement ratified during this same 23rd Regular Session of The MPs of the House was the agreement signed **between the governments of Ethiopia and Vietnam** to waive visa requirements for holders of diplomatic or official service passports. This draft was also presented to the House by the Honorable Dr. Fethi Mahdi, who explained that the agreement establishes a legal framework to strengthen the

growing bilateral cooperation and diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Furthermore, he added that by eliminating visa prerequisites and the time required to secure them, the agreement facilitates the regular travel of high-ranking government officials, diplomats, and citizens of both countries holding diplomatic passports. Ultimately, The MPs unanimously ratified the draft proclamation as Proclamation No. 1422/2018.

During their 23rd Regular Session, held on Thursday, Ethiopian House of Peoples' Representatives also ratified draft proclamations for **air service agreements that Ethiopia entered into with various countries**. The resolutions for these draft proclamations were presented by the Honorable Dr. Fethi Mahdi, who explained to The MPs that these air service agreement draft proclamations play a critical role in the country's air transport and economic growth by attracting foreign direct investment and expanding air transport destinations.

Among these agreements, the one signed between the **Government of Ethiopia and the Republic of Sierra Leone** was one, and it was noted that the agreement enables airlines to land directly at selected destinations and provide convenient aviation services. This agreement was ratified unanimously as Proclamation No. 1417/2018.

Another agreement was the one signed **between the Republic of Angola and the Government of Ethiopia**, and the House reportedly ratified this draft unanimously as Proclamation No. 1418/2018. Similarly, the air service agreement draft between the governments of Ethiopia and Bangladesh; which is said to have a significant role in attracting foreign direct investment, boosting trade and tourism, and generating foreign currency; was approved by the members of the House to be ratified unanimously as Proclamation No. 1419/2018.



The Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs, the Honorable Dr. Fethi Mahdi, during the presentation of the draft agreements;

The other air service draft proclamation ratified by the House during the same regular session was the agreement entered into **between the governments of Ethiopia and Eswatini**. While presenting the resolution for the draft, the Honorable Dr. Fethi Mahdi noted that the agreement includes conducting cargo flights without restrictions on flight frequencies, as well as importing flight-essential equipment free of

customs duties, thereby reducing operational flight costs. Information obtained from the House indicates that the members of the House unanimously ratified the draft as Proclamation No. 1420/2018.

1.2 DRAFT LAWS

During its 23rd Regular Session, House of Peoples' Representatives MPs of Ethiopia referred several draft proclamations to their respective standing committees for detailed scrutiny. The first of these was the **Federal Tax Administration Amendment Draft Proclamation**, which was referred to the Standing Committee on Plan, Budget, and Finance Affairs.

The Government Chief Whip, the Honorable Dr. Tesfaye Beljige, provided a briefing to the House on the draft proclamation. He stated that the draft proclamation would modernize the tax administration system and permanently resolve fundamental grievances regarding equity and good governance raised by taxpayers.

The Chief Whip explained that the draft proclamation contains key provisions designed to enforce tax laws in a robust manner; ensuring accountability, efficiency, equity, and transparency within the country's tax administration system. Furthermore, it aims to anchor the relationship between taxpayers and tax collectors on the rule of law. The Honorable Dr. Tesfaye added that this legal framework is

highly significant for strengthening the government's revenue collection capacity based on compliance and trust.

The second draft legislation reviewed by The MPs during the same regular session was the **Agricultural Business Corporation Draft Proclamation**, which was referred to the Standing Committee on Agriculture Affairs for detailed scrutiny. While briefing the House on this matter, the Honorable Dr. Tesfaye Beljige noted that the draft proclamation is essential for modernizing Ethiopian agriculture, driven by the necessity to elevate agricultural practices into a modern, competitive, and market-led system.

Information from the House indicates that the Minister further emphasized that the draft proclamation plays a critical role in organizing smallholder farmers, pastoralists, and semi-pastoralists into agricultural business corporations. This structure aims to enhance productivity, improve product quality, ensure food security, and foster comprehensive economic growth.

The third draft legislation that the MPs resolved to review during this 23rd Regular Session, held on Ginbot 23, 2018, was the **Food System and Nutrition Draft Proclamation**. This draft proclamation was referred to the Standing Committee on Health, Social Development, Culture, and Sports Affairs for detailed scrutiny. The Government Chief Whip, the Honorable Dr.

Tesfaye Beljige, presented the briefing on this draft, stating that the government firmly believes food and nutrition security plays a pivotal role in the country's development. The Minister added that the proclamation would help ensure the country's food system and nutrition, sustain current and future economic growth, and foster a generation that has access to proper and balanced nutrition.

During the same regular session, The MPs also referred a draft proclamation to the Standing Committee on Plan, Budget, and Finance Affairs aimed at providing Ethiopia with a modern, robust, and legally grounded statistical framework.

Briefing MPs, the Government Chief Whip, the Honorable Dr. Tesfaye Beljige, explained that the draft proclamation would enhance the credibility and quality of statistics by guaranteeing professional independence and separating regulatory and executive roles through standardized, improved coordination methods. He added that by focusing on the country's priority development areas, the law will play its own part in accelerating national growth. Furthermore, the Minister noted that the draft proclamation helps establish a system that ensures quality-assured and timely statistical data is collected, compiled, analyzed, and disseminated for national planning and decision-making purposes.

The final draft legislation reviewed by the Members of the House of Peoples' Representatives during the month of Ginbot was the **Ethiopian Carbon Market Draft Proclamation**. In his briefing to The MPs regarding this draft, the Honorable Dr. Tesfaye Beljige stated that the proclamation explicitly regulates the overall procedures and processes of carbon trading, establishing responsibility and accountability to ensure the sector is managed systematically in a manner that guarantees the country's benefit.

The Minister further noted that beyond boosting financial revenue through the carbon market, the framework plays its own role in safeguarding national interests. The House subsequently referred the draft proclamation to the Standing Committee on Plan, Budget, and Finance Affairs for detailed scrutiny.



The Government Chief Whip, the Honorable Dr. Tesfaye Beljige, during the presentation of the draft proclamations to the House;

1.3 EXPLANATORY FORUMS

Among the Explanatory Forums conducted by the House of Peoples' Representatives during the month of Ginbot, the one concerning the **Freedom of Information Draft Proclamation** was prominent in terms of time allocation. The forum was organized by the Standing Committee on Democratic Affairs of the House of Peoples' Representatives. The Chairperson of the Committee, the Honorable Ewnetu Alene, stated that the Freedom of Information Draft Proclamation is designed to enable citizens to protect and enforce their interests based on well-founded information.

The Honorable Ewnetu further pointed out that constructive ideas raised by stakeholders are vital for enriching the proclamation. Information from the House cited him as stating that efforts will be made to enrich the draft proclamation by conducting discussions with various stakeholders until it is ultimately ratified.

For his part, the Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Azmera Andemo, noted that valuable inputs for refining the draft proclamation were gathered during the consultations with stakeholders, which will ultimately help the public access accurate information and benefit from it.

The Chief Ombudsman of the Ethiopian Institution of the Ombudsman, Ms. Simegn Wube,

explained that while some comments from stakeholders are helpful for enriching the draft proclamation, the draft itself was formulated based on a prior study and the practical implementation challenges encountered over the past years.

Ms. Simegn added that although certain ideas had already been integrated following consultations with various entities after the draft was initially prepared, they remain ready to review certain concepts again, as a well-refined Freedom of Information Proclamation will ultimately benefit the public.



The Chief Ombudsman of the Ethiopian Institution of the Ombudsman, Ms. Simegn Wube, during the public hearing;

Information from the House indicates that the second explanatory forum of the month was conducted by the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs of the House of Peoples' Representatives regarding draft proclamations for **air service agreements signed**

with various countries. The standing committee held discussions on four draft air service proclamations, which were described as bilateral air service agreements signed for flights operated by Ethiopian Airlines to Bangladesh, Angola, Eswatini, and Sierra Leone.



The Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs, the Honorable Dr. Dima Nogo, during the public hearing;

It was noted that the standing committee emphasized the need to exercise special care to ensure that the agreements entered into with these countries do not conflict with the Ethiopian Constitution, other domestic laws, and international conventions ratified by Ethiopia. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Dr. Dima Nogo, stated that the standing committee would submit a resolution regarding the draft proclamations. He further underscored the need to enrich the draft proclamations in a manner that respects the sovereignty of the nations, safeguards Ethiopia's security, strengthens diplomatic relations, and

ultimately ensures that Ethiopia benefits from them.

Information from the House indicates that the third explanatory forum of the month was centered on the **Customs Amendment Draft Proclamation** and the forum was led by the Standing Committee on Plan, Budget, and Finance Affairs of the House. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Desalegn Wedaje, stated that extensive inputs on the proclamation had been gathered across various forums. He requested clarifications regarding the necessity of the proclamation, why a transitional provision was omitted, and why the port storage duration; set at 45 days for land transport and 30 days for air transport; could not be explicitly defined in terms of working days.

The Chairperson further pointed out that rather than confiscating vehicles carrying contraband, it would be better to increase the fines. He suggested that the confiscation process should be determined by regulation rather than directives, and underscored that administrative penalties ought to be incorporated into the proclamation. In turn, a member of the standing committee, the Honorable Debebe Admasu, noted that the Maritime Transit and Logistics Services enterprise had stated in writing that the law decrees the sale of properties belonging to owners who fail to settle service fees in order to cover the service payments. Consequently, he

emphasized the need to align this proclamation accordingly.

For his part, the Deputy Commissioner of the Customs Commission, Azezew Chane, stated that regarding the port storage duration, it is possible to adjust the phrasing to working days. Addressing the confiscation of vehicles carrying contraband, the Commissioner raised the point that there are those who intentionally construct hidden compartments outside the vehicle's standard body to transport contraband. He explained that raising the fines would not bring about a tangible change, and noted that there is a proper procedure where the vehicle is returned to the owner if evidence proves the owner had no involvement.



The Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Plan, Budget and Finance Affairs, the Honorable Desalegn Wedaje, during the public hearing;

Commissioner Azezew added that regarding the revenue generated from contraband confiscation, there will be an appropriate adjustment made so

that it is utilized to build the capacity of entities playing a role in combating contraband trade.

Information from the House indicates that the forum conducted by the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs regarding the draft proclamation signed to establish a **Joint Biological Research Center between the Government of Ethiopia and the Russian Federation** with stakeholders drawn from various institutions was the final explanatory forum of the month. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Dr. Dima Nogo, stated that since the agreement supports Ethiopia's activities in the fields of scientific study and biological research, it would be ratified by the House and put into operation.

The Chairperson added that the standing committee is consulting numerous entities on the draft agreement proclamation to ensure a balanced and effective implementation of the law. Responding to and clarifying questions raised by the standing committee, Solomon Belay, Advisor to the Minister at the Ministry of Innovation and Technology, stated that the agreement enables activities in the biological research sector, which have been implemented at a project level for 35 years, to scale up into an institution.

The Minister's Advisor further explained to the standing committee that the agreement had been viewed with a focus on building the research infrastructure of higher education institutions and

shaping the outcomes of studies and research in a manner that secures the countries' benefits while safeguarding national interests.



Members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs, during the explanatory forum;

2. OVERSIGHT OF EXECUTIVE INSTITUTIONS

One of the key activities of the House of Peoples' Representatives during the month of Ginbot was evaluating the 2018 budget performance and the 2019 budget requirements of four institutions, alongside hearing the nine-month plan performance reports of two institutions, which included listening to the responses and clarifications provided by the Minister of Health.

2.1 INSTITUTIONAL REPORTS

Among the institutions reviewed by the House during the month, the prominent activity in terms of time allocation was a discussion held by the Standing Committee on Plan, Budget, and Finance Affairs with officials from the **Federal Courts** regarding the nine-month budget performance report for the 2018 budget year and the budget requirements for the 2019 budget year.

The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Desalegn Wedaje, noted that the activities being undertaken by the institution to modernize its services are encouraging and that there has been better budget utilization. He added that regarding building maintenance, thorough studies should be conducted, capital budget should be allocated, and sustainable repairs must be carried out.

A member of the standing committee, the Honorable Dr. Alemu Jenberu, as cited by information obtained from the House, pointed out that presenting the detailed budget requirements for the 2019 budget year, achieving an 87.8% financial performance, maintaining a better level of physical performance, and presenting the detailed reasons behind the high budget requests for the 2019 budget year are all to be taken as strengths.



The President of the High Court, Lelise Desalegn, during her appearance at the forum;

For her part, the President of the High Court, Lelise Desalegn, stated that the High Court properly utilized the maintenance budget allocated to it for the 2018 budget year. She raised the point that the reason the maintenance costs requested for this year are higher is due to the increase in the prices of maintenance materials and machinery. The President indicated that higher budgets were requested by identifying nine budget line items, and information from the House cited her as stating

that these categories include mandatory expenditures, fuel, and building maintenance costs.

The discussion held by the Standing Committee on Plan, Budget, and Finance Affairs of the House with officials from the **National Election Board of Ethiopia** regarding the Board's 2018 budget performance and its 2019 program budget plan was another notable institutional oversight activity of the month.

Information issued by the House indicated that, using the Board's nine-month performance as a baseline, the standing committee presented several feedback points to the Board's leadership. These included addressing observed gaps in reporting presentation, ensuring a clear distinction between the regular budget and the election execution budget, and presenting capital budget utilization to the House in a transparent manner.

The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Desalegn Wedaje, stated that supporting the Board to conduct elections using its own budgetary capacity and preventing foreign interference is a primary task of the House. Noting that the standing committee is committed to working with relevant stakeholders to enable the Board to execute its operations without any disruption and secure the necessary budget, the Chairperson added that they would work collaboratively to ensure that human

resource recruitment for new branch offices and other tasks is executed at their planned levels to make the Board more effective.

For her part, the Chairperson of the National Election Board of Ethiopia, Ms. Melatwork Hailu, explained the successes the Board is achieving despite its heavy workload. She noted that its budget performance has currently reached 90%, and underscored that the Board is focusing heavily on the success of the democratic process by deploying millions of election executives, transporting electoral materials, and facilitating the required support for political parties.



The Chairperson of the National Election Board of Ethiopia, Ms. Melatwork Hailu, during her appearance at the forum;

It has been reported that this same Standing Committee on Plan, Budget, and Finance Affairs also evaluated the 2019 budget year program budget requirements submitted by the **Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC)** during this same month of Ginbot. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Desalegn

Wedaje, stated that as a demonstration of the government's commitment to protecting the human rights of citizens, it has significantly increased the budget allocated to the Commission over the past years.

The Chairperson noted that the House will provide the necessary support to ensure the institution continues to effectively preserve national interests and its independence. He assured that the standing committee will focus heavily on ensuring that the budget demands and infrastructure requests presented by the Commission receive appropriate responses. For his part, the Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Dr. Abraham Alemayehu, pointed out that one-time expenditures, such as public forums, should be separated from the regular budget and presented in the form of projects. He emphasized that backing other budget requests with concrete figures is crucial for government decision-making.

In the responses and clarifications provided for the questions raised, the Chief Commissioner of the EHRC, Berhanu Adelo, presented the fundamental reasons necessitating the budget increase in detail. Information from the House indicates that he further noted the discussion generally aimed at working collaboratively to establish a reliable human rights protection system in the country by building the Commission's institutional capacity and fulfilling the necessary budgetary inputs.



The Chief Commissioner of the EHRC, Berhanu Adelo, during his brief to the forum;

Information gathered by the Endrasie indicates that this same Standing Committee on Plan, Budget, and Finance Affairs conducted its review on the same subject with the **National Dialogue Commission**. The National Dialogue Commission submitted a request for a 62.6% budget increase for the 2019 budget year. In light of the grand objective for which the Commission was established, the standing committee noted the submission of a plan tailored toward a program budget as a key strength.

The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Desalegn Wedaje, directed the institution to present each future expenditure supported by concrete figures and in a transparent manner. For his part, the Deputy Chairperson, the Honorable Dr. Abraham Alemayehu, mentioned that the government would reinforce its support to ensure the success of the dialogue process, and commended the cost-effective manner in which the budget plan was prepared.

In his briefing, the National Dialogue Commission's Commissioner, Ambassador Mahmoud Dirir, pointed out that security situations in certain areas during the past budget year were unfavorable for field operations, which caused the budget utilization and performance to be low. However, he noted that the assistance received from the United Nations and other international partners is being utilized for its intended purpose.

Other leadership officials of the Commission explained that the remaining 2018 budget is planned to be properly utilized for the national conference scheduled to be held in the month of Sene, which will involve the participation of around 4,000 different segments of the community, according to information obtained from the House.



The Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Plan, Budget, and Finance Affairs, the Honorable Dr. Abraham Alemayehu, during the public hearing;

The Standing Committee on Plan, Budget, and Finance Affairs, which evaluated the 2018 budget performance and the 2019 budget year requirements of the three aforementioned federal institutions, also examined the 2018 budget year performance and the 2019 budget year plan presented by the **Ethiopian Institution of the Ombudsman**. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Desalegn Wedaje, emphasized that mandatory expenditures; classified as salaries, office rent, vehicle maintenance, and fuel costs; must be clearly and thoroughly identified and presented.

For his part, the Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Dr. Abraham Alemayehu, stated that appropriate resources should be allocated to the institution to enable it to effectively discharge its constitutionally mandated mission. The Chief Ombudsman of the institution, Ms. Simegn Wube, indicated that they plan to open a new branch office in the Southern region, as well as two sub-centers in the Oromia and Amhara regions, to make the institution more accessible to the public. The Chief Ombudsman added that government budget support is especially critical to handle the extensive responsibilities that will arise when the new Freedom of Information Proclamation is ratified.



The Standing Committee on Plan, Budget, and Finance Affairs, while hearing the budget request of the Ethiopian Institution of the Ombudsman;

Having heard the budget performance and the upcoming budget year preparations of such federal institutions, the House also listened to the responses and clarifications from the Minister of Health. During its 20th Regular Session of the 5th year tenure held mid-month, the House listened to the **responses and clarifications provided by the Minister of Health, Dr. Mekdes Daba**, regarding questions raised by House members concerning her ministry's nine-month plan performance. Members of the House noted that the ministry registered encouraging results over the past nine months in terms of disease prevention, control, and treatment. However, they pointed out that the capacity to prevent and control HIV and TB; diseases that are increasingly being overlooked and are claiming the lives of productive citizens, must be given due attention.

The Minister, Dr. Mekdes Daba, explained that although HIV and TB prevention and control operations had globally been supported by numerous programs for a long time, Ethiopia's success in containment and control over the past

years when those services ceased was due to the country having built a resilient health system. Regarding the supply and distribution of inputs, Dr. Mekdes stated that monitoring, oversight, and accessibility operations will be strengthened through a digital system. The Minister noted that tasks still remain when compared against globally set goals, adding that strengthening health care units, enhancing the capacity of professionals, modernizing and ensuring the credibility of the information system, strengthening the health financing system, and utilizing domestic products and local professionals are plans her ministry will focus heavily on in the future.



The Minister of Health, Dr. Mekdes Daba, during the presentation of her ministry's report;

During the same month of Ginbot, the House of Peoples' Representatives also evaluated the nine-month plan performance report of the **Ethiopian Investment Commission** for the 2018 budget year. The report was reviewed by the Standing Committee on Trade and Tourism Affairs of the House. The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Ms. Asha Yahya, noted that beyond the current budget year, the results

achieved in the final year of the medium-term plan demonstrate that the Commission's systematic integration of feedback from the standing committee as planning inputs has enabled encouraging improvements.

Directing that the achievements registered in job creation, technology transfer, and foreign currency earnings must be sustained, the Chairperson added that the efforts to enable both domestic and foreign investors to operate in all regions of the country and to expedite projects into production have made encouraging contributions toward balancing national imports and exports. For his part, the Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Yohannes Mesfin, mentioned that incorporating various services of the Commission into the "Mesob" One-Stop Service Center to make service delivery fast and efficient is encouraging. Furthermore, he urged that collaborative efforts must be further strengthened to support factories in Special Economic Zones with technology and finance, thereby ensuring that products are manufactured in high quality and quantity.

The Chief Commissioner of the Ethiopian Investment Commission, Dr. Zeleke Temesgen, explained that by amending proclamations that posed obstacles to operations and by having new proclamations ratified by the House to streamline procedures, it has been possible to create a favorable and predictable investment environment. The Commissioner raised the point

that USD 3.521 billion in revenue was secured by attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) within the nine-month period, and told members of the standing committee that numerous initiatives are being executed to make Ethiopia a leading FDI destination in East Africa and across the continent.



The Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Trade and Tourism Affairs, the Honorable Asha Yahya, during the presentation of the Ethiopian Investment Commission's report;

The final performance report presenter for the month of Ginbot was the **Ministry of Innovation and Technology**, with the report being delivered by the Minister, Dr. Belete Molla. Appearing at the 22nd Regular Session of the 5th year tenure of the House, the Minister stated that his ministry was able to register better results within the nine-month period by conducting problem-solving studies and research.

Noting that the sector has been focusing heavily on its operations with the realization that it holds a crucial share in achieving Ethiopia's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals as well as the

Agenda 2063, the Minister stated that a better outcome was recorded through 1,714 study and research initiatives carried out in the innovation sector during the nine months. The Minister added that a total of 6,424 jobs were created across all startups during the past nine months, according to the House report.



The Minister of Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Dr. Belete Molla, during the presentation of his ministry's report;

Dr. Belete raised the point that focused efforts are being undertaken with the plan to ensure that study and research sectors yield multifaceted benefits for the country. He further explained that under Digital 2030, the institution is working with a vision to guarantee power and internet accessibility in the border areas of the country. For his part, the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Employment, and Technology Affairs, the Honorable Dr. Negeri Lencho, pointed out that the activities executed by the Ministry of Innovation and Technology to

ensure that commercial and government services are supported by technology are encouraging.



The Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Employment, and Technology Affairs, the Honorable Dr. Negeri Lencho, during the review of the report of the Ministry of Innovation and Technology

The Chairperson raised the point that launching a satellite to help accelerate national development and constructing a call center to further streamline government services were planned tasks that remained unexecuted within the nine months. He urged that the institution must focus heavily on scaling up the "Mesob" One-Stop Service initiated by the government, ensuring the successful realization of Digital Ethiopia 2030, and conducting problem-solving studies in space science sectors.

2. INSTITUTIONAL AND FIELD VISITS

Although the Members of the House of Peoples' Representatives did not conduct any field visits during the month of Ginbot, information gathered from the House later indicates that they did visit certain institutions through their respective standing committees, covering six institutions in total during the month.

INSTITUTIONAL VISITS

Among the institutions visited by MPs during the month of Ginbot, the prominent one in terms of time allocation was the **Educational Materials Production and Distribution Enterprise**. The institution was visited by the Standing Committee on Public Enterprises Affairs of the House. The Chief Executive Officer of the Enterprise, Dr. Temesgen Garoma, stated that the institution, based on the education policy, is an enterprise that solely supplies inputs to the education sector by manufacturing domestically and importing from abroad.

For his part, the Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Melesse Mena, pointed out that the educational materials enterprise is an institution contributing to the education system by producing and supplying inputs vital for the development of Ethiopia's education sector. He added that the enterprise is playing an irreplaceable role in the education

sector by modernizing its services and improving its product quality over time.

The Chairperson further noted that the enterprise is contributing significantly to improving the country's education quality by domestically producing textbooks, science equipment, printing works, and school furniture, which are critical for the teaching-learning process. He stated that it is encouraging to see the enterprise overcoming its previous financial and administrative challenges to reach a better performance level today.



Members of the Standing Committee on Public Enterprises Affairs, during their visit to the Educational Materials Production and Distribution Enterprise;

During the same month of Ginbot, the Standing Committee on Urban, Infrastructure, and Transport Affairs of the House conducted field observations of various building construction projects. Information obtained from the House indicates that the standing committee toured and visited the **building construction projects of the Federal Supreme Court, the Federal Documents Authentication and Registration Agency, the**

Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority, and Kotebe University of Education.

The General Manager of the Federal Buildings Construction Project Office, Engineer Dawit Mehari, explained to the standing committee members that the building project's performance had reached 70%, while its financial performance stood at 58%. Clarifying that the project's performance has currently reached 76%, Engineer Dawit explained that focused efforts are underway with a plan to complete the entire construction project by Meskerem 30, 2019. Similarly, the standing committee visited the construction process of the Federal Documents Authentication and Registration Agency's building project, observing that the construction performance had reached 60% and the financial performance stood at 53%. The project consultants mentioned to the committee members they met there that the construction would be completed by December 30, 2019.

Not ending its monthly visits with these institutions alone, the standing committee reportedly visited the building construction project of the Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority. During this visit, besides understanding that the overall performance of the project stood at 80%, it was explained to the committee that the construction would be completed and become operational in the initial months of the 2019 budget year. Turning its attention to Kotebe University of Education, the standing committee

was able to confirm that the university's building construction performance had reached 87%, while its financial performance reached 65%.

The President of the University, Dr. Teshome Nekatibeb, stated that the university's new building project constructions are being completed at a better pace. Information obtained from the House cited him as telling the standing committee members that a budget is required to identify through studies which old buildings should be preserved for historical purposes before they cause accidents, as well as those that need to be demolished.



The Standing Committee on Urban, Infrastructure, and Transport Affairs, during its visit to the building projects;

3. PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY

One of the constitutional responsibilities executed by the Members of the House of Peoples' Representatives during the month of Ginbot pertained to parliamentary diplomacy. In this regard, they carried out **three parliamentary diplomacy** activities during the month.

The first parliamentary diplomacy activity of the House for the month was a discussion held by **members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs and the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Employment, and Technology Affairs with a delegation led by Mr. Luo Shugang, Chairperson of the Education, Science, Culture, and Public Health Committee of the National People's Congress of China.**

The Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs, the Honorable Dr. Dima Nogo, recalled that Ethiopia and China share long-standing historical relations and stated that this relationship must be further strengthened. Noting that Ethiopia is currently one of the countries with rapid economic growth, the Chairperson emphasized that China is a country that plays a major role in accelerating Ethiopia's economic development.

The Honorable Dr. Dima raised the point that the current Chinese Foreign Direct Investment flow and the trade relations between the two

countries have reached USD 5 billion. Information obtained from the House cited him as stating during the discussion that the implementation of over 2,000 Chinese projects, which have successfully created job opportunities for more than 560,000 Ethiopians, serves as a demonstration of the strong strategic relations between the nations.

For his part, the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Employment, and Technology Affairs, the Honorable Dr. Negeri Lencho, who was present at the discussion, stated that China is playing its part in the country's development within the human resource development sector by creating job opportunities for numerous Ethiopians and facilitating knowledge transfer. The Honorable Dr. Negeri added that China has provided duty-free market access to more than 50 countries, including Ethiopia, and stated that efforts should be made to ensure the country benefits by exporting Ethiopian products to China in large volumes using this opportunity.



Members of the two standing committees, during their meeting with the Chinese delegation;

Another parliamentary diplomacy initiative by MPs during the month was their attendance at a continental summit held in Côte d'Ivoire under the theme “From Digital Infrastructure to Digital Public Ecosystem.” At this summit, which involved extensive consultations on agendas regarding the distinct significance of digital ID systems for citizen service delivery, trusted data exchange, and continental economic integration, the Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs, the Honorable Dr. Fethi Mahdi, offered his insights. He stated that the Fayda National Digital ID Program initiated by Ethiopia is laying the foundation for national digital transformation and digital economy building.

Information issued by the House cited the Deputy Chairperson as adding that the building blocks of the digital ecosystem focused on at this year's summit align closely with Ethiopia's digital strategy. He emphasized to the summit attendees the importance of strengthening legal frameworks, ensuring data privacy, and creating cross-border digital ID linkages for regional peace and economic integration. It was noted that this summit, held in the capital city of Abidjan, brought together more than 2,000 participants, policymakers, and technology professionals drawn from various African countries.



The Honorable Dr. Fethi Mahdi and partial attendees of the summit, during the forum;

The final parliamentary diplomacy activity of the House for the month was an engagement wherein it was stated that Finland supports Ethiopia's diplomatic efforts to secure sea port access. The event involved a discussion held by the **Standing Committee on Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs** with **Kimmo Kiljunen**, a member of the **Parliament of Finland**, and **Sinikka Antila**, the **Ambassador of Finland to Ethiopia**.

A member of the standing committee, the Honorable Ambassador Dina Mufti, recalled that the countries share long-standing historical relations and underscored that this relationship must be further strengthened. The Ambassador briefed the delegation on Ethiopia's collaborative efforts with IGAD to establish peace, regional development, and comprehensive prosperity in East Africa. He explained Ethiopia's stance to the Finnish delegation by raising its growing demand for a sea port in light of history, geographical location, population size, and economic growth. He noted that the strategy Ethiopia pursues to obtain a sea port is peaceful, rooted in the principle of give-and-take, designed to benefit

neighboring countries, and conducted through diplomacy and agreements.

For his part, the Finnish Parliament member, Kimmo Kiljunen, stated that Ethiopia is a primary and key country for Africa within Finland's foreign policy. The representative mentioned his country's readiness to cooperate with Ethiopia in its efforts to combat terrorism and bring about peace and security in East Africa and across the continent. Information from the House cited him as stating that his country supports Ethiopia's efforts to secure a sea port in a peaceful and diplomatic manner. For her part, the Ambassador of Finland to Ethiopia, Sinikka Antila, indicated that her country is working cooperatively with Ethiopia in the sectors of digitalization, telecommunications, and solar energy, and stated that this would be reinforced moving forward.



Members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations and Peace Affairs, during their discussion with the Finnish Parliament member and the Ambassador;

4. THE REPRESENTATIVES ON THEIR OWN

Information gathered from the House during the month indicates that the activities executed by the Members of the House of Peoples' Representatives during the month of Ginbot were not limited to the aforementioned constitutional responsibilities, but also included **budget-oriented tasks concerning their own House.**

In terms of time allocation, the primary report evaluated by MPs was the **nine-month performance report of the House's operational plan.** As is known, the House had evaluated the nine-month plan performance of the Secretariat of the House this past Miyaziya. This specific report of the House was presented by Kereyu Banata, Representative of the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General of the Administration Sector at the Secretariat of the House. Listening to the report, the Honorable Speaker Tagesse Chafo urged that the scrutiny process for draft proclamations referred to the House must be finalized, and their respective reports and resolutions must be submitted to the floor.

The Speaker added that rather than addressing issues in isolation, standing committees must work in synergy and collaboration. He also indicated that the practical application of parliamentary study and research findings will be

evaluated with special focus moving forward. For their part, members of the Advisory and Coordinating Committees of the House noted that 13 laws were enacted in the lawmaking process over the past nine months, highlighting that the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Law, which had been undergoing extensive scrutiny for several years, has been ratified and put into operation.

Another internal activity of The MPs during the month was the review conducted by the Standing Committee on Plan, Budget, and Finance Affairs regarding the 2019 plan and **budget requests of the Secretariats of both the House of Federation and the House of Peoples' Representatives.** The Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Desalegn Wedaje, directed that potential scenarios for cost reduction through collaborative work with partner organizations should be explored. He further noted that identifying expenditures categorized as unavoidable would facilitate operations. The Deputy Chairperson of the Standing Committee, the Honorable Dr. Abraham Alemayehu, raised the point that it is necessary to clearly identify the factors driving the budget increase to assist in budget planning, adding that it is beneficial to benchmark the budget against the set ceiling during its preparation.

For his part, the Deputy Head of the Secretariat of the House of Federation, Dr. Belay Wedisho, mentioned during the discussion that the budget

increase request was primarily categorized into three sectors. He explained that inputs experiencing price inflation on the international market; such as fuel; along with new human resource recruitments and expenditures for the celebration of the Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Day were the drivers behind the budget increase.

The report presenter, Kereyu Banata, explained that a budget increase was necessitated because expenses for television broadcasting, library expansion, and digitalization operations surged beyond expectations. Additionally, Kereyu clarified that inflation surrounding the procurement of technological equipment, system installations, and protocol attire heavily impacted the budget preparation.



Representative of the Secretary General and Deputy Secretary General of the Administration Sector at the Secretariat of the House, Kereyu Banata, during the presentation of the report;

Another internal activity of the representatives during the month was the **evaluation conducted by the Executive Committee of the Women Parliamentarians Caucus of the House** regarding the Caucus's 10-month plan performance report for the 2018 budget year. During the evaluation, the Deputy Speaker of the House and Patron of the Caucus, the Honorable Ms. Lomi Bedo, stated that the domestic and international capacity-building trainings provided to the Caucus members yielded tangible results in lawmaking, oversight, representation, and parliamentary diplomacy operations, and should therefore be sustained.



The Deputy Speaker of the House and Patron of the Caucus, the Honorable Ms. Lomi Bedo, during the discussion;

She urged that a foundation must be laid for the upcoming House term by preparing the Caucus's strategic plan spanning from 2019 to 2023, alongside its baseline plan for the 2019 budget year. Presenting the report, the Deputy Chairperson of the Caucus, the Honorable Alemitu Abebe, noted that the capacity-building

trainings conducted at various times created better awareness, thereby enhancing the execution and enforcement capabilities of the female representatives.



5. WHAT DID ETHIOPIA AGREE TO?

During this same month of Ginbot, Members of the House of Peoples' Representatives also gave their consent to **ratify two loan agreements**. It was indicated that the agreements, which the House ratified during its 23rd Regular Session held this month, were signed **between Ethiopia and the African Development Bank, and between Ethiopia and the International Development Association (IDA)**. Providing clarifications regarding the loan agreements, the Government Chief Whip Minister, the Honorable Dr. Tesfaye Beljige, stated that the loan secured from the African Development Bank for the pastoralist food and livelihood improvement project will further support integrated development projects that enable the government to ensure the benefit of pastoralists and withstand the impacts of climate change.

The Minister added that to further reinforce this development initiative and elevate the pastoralist community's disaster resilience capacity by incorporating additional development tasks, a USD 71 million 940 thousand financial support was secured from the African Development Bank. Noting that the funds obtained through the loan will be utilized to expand water infrastructure, animal health services, sustainable land management, renewable energy alternatives, and weather forecasting stations, the Minister mentioned that the loan is interest-free and is to

be fully repaid within a 40-year period, including a 10-year grace period. The House subsequently ratified the loan agreement as Proclamation No. 1423/2018 with a unanimous vote.



The Government Chief Whip Minister, the Honorable Dr. Tesfaye Beljige, during his clarification on the loan agreements;

In a related development, the Government Chief Whip, the Honorable Dr. Tesfaye, regarding the loan agreement between Ethiopia and the International Development Association for the sixth phase of the Productive Safety Net Project (PSNP), explained that the government had previously formulated and implemented the productive safety net project to transition vulnerable segments of society experiencing food insecurity from aid dependency to productivity. He stated that the sixth phase of the Productive Safety Net Project will be implemented across 494 woredas located within 12 regions and one city administration. The House ratified the loan agreement between Ethiopia and the International Development Association as

Proclamation No. 1424/2018 with a majority
vote and one abstention.



6. BRIDGE'S OBSERVATIONAL INSIGHT; - ON ETHIOPIA'S FIRST COMPREHENSIVE TRADE POLICY

On Ginbot 18, 2018, the Council of Ministers approved Ethiopia's first uniform National Trade Policy, which is expected to modernize the trading system, strengthen competitiveness, and support long-term export growth. This event marks the first historic occasion in the 118-year history since the country established its Ministry of Trade where it has secured an independent, uniform policy document designed to lead toward a free-market system.

In light of this and other interconnected issues of macroeconomic significance, BRIDGE has selected this policy for its weekly overview. Furthermore, as the policy indicates that certain proclamations require amendments, this directly concerns the House of Peoples' Representatives of Ethiopia. Consequently, this point serves as both the rationale and an essential component of this overview.

Previously, the absence of a uniform trade policy and the fragmentation of commercial laws across various proclamations and directives hampered coordination between imports and exports. This lack of cohesion has long been cited as a reason for the erosion of fair competition in the trading

system, the expansion of illegality, and severe grievances among consumers.

6.1 INSIGHTS INTO THE POLICY

The newly approved policy aims to bridge these structural gaps. It has been deemed highly essential to, properly govern domestic and foreign trade administration; Enhance competitiveness by modernizing the export sector; Support domestic producers through tariffs and incentives and protect the rights and safety of consumers.

The document itself notes that this new National Trade Policy is primarily founded on the principles of a free-market economy, cooperation and coordination, transparency and predictability, as well as fair competition. The general substance of the document focuses on modernizing the domestic marketing system, strengthening the import-export administration framework, establishing fair trade, and building a digital trade system. The policy is highly anticipated to instill deep confidence within the business community, attract foreign investment, and transition the country's trading landscape into a new chapter.

Additionally, many economists have long pointed out that because the export sector was loosely managed across multiple uncoordinated institutions, it remained unable to guarantee international market competitiveness. Developed

with the Homegrown Economic Reform and the Ten-Year Development Plan as its baseline, the national significance of this policy is considered immense. While the preparation and approval of this document have undeniably created high predictability and confidence within the business community and the private sector, it is also believed that the government will foster an enabling environment for the private sector to serve as the primary engine of the macroeconomic framework. Specifically, by moving away from frequently changing commercial laws, regulations, and procedures, the framework intends to make operations clear, accountable, and predictable for all commercial actors, giving the private sector full confidence to steadily manage long-term plans and expand investment flows within a volatile global trading environment.

Furthermore, from the perspective of providing a uniform framework to guide Ethiopia's ongoing World Trade Organization (WTO) accession negotiations and its integration into continental and regional trade agreements, the policy has been positively recognized for offering high predictability to transnational trading entities and foreign investors looking to inject direct capital.

This policy, approved on Ginbot 18, arrives after decades of the Ethiopian trade sector operating under fragmented laws, directives, and administrative procedures rather than being guided by a single national framework. Officials

directly concerned with the matter have been heard stating that the lack of a comprehensive trade policy served as a bottleneck, causing operational delays, legal inconsistencies, and preventing the country from competing effectively in both private and international markets.

The Minister of Trade and Regional Integration, Dr. Kasahun Gofe, speaking on the document, stated that the new policy is designed to bring greater stability and consistency to Ethiopia's trading system. According to the Minister, the framework will reduce frequent legislative changes to create a clear and predictable operating environment for the business community. He also noted that the government views this policy as a major step toward shifting the structure of Ethiopia's export trade.

Given that the country's export trade has for decades relied primarily on unprocessed agricultural commodities, the Minister noted that under the new strategy, the core objectives are to expand foreign exchange earnings by developing manufacturing, value-added products, service-sector exports, and tourism. Officials argue that this type of commercial diversification is vital to strengthen economic resilience and reduce vulnerability to global commodity market fluctuations.

The policy is also said to introduce temporary tariff protections and targeted incentive systems

to support domestic industries during their growth phases. This is intended to help infant industries enhance their productivity and competitiveness before entering into full international competition.

While the ratification of the National Trade Policy marks a major milestone, the focus has now shifted toward implementation. Ultimately, there is no doubt that the success of the reform will be measured by its capacity to improve competitiveness, support exporters, attract investment, and expand Ethiopia's participation in East African and global markets.

6.2 WHAT THE POLICY CONTAINS

The Council of Ministers, led by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed, approved Ethiopia's first uniform trade policy, concluding three years of discussions aimed at filling the legal and regulatory gaps that existed over the past decades. This 48-page document fully empowers the Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration to overhaul consumer protection frameworks, and specifically mandates a strict amendment to the Trade Competition and Consumer Protection Proclamation to eliminate market distortions and the proliferation of substandard products.

The policy identifies regulatory complexity as a major bottleneck and aims to reduce business costs by supporting registration and licensing processes through a digital system. To address

the wide disparity between producer and consumer prices, it incorporates expanding the traditionally named "Sunday markets" and constructing modern market infrastructures that facilitate direct linkages as strategic interventions. The document notes that these reforms are linked with macroeconomic plans set to protect the purchasing power of the public by controlling high inflation and narrowing the gap between the official and parallel market foreign exchange rates.

This trade policy document also aims to address operational consistency issues observed in the execution of regulations and directives, unpredictable frequent regulatory changes, illicit trade practices, and problems of under-invoicing exports or over-invoicing imports. Furthermore, it can be understood from the document that great focus has been placed on eliminating transport and logistics supply shortages, border delays, and redundant paperwork through the coordination of multiple ministries, as well as attracting Foreign Direct Investment and increasing foreign revenue by expanding export products in type and volume through enhancing the country's productivity and manufacturing capacity.

Regarding strategies to expand market access and diversify exports, the document includes goals such as finalizing World Trade Organization (WTO) membership negotiations, implementing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

agreement, formalizing informal border trade, and reducing dependency solely on traditional agricultural products (namely coffee, sesame and khat) by expanding export sectors such as tourism, electric power, transport, and professional services. Additionally, the representative observed from the document that it entails participating in global value chains by adding value to leather, textile, and agro-industrial products, strengthening public-private partnerships, including electronic commerce and digital trade provisions in agreements, and fully digitalizing licensing and customs procedures.

In a related context, beyond mentioning that improving gender equality is vital to record high economic growth and achieve national strategic development goals, the policy aims to create favorable conditions for women-owned and women-led business sectors and products to receive better tariff protection. Since the majority of informal border trade is carried out by women, the document sets a goal to transition them into formal sectors where their rights are protected by reducing trade costs.

Explaining the climate change aspect, the document contains detailed points such as building a manufacturing system that takes into account the protection of natural resources, biodiversity, and ecosystems in alignment with the climate change agreement framework; protecting workers' rights based on the 2011 Labor Proclamation; prohibiting child labor; and

enhancing workforce skills through technical and vocational training. It also includes facilitating conditions in the government procurement system for businesses owned by persons with disabilities to participate and find a favorable working environment, as well as providing technical and digital transformation support to micro, small, and medium enterprises to easily meet regulatory requirements and reduce their business costs.

Finally, by establishing the policy execution strategy and institutional responsibilities, the document identifies the policy-making authority of the Council of Ministers, and the Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Planning and Development as the primary executing bodies. It separates the implementation timeline into short, medium, and long-term categories, and notes that plans are in place to amend legal frameworks such as the Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations Establishment Proclamation No. 341/1995, the Trade Competition and Consumer Protection Proclamation No. 813/2006, the Ethiopian Commodity Exchange Regulation, and the Oilseeds and Pulses Marketing Regulation.

6.3 DEBATES AND CHALLENGES

As mentioned above, before this historic document was approved by the Council of Ministers, extensive debates and grievances were observed over the past three years from various stakeholders who stated that the matter directly concerns them. The policy process began with a diagnostic study highlighting the necessity of a uniform commercial framework, followed by stakeholder consultations that included chambers of commerce, business enterprises, and sectoral associations.

One of the prominent debating voices that can be mentioned in this process pertained to informal trade, legal amendments, and free-market principles. In this argument raised around the informal trade sector; which employs the majority of the population, the core point was that forcing informal traders into the formal line would severely disrupt their livelihoods. Although the policy outlines the establishment of new cooperatives, critics argue that strengthening existing ones would be more effective. Furthermore, the representative was able to understand from the conducted overview that the policy's intention to impose certain controls, including profit margins on selected goods and services, raised questions among critics regarding whether such measures align with free-market principles.

The drafters of the document, for their part, argued that the document does not clash with free-market principles. They countered by raising

the point that Ethiopia's lack of a formal trade policy hindered international market access, restricted foreign investment flows, and blocked technology transfer. They added that this policy gap limited Ethiopia's capacity to transition from agriculture to manufacturing and the service sector, thereby restricting its influence within global value chains.

Another primary point of contention pertained to the limitations on foreign capital opportunities, risks, and infrastructure plans. Policymakers state that the document holds immense significance in attracting foreign capital, expanding export opportunities, and creating competition that can improve productivity. Critics, for their part, while acknowledging the potential for job creation in new sectors, point out that domestic industries could face severe difficulties if transnational commercial entities enter the country too rapidly. They also voice concerns that high exposure to global market fluctuations could create instability, and that if the benefits derived from liberalization are not properly distributed, severe disparities such as inequality could widen.

The policy drafters counter-argue that plans are in place to improve roads, railways, and power infrastructures to mitigate these challenges, which will enable business enterprises to efficiently handle the increasing trade flows. They also mention that the challenges feared to be created by the policy can be overcome by investing in workforce training, developing

financial instruments for cross-border transactions, and concurrently issuing robust intellectual property protection laws to encourage domestic innovation. While the new policy could yield more predictable market access and dispute resolution systems, some have been observed raising concerns that it might open the door for massive foreign actors at a pace unmatched by small domestic enterprises.

Consumer safety is another point of debate that can be raised around the document. While policymakers seek to prevent excessive price gouging, ensure product safety, and maintain quality standards, stakeholders desiring rapid liberalization conversely warn that an overly cautious approach could hinder investment and reduce competitiveness.

Advocates of the policy state that the existence of clear legal directives will enhance Ethiopia's reputation among global investors and encourage domestic entrepreneurs to build their capacity. Conversely, critics warn that if the transition toward an open market is not properly managed as envisioned by the policy, it could exacerbate inequality or harm newly emerging domestic industries.

According to the arguments of these groups, since domestic small and medium traders lack the capacity to compete equally with foreign companies entering with massive capital and modern technology, they urge that the

government must provide financial and technical support to prevent them from facing the risk of collapse.

Institutions such as the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) have not only commended this step as the largest trade sector liberalization Ethiopia has undertaken in its 50-year history, but also stated that this new policy will expedite its efforts toward World Trade Organization (WTO) membership. On the other hand, those expressing concern have been observed stating that because the domestic trade sector has created employment opportunities for millions of citizens, the entry of foreign companies bringing technology-backed operations could indirectly exert inflationary pressure on unemployment.

On the alternative side, while it is said that this competition will provide an opportunity for domestic traders to modernize their operations, adopt digital payment systems, and grow by forming joint partnerships with global suppliers, opening the trade door completely could cause imports to multiply at a higher rate than exports. It seems impossible not to raise the concern that this could exert short-term pressure, at least, on the country's balance of payments.

According to economic analysts, this policy provides a major foundation for Ethiopia to untether itself from the meager foreign exchange it has earned for ages by exporting only raw

coffee and oilseeds. Even though they state that the entry of foreign companies will improve the quality of the country's products and enhance Ethiopia's competitiveness in the global market, they strongly argue that while permitting foreign firms to directly engage in the export trade of coffee, khat, and oilseeds might increase foreign exchange earnings, the country's revenue could still remain vulnerable to shocks when global market prices for commodities like coffee decline; hence, shifting rapidly to manufacturing remains vital.

6.4 BRIDGE'S POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Although our institution aligns with the voices stating that this 48-page historic new trade policy, which we reviewed above, is in fact overdue, BRIDGE wishes to raise the following brief recommendations so that the policy can streamline Ethiopia's trading system and propel the economy forward as envisioned;

- * BRIDGE wishes to advise that the Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration of the FDRE must establish a robust monitoring framework to control contraband, parallel markets, and price fraud that may arise when foreign investors engage in retail and wholesale trade. It is also necessary to remind that this same Ministry must quickly develop and integrate its digital and human resource capacities to manage activities such

as illicit financial flows, tax evasion, and contraband trade that could occur following the implementation of the new policy.

- * Our other recommendation point is tied to bureaucratic bottlenecks. Although bureaucratic bottlenecks have registered gradual changes over the past few years, institutions such as the United Nations Conference on Development mention that remaining homework persists. Therefore, to create the favorable business environment outlined in the policy, the pace of customs procedure digitalization must be accelerated. If bureaucratic bottlenecks such as licensing renewal delays are not resolved, it may be difficult to fully achieve the ease of doing business planned by the new policy; thus, we suggest it should be properly considered.
- * It is not difficult to deduce that unless the trade policy is comprehensively synchronized and swiftly put into operation alongside the country's agricultural, industrial, and financial policies, bringing about the desired economic structural transformation will be difficult. BRIDGE wishes to particularly urge the Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration, which is directly concerned with this matter, to execute this as quickly as possible.

6.5 RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE HOUSE OF PEOPLES' REPRESENTATIVES

As is known, although this Enderassie edition of BRIDGE reviews various subject matters in its weekly observations, our monthly readers surely recall that its primary focus is the House of Peoples' Representatives of Ethiopia. From this perspective, Enderassie wishes to submit the following recommendations to the House of Peoples' Representatives;

As our review above indicates, achieving the macroeconomic goals set by the new policy is only possible when the laws that have been operational for many years and remained fragmented are amended, and related matters are properly considered. Therefore, the House should prioritize its constitutional legislative responsibilities as follows:

A: Urgently Amending Old Proclamations: - The trade policy document itself notes that the Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations Establishment Proclamation No. 341/1995 and the Trade Competition and Consumer Protection Proclamation No. 813/2006 mentioned in the document must be amended to align with liberalization and the digital trade system. Therefore, BRIDGE wishes to urge the House of Peoples' Representatives to amend these existing proclamations, which have been noted to require revision, preferably within the remaining weeks of the departing House.

B: The Necessity of Gender and Employment Security Proclamations: - As analyzed in subsection five, this policy document aims to empower the commercial and economic capacity of women. Furthermore, as we briefly raised about the document above, integrating informal commercial activities into the formal sub-economy is set as one of the goals of the document. Looking at it from this perspective, since women extensively participate in the majority of informal trade, the House should consider proclamation(s) that ensure women's rights, employment security, and tariff protection when these businesses enter the formal trading line as envisioned by the policy.

C: Robust Oversight System: - As indicated by the policy, and since the document itself explicitly notes that the direct responsibility and execution of the trade policy rest upon the Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration, the utility of the policy would be greatly enhanced if the House of Peoples' Representatives establishes a distinct oversight mechanism to track policy implementation, particularly through its standing committees directly concerned with the matter. Therefore, we suggest the House look into this emphatically. Specifically, in our first recommendation point above, we mentioned that allowing foreign investors to directly engage in wholesale and retail trade requires the establishment of a monitoring framework by the Ministry to prevent risks of contraband, parallel

markets, and under-invoicing/over-invoicing. Thus, we strongly wish to remind that it would be of great benefit to the holistic implementation of the policy if the House attentively reviews these monitoring frameworks established by the Ministry, at least during its quarterly evaluations.

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

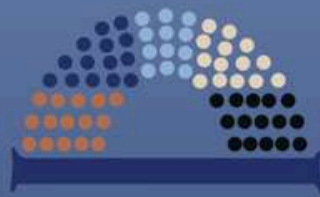
Our institution, Bridge, has utilized this word by denoting it from the past to the present era while maintaining the rules of Amharic grammar. Let us first cite what the noted scholars have established: Desta Tekle Wold defined “Enderasie” as “being me, one who works holding my authority”; Kidane Wold 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.

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