

Electricity for regional economic integration, sustaining peace, mitigating climate change

BY EPHREM ANDARGCHEW

Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP) believes that Ethiopia's power-selling activities enable the nation to strengthen its diplomacy, and economic integration with the neighboring countries.

EEP Sales and Customer Management Manager Minilik Getahun disclosed recently in an exclusive interview with *The Ethiopian Herald* that energy sale has a significant contribution to regional economic integration and promotes mutual relations between the neighboring countries. “Ethiopia generates electricity from renewable energy sources and sells it to the neighboring countries at cheaper prices. This in turn creates a sense of belonging among countries since they share the same resources.”

Currently, Ethiopia is selling electric power to Djibouti, Sudan, and Kenya. And Tanzania wants to buy energy from Ethiopia by extending the electric transmission line that is installed in Kenya. Besides, Ethiopia commences discussions and negotiations with South Sudan and Somaliland on energy supply. When relationship with Eritrea is strengthened, energy sale will be included, he stated.

He recalled that the region is affected by frequent droughts, biodiversity loss, firewood shortages, and lack of energy for air conditioners during the hot season. Although there are many reasons for violence and conflict in East Africa, the lack of a stable, inconstant, and interrupted energy supply can also lead to social and economic crises.

Realizing this, Ethiopia is generating energy from renewable sources and supplying it to neighboring countries at a competitive but lower price compared with the international level. Hence, it helps them to have a stable energy supply which contributes to attracting foreign direct investment, creating job opportunities, and a modern lifestyle. Therefore, Ethiopia is working to widen and expand its power-selling activities.

Taking Ethiopia's efforts in electrifying the region into consideration, the East African Power Pool Institute is finalizing its preparation to open its office in Ethiopia. When it is fully operational, it will streamline, facilitate and control the energy sales between neighboring

countries. It will also greatly help the country's efforts to become a major power pool in East Africa, he explained.

Ethiopian Electric Power manages and provides more than 66 KV transmission capacity which includes 132kv, 230kv, 400kv, and so on for domestic and regional customers. As a result, EEP sells 200 megawatts to Kenya, 66 megawatts to Djibouti, and 100 megawatts to Sudan.

Apart from sharing resources, promoting regional integration, and peace through power infrastructure development, the country is getting eight million US dollars per month and over 90 million US dollars a year from Kenya, more than 40 million US dollars from Djibouti, and about 50 million US dollars from Sudan. In general, the country earns more than 200 million US dollars a year from power selling, he added.

The sale of electric power supports Ethiopia and other countries to cooperate and improve their development which in return enhances their efforts in working together. Hence, many of them have supported Ethiopian dam constructions, including the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD).

Indeed, clean energy developments could help the region to reduce carbon emissions which will be supported by the international community.

Unlike other regions, the Horn of Africa has been facing recurrent drought with worsening impacts. Ethiopia's effort to construct renewable energy projects is imperative for the region to be in a stronger position to call for a goal of zero net carbon emissions by 2050.

Therefore, the international community, environmental advocates, higher educational institutions, and so on should support Ethiopia's electric power selling activities since it is indispensable for regional integration, the prevalence of peace, mitigating climate change effects, and promoting a modern lifestyle, he called on the responsible stakeholders.