



Excellent relations between Ethiopia and Sudan as a foundation for a new Cross-Border Collaboration Programme

Tuesday, 3rd December 2019

The official launch of the Cross-Border Collaboration Programme in Western Ethiopia and Eastern Sudan took place on 26 November 2019 in Assosa, Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State of Ethiopia.

The Programme is funded by the European Union Trust Fund for Africa and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany and implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in cooperation with the Intergovernmental Agency on Development (IGAD). Partners are federal and regional government institutions of both, Ethiopia and Sudan.

H.E. Ashadeli Hassen Alajeb, the President of the Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State, and the Ministry of Peace of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia hosted the event at the Bamboo Paradise Hotel with representatives of the Foreign Ministries of Ethiopia and the Sudan, the Governor of the Blue Nile State of the Sudan, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Ethiopia, Ambassador Jan Borgstam.

In his opening remarks the President stressed the sisterhood between the people of both sides of the border and appreciated the support by development partners like the European Union, the Government of Germany and IGAD through launching the Cross-Border Collaboration Programme in Western Ethiopia and Eastern Sudan. He said that the Programme is expected to play a decisive role in strengthening resilience and improving the livelihood of the population in the borderland as well as conflict transformation and peace building efforts which have already started.

The acting deputy Governor of the Blue Nile State, Commander Al-Walid Ahmed Madani noted that there is a joint cross-border collaboration committee of both states, Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State and Blue Nile State, in place which meets on regional and on local level. He welcomed the Programme's objective to develop capacities of this committee and to support additional initiatives for the benefit of the communities in the border area.

On behalf of Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, Executive Secretary of IGAD, Dr. Mohamed Moussa underlined the importance of the various cross-border clusters at the Horn of Africa in which IGAD aims to promote regional economic cooperation and integration, peace and security, agriculture, natural resource management and environment protection at the local level.

In his statement EU Ambassador, Mr Johan Borgstam, reinsured the commitment of the European Union for the support to cross-border initiatives and said that the Horn of Africa is at a turning point: "The Horn of Africa is going through an unprecedented moment in its history. I applaud the historic steps taken in building reconciliation and trust with their neighbours. I also applaud the strong political commitment that Governments of the region are demonstrating by reversing the historical marginalisation of border areas." He furthermore stated: "The ongoing reform and transition processes in both countries, Sudan and Ethiopia, as well as the excellent relationship between both states and the border regions are a very good foundation for a successful implementation of the Programme's objectives."

During the launching event, the programme management handed over equipment to the vocational training institutions in both regional states and to the Peace Committees on both sides of the border. A student of the Polytechnical College in Assosa, a female member of the Peace Committee from Kurmuk woreda, and a female Pastoralist from Blue Nile State gave an insight into the daily challenges they face in their work and into how the Programme can improve their situation. The launch was closed with a cultural programme which showcased different music groups from the border region.

The Launch was followed by the first Meeting of the Programme's Advisory Council. Members of the Council deliberated on the achievements of the Programme and provided guidance on planned activities.

Background

Populations across the Horn of Africa face frequent challenges related to food insecurity and violent conflict, particularly in border regions. These remote populations often lack basic social services and infrastructure and have to contend with limited employment opportunities and recurring food shortages. In these areas, cross-border trade offers an important opportunity for economic development, as do the strong historical ties between populations on either side of borders. Increased trade and cooperation across the border has the potential to simultaneously achieve both national and regional development goals.

The border area between Benishangul-Gumuz in western Ethiopia and the Blue Nile State in eastern Sudan is home to over 1.6 million people, the majority of whom live in rural areas. Though relations between populations have generally been peaceful, a recent influx of migrants, refugees, and internally displaced people has increased pressure on the use of communal resources, such as land, and led to increased tensions between communities. Proactive efforts to resolve these issues are urgently needed to ensure the stability and continued economic development of the region.

The Programme aims to reduce conflict and improve overall living conditions by developing and enhancing economic opportunities in the border area of the Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State of Ethiopia and the Blue Nile State of Sudan. The goal is to strengthen the population's resilience to instability and displacement as a result of climatic and economic shocks. In this regard, the Programme is supporting initiatives for improving agriculture production, social infrastructure, vocational training, conflict transformation, and cross-border cooperation, mainly targeting the economic needs of young people and women. With some delay due to political dynamics in Sudan and violent conflicts in Ethiopia, implementation is now ongoing in the Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State as well as in the Blue Nile State.

For more information

<https://www.igad.int/>

https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/region/horn-africa_en

<https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/73161.html>

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