

A low-angle photograph of numerous flags from various countries flying against a clear blue sky. The flags are on tall poles and are slightly blurred, suggesting movement. The overall tone is bright and international.

ACADEMIC DIPLOMACY AT AAU



MAJOR EVENTS IN MAY

Regional Training on Environmental and Social Risk Management

May 4 2026

The 7th Annual Research, Innovation, and Job Fairs Week

May 6, 2026

Inauguration of Walaabu Oromo Law Dictionary

May 14, 2026

Pan-African Seminar - Africa Day 2026

May 25, 2026

Message from the President

Dear Members of the AAU Community,

It is with great pride and a deep sense of responsibility that I address the university community in this edition of *AAU Connect*, centered on the theme “Academic Diplomacy at AAU” This theme captures the evolving identity of Addis Ababa University and its growing role in global engagement and cooperation.


From its founding, AAU was envisioned as a Pan-African university, established not only to serve Ethiopia but to contribute to the intellectual, scientific, and developmental aspirations of the continent. That founding vision continues to guide us as we expand our international partnerships and strengthen our contribution to knowledge, innovation, and regional integration. Today, this legacy naturally extends into what we now understand as academic diplomacy.

Academic diplomacy reflects the power of universities to connect societies through knowledge. Through research collaboration, student and faculty exchanges, and institutional partnerships, universities build trust that often transcends political boundaries. In this way, they serve as quiet but powerful actors in international relations.

At AAU, our partnerships across Africa and the world are grounded in shared purpose. They support joint research, capacity building, and innovation in areas such as health, climate change, technology, and sustainable development. These collaborations position the university as a space where ideas meet and where dialogue produces solutions to global challenges.

AAU occupies a unique and central position in Africa’s intellectual and diplomatic landscape. This location reinforces our responsibility to contribute to continental and global conversations through scholarship and engagement.

As we look forward, AAU will continue to strengthen its role as a hub of academic diplomacy, fostering openness, inclusion, and cooperation. In doing so, we reaffirm our commitment to a world where knowledge knows no borders and where universities help shape a more connected and peaceful future.



Samuel Kifle (PhD)
President
Addis Ababa University (AAU)



ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY AND THE RISE OF ACADEMIC DIPLOMACY

In an era defined by geopolitical tension, shifting alliances, and rapidly evolving global knowledge systems, universities are increasingly stepping beyond their traditional roles as centers of teaching and research. They are becoming actors in diplomacy itself, building trust, enabling dialogue, and shaping cooperation across borders through knowledge. Within this global transformation, Addis Ababa University stands at a uniquely strategic crossroads, both geographically and intellectually, to advance what is now widely understood as academic diplomacy.

Academic diplomacy refers to the role universities play in facilitating international relations through education, research collaboration, and intellectual exchange. Unlike traditional state-led diplomacy, academic diplomacy operates through networks of scholars, students, and institutions that transcend political boundaries and often sustain cooperation even when formal relations are strained.

Universities function as diplomats in three key ways:

First, they create neutral spaces for dialogue. On campuses, scholars from different political systems, cultures, and ideological backgrounds collaborate in ways that are often impossible in formal diplomatic arenas. These interactions foster mutual understanding and reduce misinformation, an increasingly valuable function in a polarized world.

Second, they produce shared knowledge for global challenges. From climate change and public health to artificial intelligence and food security, universities generate evidence-based research that informs international policy. This makes them indispensable partners in what is now called science diplomacy, the use of scientific collaboration to strengthen international relations.

Third, they cultivate long-term human networks. Students and faculty exchanges build generations of professionals who carry intercultural understanding into governments, international organizations, and industries. These networks often outlast political cycles, making them one of the most stable forms of international engagement.

AAU Beyond Borders

Located in Ethiopia's capital and near major continental institutions such as the African Union, Addis Ababa University occupies a unique position in Africa's diplomatic and intellectual ecosystem. This proximity enables AAU not only to observe continental policy debates but to actively contribute to them through research, expertise, and convening power.

Through partnerships with universities across Africa, Europe, Asia, and the Americas, AAU has expanded its global footprint in areas such as health sciences, engineering, climate studies, social policy, and legal scholarship. These collaborations are not merely academic exchanges, they are instruments of soft power and mutual development.

The university's growing engagement in international research consortia and joint academic programs reflects a broader shift: higher education institutions are no longer peripheral to diplomacy; they are embedded within it.

Academic diplomacy is closely tied to the concept of soft power, the ability to influence through attraction rather than coercion. Universities contribute to this by shaping narratives, producing trusted expertise, and hosting global intellectual exchange.

For AAU, this soft power is expressed through:

- Hosting international conferences and policy dialogues
- Engaging in cross-border research addressing African and global priorities
- Training professionals who serve in government, diplomacy, and international organizations
- Acting as a hub for regional academic cooperation in the Horn of Africa and beyond

In this sense, AAU is not only a national institution but also a regional and global knowledge actor.

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AAU HOSTS IPORA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AND LAUNCHES SAEAP PROJECT TO BOLSTER AFRICA-EUROPE ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS

Addis Ababa University (AAU) officially launched the IPORA (Interdisciplinary Policy-Oriented Research on Africa) Annual Scientific Conference and launched the Strengthening Africa-Europe Academic Partnership (SAEAP) project. The event brought together a strategic alliance between AAU, the University of Bordeaux (France), Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny (Côte d'Ivoire), and the International University of Rabat (Morocco).

In a powerful keynote address, AAU President Dr. Samuel Kifle outlined a bold vision for the future of international scholarly engagement. He emphasized that for AAU, academic partnerships with Europe must move beyond symbolic gestures toward "genuinely equitable, strategic, and impact-oriented partnerships."

"We believe these partnerships should be defined by co-creation, co-ownership, and co-leadership," Dr. Samuel stated. "This means jointly setting research agendas and ensuring balanced mobility. Partnerships must not be extractive or donor-driven; they must be grounded in mutual priorities and shared accountability."

Dr. Samuel identified the imbalance in agenda-setting and funding as a persistent challenge, noting that African institutions have too often been positioned as implementers rather than equal partners. However, he highlighted the 2024-2028 AAU Strategic Direction as a roadmap to overcome these bottlenecks by prioritizing research excellence and internationalization with local relevance.

The centerpiece of the event was a High-Level Panel Discussion on SAEAP, featuring representatives from the four partner universities, the African Union (AU), and the European Union (EU). Professor Alemu Mekonnen, Director of the Institute of Development Policy and Analysis, explained that the IPORA network has expanded significantly to ensure research findings provide direct inputs for policy formulation.

He noted that the panel focused on the nexus of Health and Agriculture, addressing global crises like climate change and food security through a unified, multi-disciplinary approach.

The conference, which features various technical sessions and workshops, will continue its deliberations through April 3, 2026, aiming to solidify the Africa-Europe academic bridge and finalize the SAEAP implementation roadmap.





AAU AND SWEDEN CELEBRATE 80 YEARS OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS THROUGH ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIP

Addis Ababa University hosted a high-level academic conference at Ras Mekonnen Hall to commemorate the 80th anniversary of Ethio-Swedish diplomatic relations, highlighting the long-standing academic and research partnership between Ethiopia and Sweden.

The conference brought together government officials, diplomats, researchers, and alumni to reflect on eight decades of cooperation, with a special focus on education, research, and institutional collaboration.

H.E. Magnus Lennartsson, Ambassador of Sweden to Ethiopia, emphasized that education and academic cooperation have remained key pillars of the bilateral relationship. He stated that through the support of Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), more than 47 research projects were conducted last year in collaboration with AAU, while over 100 PhD researchers are currently engaged in active studies.

“This cooperation will continue to strengthen across all sectors to deepen the bond between our two countries,” the Ambassador noted.

H.E. Kora Tushune, State Minister of Education, delivered a keynote address recalling the formal establishment of diplomatic ties in 1946. He described Sweden as a trusted and natural partner in Ethiopia’s modernization journey through education and praised the contributions of Swedish institutions such as Uppsala University, Lund University, and University of Gothenburg in addressing national development challenges in public health, agriculture, and governance.

Markos Tilahun, President of the Ethio-Swedish Alumni Network, explained that while the main diplomatic anniversary celebration will take place in October, the current event focused on academic achievements and alumni success stories. He noted that Swedish support has significantly contributed to aviation maintenance, agriculture, and medicine, adding that the alumni network is facilitating experience-sharing among entrepreneurs who studied in Sweden to strengthen Ethiopia’s science and business sectors.

A panel discussion organized by Nordic Africa Institute together with the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) explored how research-based knowledge can support peace processes. During the discussion, Angela M. from NAI stressed the importance of combining knowledge drawn from lived experiences, academic research, and the perspectives of practitioners and policymakers to effectively contribute to peace and security efforts.

The conference also featured three strategic panel discussions focusing on science and academia’s contribution to peace and stability, entrepreneurship and innovation, and the future of academic collaboration.

The event concluded with a shared commitment to further strengthen the Ethio-Swedish partnership through digital technology, agri-tech, and civil engineering, ensuring that returning scholars continue to contribute meaningfully to Ethiopia’s national development.





Canada–Ethiopia Mark 60 Years of Diplomatic Engagement with Calls for Deeper Cooperation on Local and Global Priorities

Ethiopia and Canada marked the 60-year milestone of their diplomatic relationship during a dialogue held at Ras Mekonnen Hall, Addis Ababa University (AAU), with senior officials and scholars urging both countries to build stronger cooperation across development, people-to-people engagement, and multilateral action.

The event brought together H.E. Ambassador Nicolas Simard, Ambassador of Canada to Ethiopia; Mr. Dawit Afework, Director for North American Affairs at Ethiopia’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and Dr. Asnake Kefale, Associate Professor of Political Science and International Relations at AAU. The discussion centred on “Canada–Ethiopia at 60 and Possible Collaborations in the Evolving World Order,” and also examined “Ethiopia’s Evolving Role in the 21st Century.”

H.E. Ambassador Nicolas Simard framed the milestone as an opportunity to reaffirm Canada’s long-term relationship with Ethiopia and to explore ways to strengthen collaboration in areas of common interest. While acknowledging the progress made so far, he underlined that a relationship sustained across generations must keep expanding particularly in sectors that contribute to sustainable development, social stability, and resilience for future challenges.

The Ambassador’s intervention also reflected Canada’s broader diplomatic approach: strengthening partnership through dialogue, support for capacity development, and engagement across multiple levels of society.

In his remarks, Mr. Dawit Afework described Canada–Ethiopia relations as a partnership that has developed over six decades through sustained diplomatic engagement. He said the anniversary should be understood not only as a celebration of past cooperation, but as a platform to identify new forms of collaboration suited to today’s rapidly changing international environment.

He emphasized that as the world order continues to evolve alongside shifting geopolitical dynamics, economic pressures, and global security concerns, countries with shared commitments must adapt by pursuing cooperation that is practical, mutually beneficial, and aligned with contemporary priorities.

Dr. Asnake Kefale linked Ethiopia’s evolving role in the 21st century to wider trends in international relations, highlighting that Ethiopia’s growing regional and global relevance requires deeper and more strategically coordinated engagement with partners.

In that context, the discussion underscored the importance of aligning diplomacy with outcomes ensuring that cooperation supports governance capacity, contributes to development goals, and helps Ethiopia navigate complex regional realities while participating constructively in international mechanisms.

The audience raised concerns and queries related to reinforce a central expectation of the event that the next phase of Canada–Ethiopia cooperation should be structured around outcomes, partnerships, and sustained engagement. They asked how Canada intends to participate in Ethiopia’s development agenda through foreign direct investment, Canada’s perspective on the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), Ethiopia’s increasing engagement with platforms like BRICS, and the issue of Ethiopia’s pursuit of sea access,

Organizers and participants indicated that the discussion would help inform future thinking on partnership priorities, with emphasis on supporting Ethiopia’s evolving role in a dynamic international environment and ensuring that bilateral ties continue to produce benefits for citizens in both countries.



China-Ethiopia Cultural Bridge Strengthens Through Chinese Bridge Competition at Addis Ababa University

The Confucius Institute at Addis Ababa University, in collaboration with the Embassy of China in Ethiopia, hosted the 2026 Chinese Bridge Competition for Foreign College Students in Ethiopia on April 23, 2026, at Ras Mekonnen Hall.

The event brought together university students from across Ethiopia to demonstrate their Chinese language proficiency, cultural understanding, stage performance, and overall competitive skills, highlighting the growing momentum of educational exchange and people-to-people relations between Ethiopia and China.

A total of 19 contestants from different universities participated in the competition. Heran Getachew Gebregiorgis, a junior student from the Department of Chinese Language and Culture, won the grand prize, while Aliya Abdulsemed, a sophomore in the same department, secured first prize. Both students will represent Ethiopia in the global final competition to be held in China.

As part of the annual global competition for college Chinese language learners, the Confucius Institute at Addis Ababa University sent nine participants this year and achieved remarkable results, including one grand prize, one first prize, two second prizes, three third prizes, and two excellence awards.

Speaking at the event, AAU President Dr. Samuel Kifle praised the competition as a strong symbol of the growing partnership between Ethiopia and China.

He further described the competition as a reflection of AAU's vision of "one planet and one people" and "one planet and many colors," where people connect through shared learning, cultural exchange, and mutual understanding.

The competition jury also commended the contestants for their outstanding performance, noting their high level of Chinese language proficiency, confidence, and well-balanced abilities.

In the talent performance segment, students showcased calligraphy, singing, dancing, and traditional arts. The jury highlighted the strong preparation and artistic quality of the performances, noting that they reflected both the richness of Chinese culture and the creativity of Ethiopian youth.

Regarding overall competence, contestants were praised for their confidence, composure, strong stage presence, and resilience under pressure, demonstrating impressive competitive capabilities throughout the event.

The annual Chinese proficiency competition attracted hundreds of spectators, including senior Ethiopian government officials, members of the Chinese diplomatic community, students, and the wider university community.



AAU Hosts Workshop on Ethical Use of AI in Journalism



The School of Media and Communication at Addis Ababa University (AAU) hosted a half-day workshop titled “AI Best Practices for Journalists” on April 1, 2026, at its Media Technology Center. The workshop brought together media professionals and students to explore the responsible integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in news production, with a strong focus on ethics, transparency, and accuracy.

The session featured prominent speakers, including James LeMay, an internationally recognized journalist and media executive known for his work on media technology and AI in journalism. In his presentation, LeMay emphasized the importance of maintaining human oversight in AI-driven newsroom practices, advocating a balanced approach that prioritizes accuracy and credibility over speed.

He outlined key guidelines for journalists using AI tools, stressing that editors must remain actively involved in reviewing AI-generated content to ensure contextual accuracy and prevent errors. He also highlighted the need for clear labeling of AI-assisted or generated content to promote transparency and minimize the risk of misinformation.

LeMay underscored that verification remains a fundamental principle of journalism. He warned that AI systems can produce inaccurate or misleading outputs, making rigorous fact-checking essential before publication. He further noted the importance of safeguarding sensitive information to prevent its misuse in training public AI models, thereby protecting privacy and maintaining public trust.

Addressing ethical considerations, LeMay reiterated that AI should support—not replace—human judgment. He emphasized that journalists retain full responsibility for published content, regardless of whether AI tools are used in the process.

Transparency emerged as a central theme throughout the workshop, with participants encouraged to adopt clear editorial policies on AI usage. According to LeMay, openly communicating how AI is used in news production helps strengthen trust between media institutions and their audiences.

The issue of algorithmic bias was also discussed, with LeMay calling for regular audits of AI systems to detect and mitigate potential biases. He urged media organizations to prioritize fairness and inclusivity by integrating bias monitoring into their editorial workflows.

Adding to the discussion, Dr. Abdulaziz Dino, Assistant Professor and researcher at AAU’s School of Journalism and Communication, highlighted the strategic role of AI in enhancing both efficiency and content quality. He emphasized the importance of preserving human elements such as empathy, cultural understanding, and contextual awareness in AI-assisted journalism.

However, Dr. Abdulaziz cautioned against overreliance on AI in sensitive areas, particularly in legally complex or emotionally nuanced reporting. He noted that such contexts require careful human judgment that AI cannot fully replicate.

The workshop reflects a growing commitment within Ethiopia’s media sector to adopt AI technologies in a responsible and ethically grounded manner. As digital transformation continues to reshape journalism globally, local practitioners are increasingly recognizing the need to pair innovation with strong ethical frameworks.

Overall, the AAU initiative highlighted that while AI offers significant opportunities for improving speed and expanding coverage, the human role remains indispensable. By upholding principles of verification, transparency, accountability, and bias mitigation, journalists can effectively harness AI while maintaining professional integrity and public trust.



Renovated NICU at Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital Inaugurated

The renovation of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital has been successfully completed and officially inaugurated on April 15, 2026. The project was implemented by Doctors with Africa CUAMM with financial support from the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation.

In his remarks, Dr. Samuel Kifle, President of Addis Ababa University, expressed appreciation to the Government of Italy and AICS for their continued support to development initiatives in Ethiopia. He also extended his gratitude to Doctors with Africa CUAMM and all stakeholders for their contributions to the successful completion of the NICU renovation.

Dr. Berhanu Sendek, CEO of the hospital, highlighted that the renovated NICU will significantly enhance the quality of care and improve health outcomes for newborns requiring intensive care. He also thanked the Italian government, AICS, and CUAMM for their commitment to the project.

The Italian Ambassador to Ethiopia, Sem Fabrizi, emphasized the long-standing partnership between Ethiopia and Italy. He expressed his satisfaction with the successful completion of the renovation and acknowledged the collaborative efforts of CUAMM and all partners involved.

Similarly, Michele Morana, Director of AICS, noted that the completion of the project reflects the strong impact of collaborative health initiatives. He commended CUAMM for its continued role in strengthening Ethiopia's health system through various projects.

Delivering a welcome address, Maria Perrella provided an overview of the project titled "Strengthening Neonatology in Ethiopia." She explained that the initiative is being implemented at Suhul General Hospital and Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital with financial support from AICS. She underscored that the NICU renovation is a key component of the project and thanked all partners, including the Italian Embassy and the Ministry of Health, for their support.

According to Worku Nigussa, the project aims to improve access to and the quality of essential and advanced neonatal care services in the two hospitals. Its ultimate goal is to contribute to reducing neonatal mortality.

The renovation works included upgrades to electrical systems, floors, walls, ceilings, and doors; improvements to medical gas supply systems; and enhancements to water supply and sanitation facilities to ensure uninterrupted service delivery. Approximately 27.6 million birr was invested in the renovation and equipping of the NICU alone.

Dr. Asrat Dimtse, Head of the NICU, expressed her satisfaction with the transformation achieved through the partnership. She noted that the unit has evolved significantly and is now better positioned to provide high-quality neonatal care. She thanked CUAMM, AICS, the Ministry of Health, and all partners for their dedication and collaboration.

"These changes are not just infrastructural improvements; they are life-saving interventions. Today, we are in a much better position to protect and save the lives of our most vulnerable patients," she said.





Breaking the Mold: International Conference Explores De-Hegemonizing Academic Publishing

The Department of Linguistics and Philology at Addis Ababa University, in collaboration with University of Cologne, hosted a three-day international conference at the university's main campus under the theme "De-monopolizing and De-hegemonizing Academic Publishing."

The conference brought together scholars and practitioners from Europe, North America, Latin America, and across Africa to explore inclusive approaches to academic publishing. Discussions focused on expanding opportunities for publishing research in African languages, particularly Ethiopian languages, amid the continued dominance of major global languages such as English, French, and German.

Professor Zelalem Leyew of the Department of Linguistics and Philology noted that academic publishing has long been shaped by a preference for dominant international languages, often sidelining African linguistic scholarship. He emphasized that the conference aims to identify practical and research-based strategies to promote the publication of scholarly work in African languages and ensure broader accessibility of knowledge.

Dr. Yekoyealem Dessie, Dean of the College of Education and Language Studies, highlighted that global knowledge production has historically been influenced by Euro-American perspectives, contributing to structural imbalances in academic representation. He underscored the importance of creating more inclusive and equitable publishing systems that recognize diverse voices and knowledge traditions.

Dr. Yekoyealem further stressed that efforts to de-hegemonize academic publishing should focus on strengthening journals, publishing houses, and knowledge platforms in the Global South. He noted that these platforms must be recognized as credible and rigorous contributors to global scholarship, rather than being treated as peripheral alternatives.

The conference concluded with a shared commitment among participants to advance more inclusive, multilingual, and equitable academic publishing practices.





"Navigating New Frontiers: Dr. Brook Lakew Inspires Youth Future Scientists at Addis Ababa University"

On April 22, 2026, Dr. Brook Lakew, a distinguished NASA space scientist, delivered a public lecture to a group of students from the Natural Sciences department at Addis Ababa University. His presentation was titled "Exploring the Solar System: Missions, Discoveries, and Frontiers."

Dr. Brook Lakew, who serves as an associate director in the Planning and Research and Development Division within the Solar System Exploration Division at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, discussed his extensive tenure at NASA's space research facility. He emphasized that introducing young university students to the research initiatives underway at NASA's space research station could significantly benefit their future professional endeavors.

Dr. Brook addressed the audience on the public lecture crafted to inspire young individuals to consistently engage with current news regarding developments and breakthroughs in space exploration, advocating for a focus on research rather than consuming trivial news about conflicts, displacement, or violence.

He mentioned that the Lunar Exploration Task Force, which had been inactive for five decades, has been reactivated to operate on a global level. This resurgence is driven by the hypothesis that water may exist within the shadowed, profound canyons located on the moon's southern hemisphere, which remain untouched by sunlight.

"A comprehensive, long-term research initiative will also take place in the lunar south. If water is discovered in this region, it would allow for the extraction of hydrogen and oxygen for use as a propulsion system or fuel. This fuel could then facilitate travel from the moon to Mars," explained Dr. Brook, a scientist affiliated with NASA.

The Deputy Director of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center's Planning, Research, and Development Division has put forward an excellent initiative to invest in Ethiopia to procure internet services via satellite systems that orbit the Earth, leveraging advancements in space exploration.



"A New Chapter Begins: 121 Future Healers Celebrated at Addis Ababa University White Gown Ceremony"



ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY AND THE RISE OF ACADEMIC DIPLOMACY (CON'T FROM PAGE 2)

Universities and Peacebuilding

Beyond knowledge production, universities also contribute to peacebuilding. Academic collaboration can persist even during periods of political tension, preserving channels of communication when others close. In post-conflict and fragile contexts, universities often serve as spaces where reconciliation, critical dialogue, and institutional rebuilding begin.

For AAU, this role is particularly significant given Ethiopia's complex regional environment and its proximity to continental governance structures. Academic diplomacy becomes not only a tool for international engagement but also for regional stability.

Internationalization at AAU is a reflection of a global reality. Knowledge today is inherently transnational. Research problems do not respect borders, and solutions increasingly require collaboration across them.

As universities continue to evolve into diplomatic actors, their responsibility also grows. They must uphold intellectual integrity, foster inclusive collaboration, and ensure that knowledge serves the public good globally.

In this landscape, Addis Ababa University is well-positioned to deepen its role as a bridge between nations, disciplines, and ideas. Academic diplomacy for AAU is an emerging practice already shaping its partnerships, its research agenda, and its global identity.

On April 17, 2026, Addis Ababa University College of Health Sciences hosted a medical white gown ceremony for 95 medical doctorate students and 26 dental doctorate students, totaling 121 clinical year students, in the college auditorium. During the event, it was highlighted that the students had progressed from the laboratory and classroom to the hospital for their practical education.

In her congratulatory address, Dr. Rahel Argaw, the Executive Dean of Addis Ababa University College of Health Sciences, stressed that while the medical profession is held in high regard within the community, the students participating in the white gown ceremony on the day should remain humble, embody a modest demeanor, and serve their patients with unwavering loyalty.

Dr. Rahel said, "You have entered the initial stage where you can show compassion towards patients and deliver suitable and precise answers to all their concerns, inquiries, and uncertainties with remarkable skill."

She encouraged the students to uphold integrity and take responsibility while serving patients, emphasizing the importance of punctuality in their duties, as medicine is a field that demands timeliness.

Dr. Getahun Tarekegn, from the Internal Medicine Department, shared his happiness with the students as they concluded their time in the library and transitioned to working in the patient rooms, where they will face genuine challenges. He advised the students to treat all patients with equal respect and to provide services without any form of discrimination during their professional activities.

Getahun stressed that all clinical students must recognize that negligence is a serious issue that can result in significant patient fatalities, and they should approach patients with the highest level of respect while offering the essential medical solutions to their issues.

"Medical students need to be committed to their patients, showing compassion towards them. The focus of your knowledge and attention should always be on the patient. What sets medicine apart from other fields is that the greatest learning occurs when you engage with the patient and discuss their concerns, so it is crucial to treat the patient with humility."

In conclusion, Dr. Rachel draped a stethoscope around the students' necks, and the students recited the oath, marking the end of the event.



Honoring a Legacy: Addis Ababa University Marks 75th Anniversary of Korean War Veterans

Addis Ababa University hosted a commemorative program marking the 75th Anniversary of the Korean War Veterans (Kagnew Shaleqa) under the theme, “Kagnew Shaleqa: Historical Memory, Military Diplomacy and Peacebuilding,” at the historic Ras Mekonnen Hall on April 30, 2026.

In his opening remarks, Professor Mathewos Ensermu, Head of the Presidential Office at AAU, stated that the gathering was organized to honor the Ethiopian soldiers who courageously served during the Korean War and stood for peace, justice, unity, and human dignity.

Professor Mathewos emphasized that the sacrifice and discipline demonstrated by the Kagnew Battalion became a lasting symbol of Ethiopia’s commitment to global peace and international solidarity.

“Your legacy is the pride of Ethiopia, the pride of the Republic of Korea, and the pride of all nations that have stood together for peace, justice, and unity,” he said. “Your courage reminds us that when nations unite for noble causes, humanity advances.”

He further noted that the service of the Kagnew veterans strengthened the historic ties between Ethiopia and South Korea, adding that the relationship continues to flourish through diplomacy, education, economic cooperation, and people-to-people engagement.

“H.E. Ambassador Kang Jung, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Ethiopia, also highlighted the enduring friendship forged through the sacrifices of Ethiopian troops during the Korean War.

The beautiful relationship established in the 1950s has grown into a dynamic and forward-looking partnership,” Ambassador Kang Jung stated. “Today, Korea and Ethiopia cooperate in areas such as development, trade and investment, education, digital transformation, agriculture, public health, and capacity building.”

The commemorative event brought together Korean War veterans, representatives of the Korean War Veterans Association, senior Ethiopian military officials, families of veterans, senior university leaders, and invited guests.

The program concluded with a renewed commitment to preserving the historical legacy of the Kagnew veterans and strengthening the longstanding friendship between Ethiopia and the Republic of Korea.



Dr. Addis Simachew Ashenef

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Transforming Leather Quality Through Microbial-Free Curing Technology

A research team led by Dr. Addis Simachew Ashenef from Addis Ababa University, in collaboration with Prof. Amare Gessesse of the Botswana International University of Science and Technology, has developed an innovative solution aimed at improving the quality of leather production. The technology focuses on a simple but critical stage in the leather value chain: the preservation of animal hides and skins before tanning. In many leather-producing regions, including Ethiopia, one of the persistent challenges is a defect known as “red heat” damage, locally referred to as የቆዳ መቅለት/መቃጠል. This problem occurs when salt-loving microorganisms known as halophiles grow on salt preserved hides and skins during storage. The microbial activity leads to discoloration, collagen degradation, and ultimately a significant reduction in leather quality. As a result, large economic losses are incurred, and the competitiveness of leather products in international markets is weakened.

To address this challenge, the researchers developed a microbial-free curing salt designed to prevent the growth of these halophilic microorganisms. The idea is simple yet powerful: by improving the quality of the salt used in preservation, the entire downstream leather production process can be significantly enhanced.

The effectiveness of this innovation has been demonstrated through both laboratory and pilot-scale studies. In the laboratory, the treated curing salt showed strong inhibitory effects against the microorganisms responsible for red heat damage. Building on these results, pilot-scale trials were conducted using sheep skins stored for four months under real-world conditions. After standard tanning processes, a clear difference emerged.



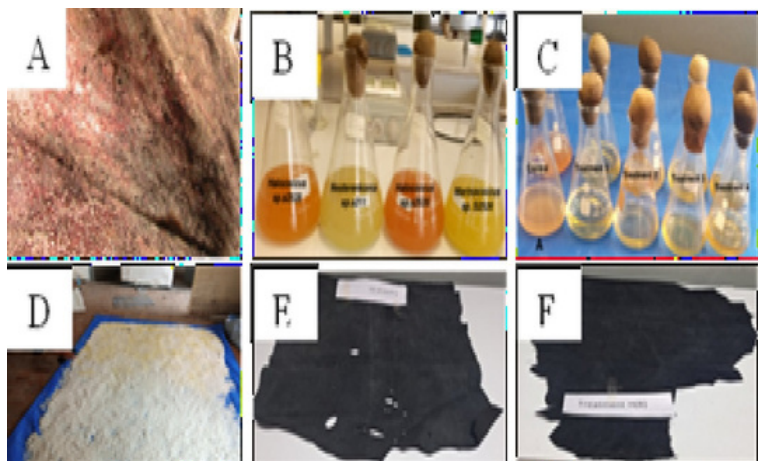
Skins preserved with the treated salt consistently produced high-quality leather graded between I and III, while those preserved using conventional salt mostly resulted in low-quality Grade V leather.

These findings provide strong evidence that the technology can significantly improve leather quality and reduce losses caused by microbial spoilage.

Although the innovation has reached a promising pilot stage, further steps are needed to translate it into widespread industrial use. The researchers emphasize the need for investment in large-scale production of the microbial-free curing salt, development of effective distribution and market systems, and stronger integration across the leather value chain. In addition, further field validation, training, and partnerships with industry stakeholders will be essential to ensure successful adoption.

If fully scaled, this innovation has the potential to bring transformative benefits to the leather sector. It could enhance the quality and export value of Ethiopian leather, reduce economic losses, and support a wide range of stakeholders, from local hide collectors to tanneries and exporters.

This research represents an important step toward a more sustainable and competitive leather industry, where simple microbial control strategies can translate into major economic and industrial gains.



APRIL'S ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: PROFESSOR SEBSEBE DEMISSEW – BRIDGING BIODIVERSITY, CULTURE, AND ACADEMIC DIPLOMACY



Few scholars embody the spirit of this month's AAU Connect theme "Academic Diplomacy" more profoundly than Sebsebe Demissew, an internationally respected botanist, educator, and one of Ethiopia's leading voices in biodiversity conservation.

A graduate and longtime faculty member of Addis Ababa University, Prof. Sebsebe's work extends far beyond science alone. Over decades of teaching, research, and international collaboration, he has demonstrated how universities can connect cultures, disciplines, and nations through knowledge. His career is, in many ways, a living example of academic diplomacy in practice.

Prof. Sebsebe has authored and co-authored numerous books and over 200 scientific publications, while mentoring generations of Ethiopian researchers and conservationists. He also served as Executive Director of the Gullele Botanic Garden and contributed extensively to global biodiversity policy through international scientific organizations.

His outstanding contributions to science and conservation have earned him prestigious international recognitions, including the Kew International Medal, the José Cuatrecasas Medal for Excellence in Tropical Botany, the Linnean Medal in Botany, and election as a Foreign Member of the Royal Society in 2018.

One of his most visionary ideas is the proposed Abrahamic Botanic Garden within the Gullele Botanic Garden in Addis Ababa. Inspired through collaboration with UNESCO specialists, the project seeks to create a unique botanical space featuring plant species mentioned in the holy books of the Abrahamic faiths, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism.

The garden is envisioned as a space where environmental education and cultural heritage meet. It highlights the idea that plants are not only ecological resources, but also part of shared human narratives that transcend geography, religion, and history.

Prof. Sebsebe's academic legacy is also deeply rooted in large-scale scientific collaboration. Through his leadership of the Ethiopian Flora Project, he contributed to the documentation of thousands of plant species across Ethiopia and Eritrea, while helping to strengthen the National Herbarium at AAU into a major center for plant research and identification. This work has supported generations of students and researchers in botany, ecology, pharmacy, and related fields.

Beyond research, his long academic career at AAU has been marked by sustained engagement in teaching and mentorship, contributing to the development of a growing community of scientists in Ethiopia and across the region.

As an alumnus of AAU, he represents the university's long-standing tradition of producing scholars who contribute not only to national development but also to global scientific knowledge. His career reflects the strength of AAU's academic foundation in shaping leaders who remain closely connected to the institution while advancing their fields internationally.

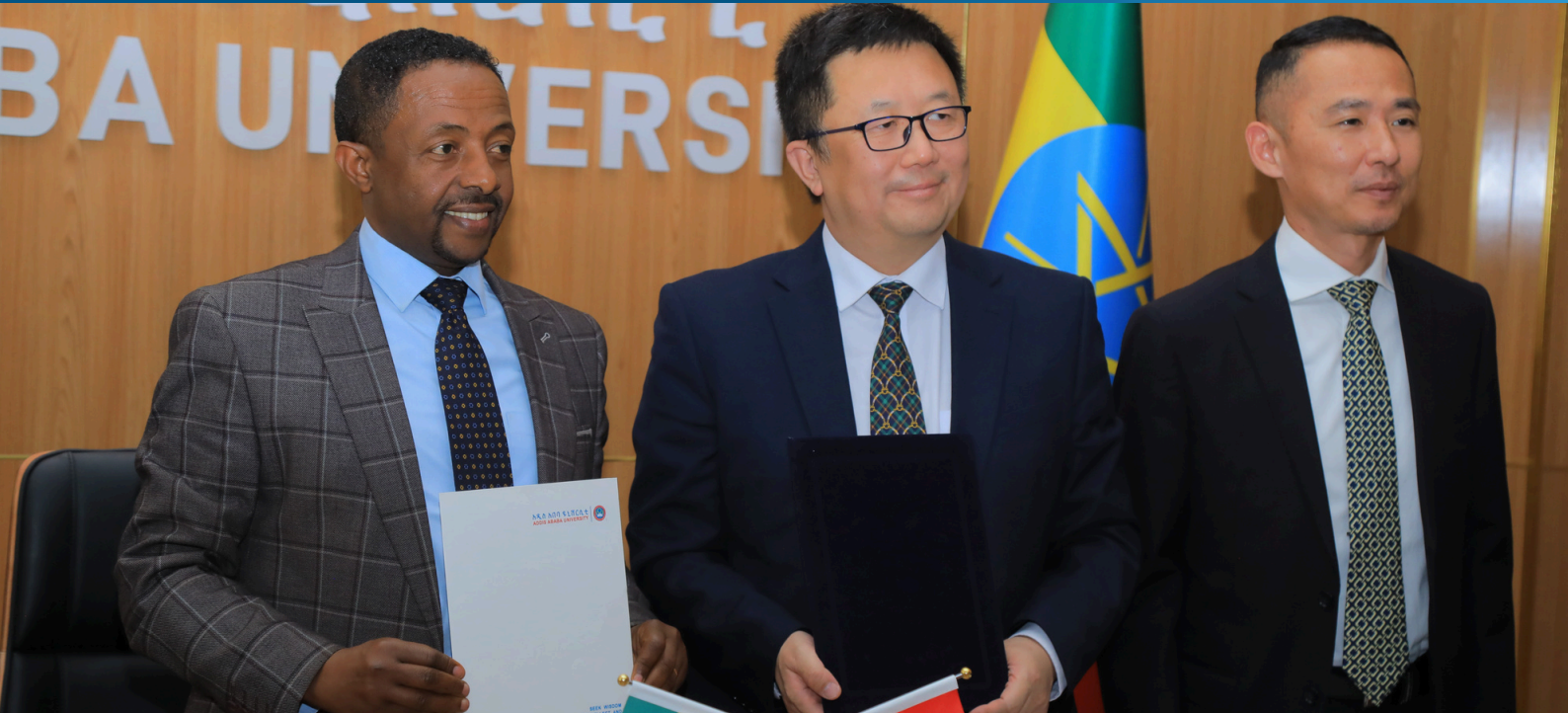
He also continues to embody the role of the engaged alumnus returning to the university as a mentor, academic leader, and contributor to institutional growth. His journey illustrates how AAU alumni remain integral to the university's intellectual community long after graduation, strengthening its academic culture across generations.

Through his scientific and institutional contributions, Sebsebe Demissew exemplifies how academic work can extend beyond the laboratory and classroom linking science, culture, and international cooperation in ways that reflect the spirit of academic diplomacy.



CHINA–AFRICA INSTITUTE–AAU CHINA–AFRICA RESEARCH CENTER: ADVANCING ACADEMIC DIPLOMACY

PARTNER OF THE MONTH



Addis Ababa University continues to strengthen its role as a leading platform for academic diplomacy through the launch of new strategic international collaborations that connect Africa to global knowledge networks. A key milestone this April is the signing of a cooperation agreement between AAU and the China–Africa Institute to establish the China–Africa Institute–AAU China–Africa Research Center in Addis Ababa.

The agreement was signed in Ethiopia’s capital, widely recognized as Africa’s diplomatic hub, bringing together AAU and one of China’s leading research institutions. The initiative aims to deepen collaboration in joint academic research, talent development, and cultural and academic exchange.

The establishment of the Center highlights AAU’s growing recognition as a trusted academic partner and a convener of international knowledge platforms. It reinforces the university’s Pan–African identity while also expanding its global academic engagement. By hosting the Center, AAU strengthens its position at the intersection of African scholarship and global research collaboration, where knowledge production increasingly intersects with diplomacy and international cooperation.

The China–Africa Research Center will focus on joint academic research, talent development, and academic exchange, bringing together scholars, researchers, and practitioners to work on shared development priorities. These include areas such as economic transformation, governance, technology, and regional integration. Through these activities, the Center is expected to contribute not only to academic outputs but also to practical knowledge that informs policy and development pathways in both regions.

The agreement also introduces structured coordination mechanisms and an annual work plan to ensure continuity, sustainability, and measurable impact. This framework is intended to support long–term collaboration and ensure that the Center remains a dynamic space for innovation and knowledge co–creation.

More broadly, this partnership further positions Addis Ababa University as a bridge institution in global academic diplomacy. It reflects the growing role of universities as actors in international engagement, where they contribute not only through teaching and research, but also by creating spaces for dialogue, trust–building, and cooperation across borders. In hosting this Center, AAU continues to expand its contribution to inclusive global knowledge systems while amplifying African perspectives in international research conversations.

Ultimately, this initiative demonstrates how academic partnerships can evolve beyond formal agreements into sustained relationships that advance both knowledge production and international understanding. It is another step in AAU’s ongoing commitment to academic diplomacy in practice, where universities serve as bridges between nations, ideas, and people.



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