

Pakistan-Ethiopia Ties: Unlocking New Avenues for Economic and Diplomatic Collaboration

By
Areeba Arif Khan
Research Associate

Centre for Afghanistan, Middle East & Africa (CAMEA), ISSI

Edited by
Amina Khan

March 06, 2025

(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)



In recent years, the relationship between Pakistan and Ethiopia has made significant strides forward. Marked by political, economic, and cultural collaboration, the bilateral ties have unlocked new opportunities for growth, partnership, and mutual benefit. Ethiopia, one of Africa's fastest-growing economies, presents immense potential for Pakistani businesses seeking new markets. At the same time, Pakistan's diverse industrial base and geostrategic position offer Ethiopia valuable avenues for trade and investment.

Key Developments and Agreements On January 23, 2025, Ethiopia and Pakistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Addis Ababa for regular bilateral political consultations. The MoU was signed by Ethiopia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Mesganu Arga, and Pakistan's Additional Foreign Secretary Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan. Both sides emphasised the importance of deepening collaboration in key sectors, including agriculture, trade, aviation, technology, and education. Ambassador Mesganu reaffirmed Ethiopia's commitment to South-South cooperation, while Ambassador Hamid Asghar highlighted the critical role played by Ethiopian Airlines direct flight to Karachi in strengthening ties.¹

Pakistan's 'Engage Africa' policy, and Ethiopia's strategic position as a gateway to Africa have paved the way for wide-ranging engagement. A significant outcome of this policy is the upcoming single-

¹ "Ethiopia, Pakistan Sign MoU to Enhance Bilateral Cooperation," ENA (Ethiopian News Agency), January 23, 2025, https://www.ena.et/web/eng/w/eng_5838334

country exhibition in Addis Ababa, scheduled for May 2025. Organized by Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce and Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), the event aims to connect Pakistani businesses with Ethiopia's markets, unlocking access to the African continent's 1.4 billion consumers. This initiative will be preceded by seminars designed to maximize engagement and foster mutual understanding.²

Enhanced Economic Cooperation Trade and investment have emerged as central pillars of the Pakistan-Ethiopia relationship. Ethiopia's Ambassador to Pakistan Dr. Jamel Beker Abdula, and Pakistan's Finance Minister, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb during a call on in August 2024, explored avenues for economic collaboration. The two sides underscored the importance of financial reforms and stable macroeconomic policies as catalysts for bilateral trade growth. Ethiopia's burgeoning manufacturing sector and Pakistan's expertise in textiles, pharmaceuticals, and agricultural products create a natural synergy for trade partnerships.³

The discussions also touched on educational exchanges and cultural cooperation. Ambassador Abdula proposed initiatives such as student exchange programs, and scholarships to deepen ties and enhance people-to-people connections. Pakistan's Virtual University and Allama Iqbal Open University are already offering online education to Ethiopian students equipping them with skills to thrive in a competitive global environment.

Connectivity and Regional Integration Direct flights between Karachi and Addis Ababa by Ethiopian Airlines in May 2023 have been instrumental in fostering closer ties. This connectivity facilitates not only trade but also cultural and academic exchanges. The Pakistan-Ethiopia Business Forum held in 2023 brought together over 150 representatives from diverse industries including pharmaceuticals, textiles, food products, and tourism. The signing of the MoU between the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce further cemented this collaboration.

Ethiopia's engagement with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Pakistan's experience with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) offer valuable lessons for both nations. By sharing expertise in infrastructure development, energy projects, and special economic zones, Pakistan and Ethiopia can strengthen their economic collaboration and promote regional integration. Ethiopia's

² "Ethiopia, Pakistan to Collaborate on Single Country Exhibition," The Express Tribune, January 23, 2025, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2512776/ethiopia-pakistan-to-collaborate-on-single-country-exhibition>

³ "Pakistan and Ethiopia Agree on Initiatives to Forge Stronger Ties," The Express Tribune, August 2024, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2484709/pakistan-and-ethiopia-agree-on-initiatives-to-forge-stronger-ties>

renewable energy potential aligns with Pakistan's energy needs, presenting opportunities for sustainable development.

Healthcare and Research Collaboration Healthcare has emerged as another promising area of cooperation. Ethiopia's advancement in disease prevention and research, coupled with Pakistan's pharmaceutical and surgical expertise, can lead to significant breakthroughs. In November 2024, discussions between Ethiopian Ambassador Dr. Jamel Beker Abdula and Coordinator to Prime Minister on National Health Services on Regulations & Coordination Dr. Malik Mukhtar Ahmed Bharath was held on fostering collaboration in public health initiatives.⁴ The meeting primarily centred on global health security, institutional linkages, and collaborative research on the prevention and treatment of communicable diseases, including pandemics and outbreaks. Discussions also emphasized medical and allied health professional education opportunities for Ethiopian students in Pakistan and the promotion of medical tourism. This partnership in healthcare and research aims to enhance healthcare access and expertise for citizens of both countries.⁵ Moreover, Ethiopia's state-of-the-art Centre for Disease Prevention presents opportunities for joint research in health and infectious diseases.

South-South Cooperation: A shared vision Pakistan and Ethiopia's commitment to South-South cooperation forms the foundation of their growing relationship. Both nations share a vision of mutual development, leveraging their respective strengths to address global challenges. Ethiopia's hosting of the African Union (AU) Secretariat positions it as a key player in regional diplomacy, aligning with Pakistan's effort to engage with African nations through its Engage Africa Policy.⁶ The collaboration extends beyond bilateral ties to multilateral forums, where Pakistan and Ethiopia advocate for equitable global development. By pooling resources and expertise, both nations aim to address pressing issues, such as climate change, food security, and sustainable development.

The strengthening of Pakistan-Ethiopia relations marks the beginning of a new era. Through initiatives such as the single-country exhibition, direct flights, and joint research endeavours, the two countries are building a foundation for shared prosperity. Their collaboration in trade, education, healthcare, and infrastructure underscores the potential of South-South cooperation to

⁴ "Ethiopia, Pakistan Agree to Enhance Health Sector Cooperation" The Gulf Observer, November 18, 2024. <https://thegulfobserver.com/ethiopia-pakistan-agree-to-enhance-health-sector-cooperation/>

⁵ "Pakistan, Ethiopia Agree for Cooperation in Education, Science, Technology Sectors," The News International, January 2025, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1251866-pakistan-ethiopia-agree-for-cooperation-in-education-science-technology-sectors>

⁶ Pakistan-Africa Relations: Expanding Trade and Investment Opportunities. Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), August 11, 2023. https://issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/IB_Areeba_Aug_11_2023.pdf.

boost economic growth and regional integration. By capitalizing on historical ties and shared aspirations, this relationship has the potential to leave a lasting impact on citizens and the broader international community. The road ahead is paved with opportunities, and the combined efforts of Pakistan and Ethiopia will undoubtedly lead to a brighter future for both countries.