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**PEACE BUILDING AND PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY: A CASE STUDY OF THE OROMIA NATIONAL REGIONAL STATE WITH NEIGHBORING REGIONAL STATES OF ETHIOPIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

The study examines the peacebuilding and preventive diplomacy initiatives of the Oromia National Regional State with neighboring regional states. It adopts a qualitative research approach, analyzing documents, conducting interviews, and studying case projects. The findings indicate that the Oromia National Regional State has implemented various strategies, including joint commissions, peace and security councils, and economic integration organizations, to foster cooperation and build trust. Positive outcomes include improved cross-border trade, increased economic interdependence, and reduced tensions. However, challenges such as political differences, historical grievances, and resource competition persist. Overall, the study concludes that the Oromia National Regional State's efforts have contributed to cooperation and conflict mitigation. Recommendations include strengthening regional institutions, promoting economic interdependence, and supporting grassroots peacebuilding. Consistent monitoring, evaluation, and learning from past experiences are essential for long-term success.

*Keywords:* International Relations, Peace Building, Diplomacy, Peaceful Coexistence, Oromia, Ethiopia.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Following the end of the Cold War, the international community faced new security challenges that were characterized by internal conflicts and state breakdowns. To effectively address these issues, the United Nations (UN) developed a range of peace intervention measures, including peacemaking, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and preventative diplomacy. These measures aimed to prevent and resolve conflicts, promote stability, and facilitate the transition from conflict to peace.

Peacemaking involves diplomatic endeavors carried out by the United Nations (UN) and other international entities with the aim of resolving conflicts and facilitating negotiations between opposing parties. It encompasses activities such as mediation, negotiation, and the facilitation of peace accords. Special envoys or mediators are frequently appointed during peacemaking initiatives to actively work towards mediating agreements and fostering dialogue among conflicting parties (Georgieva, 2004).

Peacekeeping entails the authorized deployment of international military, police, and civilian personnel to areas affected by conflict, with the consent of the parties involved. The primary goal of peacekeeping missions is to uphold peace and security safeguard civilian populations, facilitate the implementation of peace agreements, and aid in the reconstruction of institutions and infrastructure in post-conflict settings. Peacekeepers assume a neutral role, serving as a buffer between conflicting parties and working towards the creation of an environment that is favorable to peace (Georgieva, 2004).

Peacebuilding encompasses sustained and extensive endeavors that target the underlying causes of conflicts and strive to establish lasting peace. Its focal points include the reconstruction of institutions, the promotion of reconciliation, the cultivation of a culture of human rights, and the facilitation of socio-economic development. Peacebuilding initiatives typically involve activities such as implementing reforms in governance, restructuring the security sector, undertaking disarmament and demobilization efforts, reintegrating former combatants into society, and advancing principles of justice, truth, and accountability (United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office, n.d.).

Preventative diplomacy pertains to diplomatic endeavors taken in order to prevent the occurrence, escalation, or recurrence of conflicts. It encompasses early engagement and dialogue with relevant parties to proactively identify and address potential sources of tension and conflict. The main objectives of preventative diplomacy are to foster peaceful resolutions, enhance relationships between states, and prevent the emergence or spread of conflicts (United Nations, 1992). Peacemaking and preventative diplomacy are diplomatic strategies that prioritize dialogue, negotiation, and mediation to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts. These approaches underscore the

significance of early engagement with conflicting parties, identifying potential sources of tension, and facilitating peaceful resolutions. By promoting dialogue and building trust among parties, diplomatic efforts contribute to de-escalating conflicts and establishing an environment conducive to peace negotiations.

On the other hand, peacekeeping is a military strategy employed by the UN to uphold peace and security in areas affected by conflict. Peacekeepers, deployed with the consent of involved parties, assume a neutral role, acting as a buffer between conflicting parties and reducing the risk of violence. Their presence fosters a sense of security, safeguards civilians, and supports the implementation of peace agreements. The military dimension of peacekeeping complements diplomatic endeavors by providing a stable environment for peacebuilding activities.

Likewise, peacebuilding encompasses developmental strategies that address the underlying causes of conflicts and promote sustainable peace. It encompasses efforts to rebuild institutions, promote good governance, and support socio-economic development, and foster reconciliation and social cohesion. By tackling issues such as poverty, inequality, and limited access to resources, peacebuilding initiatives aim to establish conditions that contribute to long-term stability and prevent the recurrence of conflicts. By and large, these measures peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding represent a comprehensive approach that combines diplomatic, military, and developmental strategies to address security challenges and promote sustainable peace. By integrating these approaches, the UN acknowledges the multidimensional nature of conflicts and strives to tackle their various aspects effectively.

While peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding efforts are aimed at promoting sustainable peace, there are arguments that globalization has led to increased human insecurity in various nations. Scholars such as Vaughan (2003) and Wolfrum (2005) have highlighted several concerns related to globalization and its impact on security. They argue that globalization has contributed to increased defense spending and anti-terrorism measures, as well as the proliferation of the arms market, leading to the spillover of conflicts and a sense of fear and inadequacy. Let me delve into these points in more detail.

Globalization has intensified competition for resources, economic power, and influence among nations. This heightened competition has led to increased defense spending as countries seek to protect their interests and maintain their security in an interconnected world (Vaughan, 2003). Additionally, the rise of transnational threats such as terrorism has prompted nations to invest more in anti-terrorism measures and security apparatus to safeguard their populations and counter potential risks (Wolfrum, 2005).

The unregulated arms market that emerged alongside globalization has contributed to the proliferation of weapons and their availability to various actors, including non-state actors and groups engaged in conflicts. This has increased the likelihood of conflicts spilling over borders and exacerbating regional tensions (Wolfrum, 2005). The easy accessibility of weapons can fuel violence, prolong conflicts, and lead to higher levels of human insecurity. Others argue that globalization has also created an interconnected world where the impacts of conflicts in one region can be felt globally. This interconnectedness, coupled with media coverage, has amplified the perception of insecurity and fear among populations. Individuals and nations may feel vulnerable and inadequately equipped to address emerging security challenges, leading to a heightened sense of insecurity (Vaughan, 2003).

It is important to note that these arguments do not negate the importance of peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding efforts. Rather, they highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of security challenges in the context of globalization. While these measures aim to address conflicts and promote sustainable peace, the dynamics of globalization can complicate these efforts and contribute to increased human insecurity in certain contexts.

In post-conflict settings, peacebuilding interventions play a crucial role in addressing the root causes of conflicts. They focus on addressing grievances, promoting social justice, and rebuilding trust among communities (Paris, 2020). By fostering inclusive governance and promoting equitable access to resources and opportunities, peacebuilding interventions aim to address the structural factors that contribute to conflict and prevent their recurrence. Moreover, peacebuilding efforts emphasize the importance of reconciliation and healing processes. These processes seek to address the psychological and

emotional wounds inflicted by the conflict, promote understanding and forgiveness, and lay the groundwork for social cohesion and sustainable peace (Lederach, 2019). By promoting dialogue and fostering a culture of peace, peacebuilding interventions contribute to building trust and cooperation among conflicting parties.

Preventive diplomacy, on the other hand, focuses on proactively addressing conflicts before they escalate into violence. It involves diplomatic efforts, such as mediation, early warning systems, and conflict analysis, to identify potential sources of tension and resolve them through peaceful means (United Nations, n.d.). Preventive diplomacy aims to mitigate conflict risks, promote dialogue, and facilitate peaceful resolutions.

The relationship between peacebuilding and preventive diplomacy is closely intertwined. Peacebuilding efforts provide a conducive environment for preventive diplomacy to be effective. By addressing the root causes of conflicts and promoting inclusive institutions, peacebuilding creates a foundation for sustainable peace and reduces the likelihood of violent conflicts (Richmond, 2011). This, in turn, creates an environment where preventive diplomacy can be more successful in preventing the escalation of tensions and addressing emerging conflicts.

Conversely, preventive diplomacy can support peacebuilding by identifying potential conflicts at an early stage and addressing them before they escalate. By engaging with relevant actors and facilitating dialogue, preventive diplomacy contributes to conflict prevention and the promotion of peaceful resolutions. It can also help build trust and cooperation among conflicting parties, which are essential for successful peacebuilding processes (Lund, 2017).

African countries have adopted diverse paths towards democratization and peacebuilding, with some embarking on democratization processes following internal conflicts. An examination of the democratization journeys in various African countries reveals a recurring pattern where peacebuilding precedes democratization, creating a conducive political environment for the establishment of democratic systems. However, external actors also significantly influence Africa's peacebuilding and democratization processes, employing various methods to promote democracy. These methods

encompass diplomatic pressure, imposition, threats of sanctions, and the conditioning of assistance.

Numerous African countries have experienced internal conflicts and subsequently embarked on peacebuilding processes that precede democratization efforts. This sequence allows for the establishment of stability and the resolution of underlying grievances, providing a foundation upon which democracy can flourish (Bratton & van de Walle, 1997). By addressing the root causes of conflicts and fostering social cohesion, peacebuilding efforts contribute to creating an environment conducive to democratic governance.

External actors, such as international organizations and foreign governments, also play a significant role in Africa's peacebuilding and democratization processes. These actors employ various methods to promote democracy on the continent. Diplomatic pressure is often exerted through dialogues, negotiations, and diplomatic channels, encouraging governments to undertake democratic reforms (Murithi, 2020). Additionally, external actors may impose conditions on aid or trade agreements, linking assistance to the implementation of democratic practices (Cheeseman & Fombad, 2019).

Threats of sanctions and other punitive measures are sometimes utilized to incentivize African governments to engage in democratic reforms. The international community may impose targeted sanctions, asset freezes, or travel bans on individuals or governments that hinder democratic progress (Basedau & Stroh, 2019). Such measures aim to exert pressure on governments and encourage them to embrace democratic principles.

Furthermore, external actors often condition their assistance on the adoption of democratic practices. Development aid and financial support are often tied to the implementation of good governance, respect for human rights, and democratic reforms (Mawdsley, 2012). This approach seeks to incentivize African governments to undertake democratic changes by linking their economic and development aspirations to democratic governance.

Ethiopia, like many other African nations, has experienced significant ethnic tensions in recent years. The country is home to a diverse range of ethnic groups, each with its own cultural heritage, language, and identity. The

prominence of ethnicity in Ethiopian politics has led to both necessary and unnecessary competition among ethnic groups, which has at times fueled tensions between them. Ethnicity has played a central role in Ethiopian politics due to historical, social, and economic factors. The country's federal system, established in 1995, grants significant autonomy to regional states based on ethnic lines, which has reinforced the salience of ethnicity in political discourse (Abdi, 2019). This devolution of power along ethnic lines was intended to address historical grievances and ensure representation for all ethnic groups. However, it has also created an environment where competition for political power, resources, and representation among ethnic groups can escalate into tensions.

The necessary competition among ethnic groups arises from the need for fair representation and the recognition of diverse identities in the political sphere. This competition can be positive, as it allows different groups to voice their concerns, protect their interests, and participate in decision-making processes (Kiros, 2017). Ethnic-based parties and movements have emerged to advocate for the rights and aspirations of specific communities. However, the competition can also become unnecessary and potentially divisive when it leads to exclusion, discrimination, or the marginalization of certain ethnic groups. Political rhetoric that exacerbates ethnic divisions, the unequal distribution of resources, and historical grievances can contribute to escalating tensions (de Waal, 2019).

It is important to note that the situation in Ethiopia is complex and dynamic, with multiple factors contributing to ethnic tensions. These tensions can manifest in various forms, including protests, conflicts over resources, and political disputes. Addressing these tensions and promoting peacebuilding requires a comprehensive approach that includes inclusive governance, dialogue, and efforts to address the root causes of grievances (Abdi, 2019). Regional states can act as intermediaries, facilitating dialogue and negotiation between conflicting parties in neighboring regions (Woldemariam, 2019). They can utilize their local knowledge, cultural understanding, and established relationships to promote trust-building and reconciliation processes. By engaging in preventive diplomacy, regional states can proactively address potential conflicts and tensions before they escalate into violence (Murithi, 2017). Furthermore, regional states can collaborate with national and international stakeholders to implement

peacebuilding initiatives and strategies. This cooperation can involve joint efforts in conflict resolution, security sector reform, and the promotion of good governance and human rights (Berhe, 2016).

The purpose of this article is to examine the efforts made by the Oromia Regional State in Ethiopia to promote peacebuilding and engage in preventive diplomacy. The focus is on exploring the experiences and strategies employed by Oromia in order to foster peaceful relations and proactively address potential conflicts.

## **2. MATERIALS AND METHOD**

This study utilized a qualitative research approach, relying on secondary sources such as journals, research papers, and institutional reports. Thematic analysis was conducted on the collected data, aiming to understand the social, cultural, and human experiences related to peacebuilding and preventive diplomacy in the Oromia Regional State. The study also explored the transactive perspective, which emphasizes coexistence, dialogue, and collaboration among diverse stakeholders. This perspective advocates for the active involvement of local actors, communities, and civil society organizations, moving away from top-down approaches. Scholars such as Keeley and Schulz, Lederach, and Burton have contributed to the understanding of the transactive perspective by emphasizing collaborative problem-solving and transforming relationships and structures. Integrating the transactive perspective can address root causes and create conditions for lasting peace.

## **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS**

Peaceful coexistence entails individuals and groups with diverse backgrounds living together harmoniously, while respecting and acknowledging each other's differences. It necessitates mutual respect and recognition of diversity, encompassing the appreciation of various cultural, ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds. This acknowledgment of diversity fosters an inclusive environment where individuals feel accepted and valued (UNESCO, 2013).

Peaceful coexistence requires effectively addressing conflicts and differences in a nonviolent and constructive manner. It entails engaging in dialogue,

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negotiation, and mediation to achieve peaceful resolutions (United Nations, 2015).

By promoting peaceful conflict resolution, peaceful coexistence plays a key role in preventing violence and fostering sustainable peace within communities (Galtung, 1969). Peaceful coexistence acknowledges that diversity can be a valuable asset, contributing to the strength and enrichment of societies. It recognizes that diverse perspectives and experiences can generate innovative solutions, enhance social cohesion, and drive societal progress (European Commission, 2008). Embracing diversity creates opportunities for mutual learning, understanding, and collaboration. Peaceful coexistence is strongly connected to the advancement and safeguarding of human rights and social justice. It entails guaranteeing equal rights and opportunities for everyone, regardless of their background, while also addressing systemic inequalities and discrimination. Through the promotion and protection of human rights and social justice, peaceful coexistence actively contributes to the establishment of fair and inclusive societies.

The Oromia Regional State in Ethiopia is indeed the largest region in terms of land area and population. It encompasses approximately 34% of the country's land area and is home to over 37 million people. Oromia shares borders with nearly all other regions of Ethiopia, with the exception of Tigray. However, it has experienced various boundary disputes with neighboring regions, notably Somali, Amhara, and Benshangul Gumuz.

The border dispute between Oromia and Somali Regional State revolves around delineating the boundary between the two regions. The conflicts have arisen due to issues such as resource allocation, land ownership, and ethnic tensions among the Oromo and Somali communities residing along the border (Addis Standard, 2018). Oromia has also encountered boundary disputes with the Amhara Regional State, primarily focused on contested areas like Welkait, Tsegede, and Raya, which are claimed by both regions. These conflicts involve conflicting historical narratives, ethnic tensions, and political demands for self-determination (Africa News, 2020).

Oromia has encountered boundary disputes with the Benshangul Gumuz Regional State, particularly in areas along the border such as Kamashi and Assosa zones. These disputes have involved conflicts over land ownership,

control of resources, and ethnic tensions between the Oromo and Benshangul Gumuz communities (Ethiopian Human Rights Project, 2019). These boundary disputes have been intricate and multifaceted, encompassing historical, political, economic, and ethnic factors. They have resulted in tensions, sporadic clashes, and challenges to the peaceful coexistence of the communities residing in these regions. Resolving these disputes necessitates extensive dialogue, negotiation, and the participation of relevant stakeholders to reach mutually acceptable solutions.

Establishing genuine, long-term local governance requires the promotion of democracy and popular engagement to gain legitimacy. Local ownership and democratic engagement are necessary for new political formations to gain legitimacy, even during transitional periods. Without legitimacy, governance cannot be effective, and services cannot be delivered fairly. Oromia is currently transitioning towards "local ownership" and "bottom-up governance" away from national peacekeeping administration. This governance structure emphasizes short-termism and focuses on four policy accomplishments for peace builders: recruitment, coordination, accountability, and exit. Local organizations function as "agents" of "primary states," making them more accountable to the local societies they interact with. This approach enables peacebuilders to respond effectively to the real needs of the state or community, resulting in successful participation. The Oro-Amara, Oro-Somali, Oro-Benshangul Gumuz, Oro-Gambela, and Oro-Sidama relationships are examples of this concept in practice.

The transactive perspective emphasizes the active involvement of local actors, communities, and civil society organizations in peacebuilding, deviating from traditional top-down methods. It acknowledges that peace is a multifaceted process that necessitates the participation and ownership of those directly affected by the conflict. The transactive perspective seeks to facilitate dialogue, trust-building, and inclusive decision-making processes, which are vital for establishing sustainable peace. In the specific case of the Oro-Amara, Oro-Somali, Oro-Benshangul Gumuz, Oro-Gambela, and Oro-Sidama relationships, the transactive perspective can be implemented through various strategies. These strategies include creating platforms for dialogue where representatives from different communities can openly communicate, understand each other's concerns, and develop shared visions for peaceful coexistence.

Another approach is the establishment of community-led conflict resolution mechanisms that enable disputing parties to address their differences through mediation, negotiation, and reconciliation. These mechanisms help address grievances, foster understanding, and build trust among conflicting groups. Additionally, encouraging collaborative development projects that involve members from different communities working together towards shared goals can promote interdependence, mutual benefits, and positive interactions, ultimately strengthening relationships and fostering peaceful coexistence. Lastly, ensuring that decision-making processes are inclusive and representative, giving all stakeholders a voice in shaping policies, resource allocation, and development initiatives, is essential. This approach instills a sense of ownership, reduces exclusion, and encourages cooperation among diverse communities.

The promotion of democracy and popular engagement is widely recognized as essential for establishing genuine and long-term local governance (Abbink, J& de Bruij, (2014). This is because democratic participation and local ownership are crucial for new political formations to gain legitimacy, even during transitional periods. Without legitimacy, governance is likely to be ineffective, and the delivery of services may be compromised. The concept of local ownership emphasizes empowering local communities and organizations to take charge of their own governance and decision-making processes (The Carter Center, 2018). It recognizes that local actors have a better understanding of the specific needs and aspirations of their communities, and their active participation is crucial for the success and legitimacy of governance structures.

Bottom-up governance refers to an approach that involves grassroots participation, where decisions are made at the local level and then aggregated upward. This approach aims to ensure that the voices and perspectives of local communities are effectively represented in the governance process (Kebede, 2016). This shift recognizes the importance of promoting democracy and popular engagement to establish genuine, long-term local governance. It acknowledges that legitimacy is essential for effective governance and fair service delivery. The transition emphasizes empowering local communities and organizations to take charge of their own governance, ensuring their active participation and representation in decision-making

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processes. This move towards local ownership and bottom-up governance aims to align governance structures with the specific needs and aspirations of the Oromia region.

To bring about a governance shift towards peacebuilding and preventive diplomacy, it is essential to establish institutions and mechanisms that foster social cohesion and enable peaceful conflict resolution. This is crucial for achieving peaceful coexistence and constructing a stable and harmonious society. This process entails the development of inclusive policies and laws that safeguard the rights of all individuals, irrespective of their backgrounds, while also promoting intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding. However, achieving peaceful coexistence can be challenging, particularly in contexts marked by deep-seated ethnic, religious, or political divisions. Such circumstances often necessitate the involvement of multiple stakeholders, including government bodies, civil society organizations, and local communities, to establish effective conflict resolution mechanisms and foster trust among diverse groups.

In his study, Richmond (2011) provides valuable insights into the importance of institutions and mechanisms in promoting peace and political stability in conflict-affected societies. The author emphasizes that these institutions and mechanisms play a crucial role in establishing a peaceful and orderly environment. Furthermore, Richmond highlights the necessity of adopting inclusive policies, enacting protective laws, and fostering intercultural dialogue to foster peaceful coexistence. These findings underscore the significance of creating a comprehensive framework that addresses the diverse needs and perspectives of all individuals in order to achieve sustainable peace and harmonious societal relations. Additionally, international organizations such as the United Nations report explore the involvement of institutions and stakeholders in peacebuilding efforts and underscore the significance of inclusive governance and mechanisms for resolving conflicts. It highlights the importance of establishing a framework that actively includes diverse actors and ensures their participation in decision-making processes. The report emphasizes the need for effective conflict resolution mechanisms that can address the underlying causes of disputes and contribute to sustainable peace (United Nations, 2009).

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#### 4. MEASURES THAT OROMIA REGIONAL STATE HAS TAKEN

The Oromia Regional State has taken proactive measures to foster peaceful coexistence with neighboring regional states through the implementation of diverse peacebuilding and preventive diplomacy strategies. These strategies encompass a range of approaches, including the promotion of dialogue and negotiation, the establishment of economic interdependence, the strengthening of regional institutions, and the support of community-level peacebuilding initiatives. Through the deployment of these strategies, the regional government has achieved notable success in preventing the escalation of conflicts and cultivating harmonious relations with neighboring states. The subsequent sections will delve into specific instances that highlight the Oromia Regional Government's effective peacebuilding endeavors with neighboring regional states.

Promoting dialogue and negotiation as effective strategies for resolving disputes and fostering cooperation is widely recognized in the literature on peacebuilding and conflict resolution (Fisher & Ury, 1991; Bercovitch & Jackson, 2009; Lederach, 1997; Ramsbotham, Woodhouse, & Miall, 2011). Engaging in dialogue and negotiation enables conflicting parties to address grievances, identify common ground, and work towards peaceful coexistence. The specific example mentioned, involving the Oromia Regional State signing a peace agreement with the Somali Regional State in 2018 and organizing a peace conference in 2020, demonstrates the regional government's commitment to employing dialogue and negotiation to resolve conflicts and promote harmonious relations with neighboring regions. These efforts demonstrate the Oromia Regional State's dedication to promoting dialogue and negotiation as a strategy for building peaceful coexistence with neighboring regions.

A peace agreement is a formal agreement signed between conflicting parties, aimed at ending the conflict and establishing peace. These agreements can take various forms and address a range of issues related to the conflict, such as security arrangements, power-sharing, and human rights protection (Bercovitch, J., & Gartner, S. S. (2011); Paris, R. (2004); Bell, C., & O'Rourke, C. (2007) and Walter, B. F. (2002)). Negotiations or other forms of dialogue between the conflicting parties, facilitated by third-party mediators or negotiators, often result in peace agreements. The negotiation process can be complex and lengthy, requiring multiple rounds of negotiations and

involving various stakeholders. After signing, peace agreements are typically implemented through measures such as deploying peacekeeping forces, establishing transitional institutions, and implementing legal and institutional reforms.

The Oromia Regional Government has implemented strategies aimed at fostering economic interdependence with neighboring states as a means of promoting peace and stability. According to a report by Xinhua (2021), the government has entered into agreements with neighboring states to jointly develop infrastructure projects, including roads and rail links. The objective of these initiatives is to enhance economic cooperation and integration among neighboring states, which can contribute to reducing tensions and fostering stability in the region. The approach of creating economic interdependence is a strategy employed in peacebuilding and preventive diplomacy. It involves nurturing economic cooperation and integration among neighboring states as a mechanism to mitigate tensions and prevent conflicts. Economic interdependence can be established through various means, such as trade agreements, collaborative infrastructure endeavors, and investments in local communities. By promoting economic interdependence, neighboring states become more interconnected, thereby diminishing the likelihood of conflicts and encouraging cooperation. Moreover, economic interdependence can yield broader benefits, including economic growth, poverty reduction, improved access to healthcare and education, and reduced inequality. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the creation of economic interdependence alone may not be sufficient to ensure sustainable peace. Additional strategies, such as dialogue and negotiation promotion, strengthening regional institutions, and supporting grassroots peacebuilding initiatives, may also be necessary to address the underlying causes of conflicts and establish lasting peace.

The Oromia Regional Government's initiative to promote economic interdependence with neighboring regions through joint infrastructure projects, such as roads and rail links, can have significant implications for peacebuilding and preventive diplomacy. By fostering economic cooperation and connectivity, these initiatives aim to enhance regional integration, improve trade relations, and strengthen relationships among neighboring states. The specific example of signing a memorandum of understanding with

the Somali Regional State in 2019 to construct a 1000km road linking the two regions provides a concrete illustration of these implications.

Joint infrastructure projects play a crucial role in promoting economic interdependence between regions. By improving transportation and connectivity, these projects enable the smooth flow of goods, services, and people, thereby creating favorable conditions for trade, investment, and economic growth. This interdependence brings about mutual benefits, shared prosperity, and a sense of common interests among the participating regions (World Bank, 2017). Moreover, the World Bank highlights that infrastructure initiatives connecting different regions contribute to regional integration by facilitating the movement of people, goods, and services across borders. This integration fosters cultural exchange, cooperation, and collaboration, leading to the development of social ties, understanding, and unity among diverse communities (World Bank, 2017).

Collaborative infrastructure projects have the potential to strengthen relationships between regions. When regions engage in joint planning, implementation, and management of such projects, they develop a shared sense of responsibility and mutual trust. Regular interactions and cooperation in infrastructure development foster positive inter-regional relationships (Nolte et al., 2018). Furthermore, economic interdependence and regional integration resulting from these projects contribute to conflict prevention. By promoting interconnectedness and interdependency, joint infrastructure initiatives create incentives for peaceful relations and cooperation. They reduce the likelihood of conflicts arising from factors such as economic disparities, competition over resources, or isolation (Reuveny & Li, 2003).

The Oromia Regional Government has implemented various initiatives to enhance economic cooperation with neighboring states. For example, in 2019, a trade agreement was signed with the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Regional State to facilitate cross-border trade. Investments have also been made in local communities of neighboring states to foster economic growth. One notable project is the establishment of a fruit processing plant in the Afar Regional State in 2020, which is expected to create employment opportunities and stimulate economic development in the region.

The Oromia Regional Government has prioritized strengthening regional institutions, including the establishment of a peace and security bureau, to support peacebuilding and cooperation. This strategy promotes coordination, conflict resolution, and economic cooperation with neighboring states. Strengthening regional institutions fosters collaboration, addresses shared challenges, and builds trust among neighboring states. However, it is important to recognize that enhancing regional institutions alone may not be enough for sustainable peace. Additional strategies such as promoting economic interdependence, supporting grassroots peacebuilding, and encouraging dialogue and negotiation are also crucial.

As part of its peacebuilding and preventive diplomacy efforts with neighboring states, the Oromia Regional Government has implemented various initiatives to strengthen regional institutions. According to ReliefWeb (2019), the government has established joint commissions with neighboring states to promote communication and cooperation. For example, in 2019, a joint technical committee was formed with the Somali Regional State to address cross-border issues related to trade, security, and infrastructure. The Ethiopian Herald (2018) and Ethiopia News Agency (2021) report that the Oromia Regional Government has taken several measures to promote peacebuilding and conflict resolution. This includes the establishment of regional peace and security councils and a peace and security bureau to coordinate peacebuilding efforts. Additionally, economic integration organizations have been formed with neighboring states to foster economic interdependence and cooperation. One notable example is the 2021 agreement signed with the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Regional State to establish an economic integration organization focused on joint investment and development initiatives.

The Oromia Regional Government supports community-level peacebuilding initiatives, including the establishment of peace committees and inter-ethnic dialogue. These initiatives aim to address local conflicts and promote peace. Community-level peacebuilding is an important strategy within the broader framework of peacebuilding and preventive diplomacy. It involves empowering local communities to engage in conflict resolution, establish peace committees, and promote economic development. By fostering collaboration among neighboring communities, tensions can be reduced and

conflicts prevented. Community-level initiatives also address underlying causes of conflict by providing a platform for expressing concerns and working towards their resolution. However, community-level efforts alone may not be sufficient for long-term peace. Additional strategies like economic interdependence, strengthening regional institutions, and promoting dialogue and negotiation are also necessary for sustainable peace.

In its pursuit of peacebuilding and preventive diplomacy, the Oromia Regional Government has implemented various initiatives to support community-level peacebuilding. One notable example is the establishment of a local peace committee in the Guji Zone in 2019, aimed at addressing inter-ethnic conflicts and fostering peace. Moreover, the government has provided support to a women's cooperative in the Borana Zone, promoting entrepreneurship and small business development within the community. The promotion of inter-ethnic dialogue and understanding has also been emphasized through initiatives like community forums and cultural exchange programs in the Harari Regional State.

Efforts to prevent inter-ethnic conflicts and promote peace have also been undertaken between the Oromia and Benishangul Gumuz Regional States. Joint peacebuilding initiatives have been implemented, including the establishment of a joint peace committee focused on identifying root causes of conflicts, fostering inter-ethnic dialogue, and developing conflict resolution strategies. Additionally, joint security operations have been conducted to disarm militias and prevent conflicts in border areas. Both regional governments have also encouraged inter-ethnic dialogue and understanding through cultural exchange programs and community forums. These initiatives reflect a commitment to addressing underlying causes of conflicts and promoting peaceful coexistence between the two regions.

##### **5. SUSTAINANCE OF PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY IN OROMIA NATIONAL REGIONAL STATE**

The preventive diplomacy operations conducted by the region encompass various approaches, including good offices, facilitation, intermediation, conciliation, and judgment. These measures aim to prevent conflicts and promote peaceful resolutions. Additionally, conflict prevention activities involve addressing the root causes of disputes, such as governance issues, social and economic welfare, equality, and resource management.

Strengthening human rights monitoring mechanisms is also crucial in these efforts. These are diplomatic approaches employed to prevent conflicts and facilitate peace processes. Good offices refer to diplomatic initiatives by a neutral third party to facilitate dialogue and negotiations between conflicting parties. Facilitation involves assisting the parties in finding common ground and reaching an agreement. Intermediation refers to the active involvement of a mediator who assists in resolving disputes. Conciliation involves promoting reconciliation and understanding among conflicting parties. Judgment refers to the impartial assessment and resolution of conflicts by a trusted entity (United Nations, 1992).

Conflict prevention efforts focus on identifying and addressing the underlying causes of disputes. This includes improving governance structures and processes to ensure fair and inclusive decision-making. Efforts to enhance social and economic welfare aim to reduce socio-economic inequalities that can fuel conflicts. Promoting equality and addressing issues related to discrimination and exclusion can help prevent tensions. Effective resource management, including equitable distribution and sustainable practices, is crucial for conflict prevention (United Nations, 2015). Monitoring human rights violations and ensuring accountability are vital aspects of conflict prevention. Robust human rights monitoring mechanisms help identify early warning signs of conflicts and provide a basis for preventive action. They contribute to addressing grievances, promoting justice, and deterring potential conflicts (United Nations, 2015).

The specific measures in preventive diplomacy implemented by the region depend on the unique context and initiatives undertaken. To obtain accurate and up-to-date information about the preventive diplomacy measures executed by a particular region, it is advisable to consult official sources, regional organizations, and relevant government reports and publications. These sources can provide detailed insights into the specific actions and strategies employed by the region to prevent conflicts and promote peaceful resolutions.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the Oromia Regional Government has made significant strides in promoting peacebuilding and preventive diplomacy with its neighboring regional states. The government has achieved this through initiatives such as

promoting dialogue, creating economic interdependence, strengthening regional institutions, and supporting community-level peacebuilding efforts. However, there are still challenges that exist, such as deep-seated ethnic, religious, or political divisions, lack of trust, external interference, lack of resources, and difficulty in ensuring meaningful participation of all stakeholders.

Despite these challenges, the Oromia Regional Government remains committed to building a peaceful society by recognizing diversity and resolving conflicts peacefully. The experience of Oromia can serve as a valuable lesson for other regions and countries seeking to promote peacebuilding and preventive diplomacy. Building sustainable peace requires addressing challenges and obstacles through the implementation of effective strategies that prioritize dialogue and negotiation, promote economic interdependence, strengthen regional institutions, and ensure the meaningful participation of all stakeholders.

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