

## Ethiopia-Somaliland Agreement: A Geopolitical Game-Changer in the Horn of Africa

The Ethiopia-Somaliland Agreement, involving a 50-year lease of sea access at Berbera Port, represents a seismic shift in the Horn of Africa's geopolitical landscape. Ethiopia's strategic move to secure a maritime outlet contrasts sharply with Somalia's vehement opposition, citing a violation of its national sovereignty.

- **Strategic Implications for Ethiopia:** As a landlocked nation, Ethiopia's dependency on Djibouti's docks has been costly, with an annual expenditure of \$1.5 billion. This agreement not only alleviates financial burdens but also propels Ethiopia towards establishing a green water navy, marking a significant leap in its quest for maritime emancipation.
- **Somalia's Stance and Regional Tensions:** Somalia perceives the agreement as an indirect endorsement of Somaliland's separatist aspirations, leading to heightened diplomatic tensions and appeals to international bodies like the UN and African Union. Somali leadership, including President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud and Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre, views this deal as a direct threat to Somalia's unity and territorial integrity.
- **Benefits for Somaliland:** Somaliland's gains are multifaceted: formal recognition by Ethiopia enhances its global standing, while a stake in Ethiopian Airlines boosts its economic profile. The Berbera Corridor Project, integral to this deal, promises infrastructure upgrades, bolstering regional trade and connectivity.
- **Impact on the Horn of Africa and Beyond:** The Ethiopia-Somaliland agreement, amidst the volatile Red Sea Region, reflects Ethiopia's strategic intent to gain a foothold in the Gulf of Aden. This deal could potentially alter the balance of power and economics in the Horn of Africa, particularly impacting Somalia in a region fraught with conflicts.