

Covid-19 Task Force:
Q&A on key issues under
Ethiopian law

Updated with tax measures

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Tameru Wondm Agegnehu Law Office in cooperation with BonelliErede prepared this document to assist businesses in addressing key legal issues arising from the Covid-19 pandemic:

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Banking and Liquidity

Question	Answer/points for consideration
Has the government taken measures to ensure liquidity during the Covid-19 outbreak?	The government has instructed the National Bank of Ethiopia to make ETB 15 bn of liquidity available to private banks to provide debt relief and additional loans to customers in need.
Do the measures include allocating foreign currency to businesses?	Due to the ongoing crisis, the government has instructed banks to prioritise allocating foreign currency to businesses that import input materials that will be used to prevent the spread of Covid-19.
Have any restrictions been eased due to the Covid-19 outbreak?	The National Bank of Ethiopia is due to lift the price cap set on flower exporters. Ethiopia's biggest bank, the government-owned Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, is due to increase the amount of money that customers can transfer through mobile banking to encourage them to use less cash. Under the current allowance, customers can transfer a maximum of ETB 200,000 to their own accounts and a maximum of ETB 100,000 to other accounts.

Consumer Protection

Question	Answer/points for consideration
Is a legal framework in place to protect consumers during the Covid-19 outbreak?	Consumers' rights are protected by Trade Competition and Consumers Protection Proclamation No. 813/2013, which tasks the Ministry of Trade and Industry with, among other things: (a) inspecting and taking measures against any acts of hoarding or diverting of goods, and (b) regulating the prices of basic goods.
Has any action been taken since the start of the outbreak?	The Addis Ababa City Administration and the regional governments of Oromia and Amhara have taken measures against various businesses that have refused the sale of and/or hoarded goods because they are expecting prices to increase. Consumer cooperatives are encouraged to take advantage of the tax break they enjoy in order to offer food and health products at or below market prices.
What is expected in the future?	The macro-economic subcommittee of the prime minister's office has instructed the Ministry of Trade and Industry to strengthen existing measures to protect consumers and to continue to take new ones, and to supply basic goods when a shortage occurs.

Employment

Question	Answer/points for consideration
What obligations do employers have in relation to Covid-19?	Employers have a general obligation under Labour Proclamation No. 1156/2019 (“ Labour Proclamation ”) to take the necessary measures to protect the health and safety of their employees.
Can Covid-19 be considered an occupational disease?	Endemics and epidemics are not occupational diseases under the Labour Proclamation, unless the work in question involves combatting them.
Can employers terminate employment contracts or reduce workforces due to the Covid-19 outbreak?	Under normal circumstances, employers must base the termination of an employee’s contract on the employee’s conduct or performance, or on occupational and organisational requirements. Under the Labour Proclamation, an employer has valid grounds to reduce its workforce if it permanently ceases operations, if an employee’s activities permanently cease or if demand for the employer’s products falls to such an extent that it reduces work or profit. However, under the state of emergency proclamation (discussed in detail below), the government has prohibited reducing workforces and terminating employment contracts except for cases governed by a procedure to be set out by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.
Could the Covid-19 outbreak be invoked as a ground to suspend employment contracts?	The Labour Proclamation allows employers to suspend employment contracts during force majeure events or if suspension is required due to financial problems not attributable to the employer in question. The employer must inform the ministry/competent authority in writing about its decision within three days. The ministry then decides whether to approve or decline the suspension. If the ministry/competent authority does not respond within three days from receipt of the employer’s written notice, the suspension is to be considered permitted. The ministry/competent authority fixes the duration of the suspension; however, the suspension must not exceed 90 days. The Labour Proclamation does not define force majeure – but it is defined by Arts. 1792–1793 of the Ethiopian Civil Code, and the definition includes the occurrence of a natural catastrophe. The competent authority normally carries out an investigation to ascertain the existence of a good cause for suspension, but it appears this is not happening during the outbreak. Employers must thus notify the nearest labour and social affairs bureau in writing of their decision, which must mention valid and justifiable grounds for the suspension.

Question	Answer/points for consideration
Have public authorities issued any legal or administrative recommendations?	The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has issued a protocol with recommendations for employers, employees and trade unions to agree on and then tailor to the needs of the organisation in question. The protocol is a non-binding document and must be applied in accordance with the Labour Proclamation, as this is the primary legislation governing labour relationships. The protocol contains the following recommendations: a) Organisations and sectors vary in their ability to withstand and respond to crisis; therefore, employers and employees are recommended to adhere to third-party recommendations in addition to recommendations from within their own organisation/sector. b) Employers should request employees who have not taken their annual leave to take it and allow those who have taken their annual leave to take at least half of next year's, with full pay. c) Employers, employees and trade unions should suspend unfinished negotiations on collective agreements for 12 months. d) Salary increases that have not yet taken effect should remain ineffective for the next 12 months. e) Employers should suspend allowances (for hardship, transport and housing), bonuses, product sampling, commissions and any other payments not considered salary, until the crisis is fully resolved. f) Employers and trade unions should revise previously agreed wage/salary scales and apply them to ensure employers' continuing operation and solvency g) Employers should suspend contracts with non-essential workers, provide them a loan and give them a guarantee letter stating they will return to work when conditions improve. h) Employers' associations and trade unions should collaborate as much as possible to ensure that employers adhere to principles of social responsibility.
Have public authorities recommended any precautionary measures?	The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs recommends that employers, employees and safety officers/committees take the following precautions: 1. Employers must: a) provide water and protective equipment; b) provide masks that cover workers' mouths and noses and explain how to use them correctly; c) establish a committee led by the owner/manager, a trade union member and an employee; d) abolish practices that involve working in close quarters, or introduce new ways of working together;

Question	Answer/points for consideration
	e) ensure company vehicles used to transport employees are disinfected, avoid having too many employees in one vehicle and ensure vehicle windows are open during commutes; f) provide employees information on safety and preventive measures in their language through posters, audio and visual materials; g) extend canteen opening hours (for employers that have one) to reduce close contact between employees; h) avoid in-person meetings and use phone calls and online communication as much as possible; i) provide self-isolation areas for employees that show Covid-19 symptoms until they can be transported to a health centre; j) provide lockers that are regularly disinfected; and k) set up a reporting system in consultation with trade unions and management. 2. Employees must: a) wash their hands thoroughly with soap or alcohol; b) avoid handshakes and other forms of physical contact; c) cover their mouth with their elbow or tissues when sneezing or coughing; d) refrain from sharing their assigned protective equipment; e) call their employer and seek medical assistance if they show Covid-19 symptoms; f) keep their protective gear and work clothes clean and tidy and use them correctly; and g) remain calm and continue to follow management's directions if they learn that a co-worker has Covid-19. Cleaning staff must: a) take necessary precautions and clean equipment and surfaces touched by employees; and b) refrain from using their hands when disposing of tissues and other cleaning items used by employees. 3. Safety offices/committees must: a) screen the organisation's premises and identify conditions that could be conducive to the virus' spread; b) work with management to follow up on absent employees' conditions; c) collaborate with the organisation's health officer (if it has one) to: i) physically isolate any employees who have the virus, ii) follow the organisation's guidelines, iii) report the situation, iv) ensure the

Question	Answer/points for consideration
	employee receives assistance, v) isolate employees who came into contact with the infected employee, and vi) clean the premises with the assistance of the competent public health institute; d) ensure that workers most exposed to infection due to the nature of their work are closely monitored; e) check that enough cleaning materials are provided during both day and night shifts; and f) provide employees the latest information on Covid-19.

Tax

Question	Answer/points for consideration
Has the government passed any decisions relating to tax exemptions?	The macro-economic subcommittee of the prime minister's office has announced that the government will institute a tax exemption for the import of materials used to prevent the spread of Covid-19.
Has the government passed any decisions relating to VAT?	The government has instructed the Ministry of Revenue to expedite VAT refunds to support businesses' cash flow.
Has the government taken any measures relating to tax debts?	The government has decided to cancel tax debt to ease the burden caused by the pandemic and stimulate the economy. To that effect, the Ministry of Finance has enacted Directive No. 64/2012, which provides details on how the cancellation of tax debt will be applied.
What is the scope of application of the tax debt cancellation directive?	Overall the directive covers tax debt – including interest and penalties – up to 2018 due under the income tax, mining income tax, VAT, turnover tax, excise tax, and tax administration proclamations. It does not apply to tax payments collected by the Ministry of Revenue in its capacity as an agent. The beneficiaries of the tax debt cancellation are taxpayers engaged in the following sectors: a) manufacturing; b) services; c) export and trade; d) finance; and e) construction.
Does the directive apply in the same manner to all debts incurred until 2018?	No – tax debt has been divided into two periods for the purpose of the directive. The first period, called “category A”, refers to tax debt incurred up to and including 2007 for taxpayers who declare their taxable income following the Ethiopian calendar and up to and including 2014 for taxpayers who declare their taxable income following the Gregorian calendar.

Question	Answer/points for consideration
	The second period, called “category B”, refers to tax debt incurred from 2008 to 2011 for taxpayers who declare their taxable income following the Ethiopian calendar and from 2015 to 2018 for taxpayers who declare their taxable income following the Gregorian calendar.
What is the scope of the directive for category A?	The entire tax debt stated in tax assessments, and any outstanding payments, are cancelled. The directive does not affect the following payments if already made (thus, they will not be reimbursed): a) payments made to appeal against a tax authority decision; and b) payments made in whole or in part in accordance with a tax assessment. Overall, the directive does not apply to any payments already made for various reasons, such as payments made as part of a settlement with the tax authority, or expenses incurred for appeals brought before a court or before a tax appeal commission. Payments made in excess will not be returned and cannot be carried forward to offset a tax debt that is incurred in another tax period.
What is the directive’s effect on the settlement of disputes concerning category A tax debt?	Taxpayers who have filed a complaint/appeal seeking a review with the tax complaint office or tax appeal commission, or who have initiated litigation at any level of ordinary courts, have 30 days from the day the directive came into force to notify the Ministry of Revenue that they wish to continue the complaint/appeal/litigation; failing that, they will be considered to have accepted the tax debt cancellation directive. The tax authority must notify any taxpayer who has a pending case under review by the tax complaint office that the review has been discontinued. Furthermore, the tax authority must notify the taxpayer and other stakeholders that any appeal filed by the tax authority against a tax appeal commission decision or at any level of the ordinary courts has been withdrawn. The tax authority must provide written confirmation that a taxpayer’s tax debt has been cancelled, unless the taxpayer notifies the Ministry of Revenue that he/she/it wishes to continue the complaint/appeal/litigation. If the tax debt amount has been amended by court decision following an appeal, and if the amended amount is lower than an amount deposited by the taxpayer as a security, the difference is to be returned to the taxpayer.

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	An amendment to a tax assessment (which may also increase the taxpayer's burden) submitted to the tax authority after a review by the tax complaint office, tax appeal commission, or an ordinary court, will not take effect unless the taxpayer opts to appeal the decision at the next level. Any remaining tax debt under negotiation between the taxpayer and the tax authority is automatically cancelled (i.e., the taxpayer need not apply for the cancellation).
What is the directive's effect on properties held to enforce collection of category A tax debt?	Any properties held to enforce tax debt will be returned to the taxpayer so long as the taxpayer is engaged in the economy. The Ministry of Revenue is responsible for deciding what constitutes evidence of engagement in the economy. The return of property is effective only for tax debt incurred prior to 2016. If the taxpayer fails to collect the property within 30 days from the day the directive came into force, the property is acquired by the government. If the property is attached to enforce claims of other creditors, it will be returned only if the taxpayer produces a judicial decree demonstrating that the claims filed by other creditors have been settled.
What is scope of the directive for category B?	The cancellation applies to interest and penalties on the principal amount of the tax debt. The directive applies when there is remaining interest and penalties on a tax debt and the taxpayer concerned submits a request to the tax authority within 30 days from the day the directive came into force, stating his/her/its intention to benefit from the cancellation. If the tax payment is due following negotiations with the tax authority, the taxpayer must have paid 25% of the tax upon conclusion of the negotiations and the remaining 75% within a year. If the taxpayer has paid a tax within 30 days from the day the directive came into force, 10% will be deducted from the remaining tax debt, and the remaining interest and penalties on the tax debt will be cancelled.

Question	Answer/points for consideration
What is the directive's effect on the settlement of disputes concerning category B tax debt?	Taxpayers who request the cancellation of category B tax debt must declare in the request form that they have withdrawn any complaints/appeals under review by the tax complaint office, tax appeal commission, or the courts. The tax authority will confirm that the interest and penalties on the debt are cancelled only when the taxpayer shows evidence – obtained from the public body that was reviewing the complaint/appeal – of the withdrawal. If a taxpayer does not request to be treated as per the directive, the regular tax rules and procedures apply. If a taxpayer is the subject of a tax authority appeal filed following a decision of the tax complaint office, tax appeal commission, or the courts, and that taxpayer requests to benefit from the debt cancellation, the tax authority must notify the taxpayer and the public body reviewing the appeal that it has withdrawn its appeal. If the tax debt amount has been amended by court decision following an appeal, and if the amended amount is lower than an amount deposited by the taxpayer as a security, the difference is to be returned to the taxpayer.
How are taxpayers treated if they entered into a negotiated settlement agreement for category B tax debt?	For taxpayers who entered into a negotiated settlement agreement for a tax debt, started paying the tax debt and subsequently requested to benefit from the debt cancellation: a) If the payments already made are more than the tax debt: the payment process is considered completed. b) If tax debt remains: the initial agreement made to settle the tax debt is cancelled; 25% of the remaining debt principal is to be paid immediately, and the remaining tax debt must be paid within one year. If a taxpayer fails to complete payment of a tax debt as per a negotiated settlement agreement within one year, the tax debt – including interest and penalties – must be paid in full.
What is the directive's effect on undeclared taxable income from the category B period and on tax assessments received following a tax audit relating to the category B period?	For taxpayers who declare taxable income from the category B period within 30 days from the day the directive came into force: a) If no tax is due after assessment: the interest and penalties due are cancelled. b) If tax is due: only the principal amount of the tax is to be paid, and the interest and penalties calculated based on the assessment are cancelled.

Question	Answer/points for consideration
	If a taxpayer receives an amended tax assessment following an audit undertaken to ascertain the veracity of declared taxable income, the taxpayer must submit a request to benefit from the debt cancellation within 30 days from receipt of the amended tax assessment.
What is the directive's effect on properties held to enforce collection of category B tax debt?	Once the principal amount of a tax debt has been paid – all at once or over the period envisaged under a negotiated settlement agreement – the tax authority will lift any attachment for execution of a decree and return property held to enforce payment of the tax debt. Taxpayers have 30 days from the day they completed payment of the principal amount to request to benefit from the debt cancellation. If they do not submit this request within these 30 days, the tax authority will assume the taxpayer has abandoned the property, which will consequently be registered as government property. If a taxpayer entered into a negotiated settlement agreement and has paid 25% of the tax due, the tax authority will allow the taxpayer to use the property for business activities. The attachment will be lifted when the taxpayer pays the tax debt in full; the taxpayer has 30 days from completion of payment to submit a request to the tax authority in order to take possession of the property with full ownership rights. Any properties held to enforce tax debt will be returned to the taxpayer so long as the taxpayer is engaged in the economy. The Ministry of Revenue is responsible for deciding what constitutes evidence of engagement in the economy.
Are there any other benefits for taxpayers besides those detailed in the directive?	Taxpayers can submit a request to the Ministry of Finance to cancel more debt than the amount cancelled under the directive.

State of Emergency

Question	Answer/points for consideration
Has the government declared a state of emergency?	The Ethiopian government declared a state of emergency under Proclamation No. 3/2020, which was enacted to combat the spread of Covid-19 and mitigate its consequences. The Council of Ministers subsequently implemented the state of emergency by issuing a regulation with a list of prohibitions and obligations. A ministerial committee has been established to oversee the proclamation's implementation and to introduce or suspend measures as it deems necessary during the state of emergency. The state of emergency will last five months; anyone who infringes the declared measures could face up to three years' imprisonment or be required to pay a fine of ETB 1,000–200,000.
What are the prohibitions in terms of social distancing and doing business?	When doing business during the state of emergency, it is prohibited for: a) individuals to shake hands; b) individuals to gather – whether for religious, social, governmental, political or other reasons – in groups of four or more at places of worship, government institutions, hotels or meeting halls; c) landlords who rent houses or business establishments to increase rent or evict a tenant without the tenant's agreement; d) private organisations who govern employees covered under Proclamation No. 1156/2019 to terminate employment contracts (except for cases to be governed by the procedure to be set out by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs); and e) individuals to stand or sit within two metres from each other in banks, markets, stations, shops, pharmacies, and other places of public service.
What are the obligations regarding social distancing, travel, health protection measures, doing business, safety measures at the workplace, and the manufacturing of protective equipment?	When doing business during the state of emergency, it is obligatory for: a) individuals suspected of carrying the virus or travellers arriving in Ethiopia to stay in quarantine and undergo a test for Covid-19; b) travellers to cover their own expenses during quarantine; if they are unable to cover their expenses, they will be quarantined in places arranged by the government; c) anyone who has tested positive for Covid-19 to be quarantined in places arranged by the government; d) individuals to report anyone suspected of carrying the virus to the Ministry of Health or to the police;

Question	Answer/points for consideration
	e) individuals to wear face masks in banks, markets, stations, shops, pharmacies and other places that provide services to the public or accommodate sizable crowds (face masks may be factory-made or homemade using any kind of fabric or clothes); f) public bodies and private service providers to provide protective equipment to visitors and ensure visitors undertake due care; g) public bodies and private establishments to mark standing positions that are at least two metres apart for visitors; h) public bodies and private establishments to: i) provide their employees information about Covid-19 through various means, ii) provide soap and water or other hand hygiene items at the entry and exit of the premises or any other places they consider necessary, and iii) provide as much protective equipment as possible; i) public bodies and private establishments to organise different shifts or ways for employees to work from home to maintain social distancing, i.e., to reduce the number of people working in one room and using transportation at the same time; j) public bodies and private establishments that have employees covered by Labour Proclamation No. 1156/2019 to arrange transportation services for those who require transportation; k) owners of a house, hotel, apartment, vehicle, hall or any other kind of property to hand over the property to combat the spread of the virus and mitigate the consequences of Covid-19 when the ministerial committee or any other designated public body requests so; and l) manufacturers and service providers to: i) provide and expand necessary services; ii) continue producing; iii) increase their production capacity; iv) produce new product lines for, or sell their products at a reasonable price to, the government and cooperatives; and v) follow the government's or designated bodies' orders to combat the spread of Covid-19 and mitigate its consequences.

Construction Industry

Question	Answer/points for consideration
Has the government issued any instructions specifically for construction sites?	A directive on protection and safety at construction sites has been issued by the Ministry of Urban Development and Construction. It sets out precautionary measures to raise awareness and other measures contractors must adopt.
What are the instructions concerning awareness-raising?	Contractors must hold an awareness-raising session with the support of a health professional to educate people working on the site about the Covid-19 pandemic and its effects and to explain the individual and group responsibilities in relation to precautions against Covid-19. The session must be conducted using various educational tools, and the related information must be posted around the site at places where workers will be able to read them easily.
Are there any restrictions on access construction sites?	Access is restricted to employees and those who have been granted a permit to enter for a specific reason. In addition: • a shift-work policy must be adopted to ensure safe distances. Employees must be duly informed of their shifts; • temperatures must be checked before granting access to the site – those with a high temperature must be denied access; and • communication between the head office and the site must be limited to phone calls and video conference to the extent possible.
What are the instructions regarding temperature-checking?	Contractors must provide thermometers to a health professional to check temperatures. It is recommended that each employee's temperature is checked at least twice a day, or more if the employer so decides or if employees so request. The health professional must also check for fatigue, dry cough, shortness of breath, and immediately isolate employees showing symptoms of Covid-19. The national health institute must be promptly informed, and employees who have had contact with an employee with symptoms must be treated as per the instructions of the health institute.

Question	Answer/points for consideration
What are the instructions concerning physical distances?	Contractors must ensure employees keep a safe distance from each other at all times. If distancing is impossible due to the nature of the work, the contractor must provide gloves and face masks, which employees must use properly and not share with others. Whenever anyone sneezes or coughs, they must cover their nose and mouth with their elbow or a handkerchief/tissue. Tissues must be disposed in a proper manner and employees must wash their hands continually throughout the shift.
What are the instructions concerning physical contact and contamination?	Sufficient tools/equipment must be supplied to ensure that employees do not share tools. It is recommended that people not eat together; in any case, all breaks must be arranged to ensure safe distances are maintained. Tools/equipment and the workplace must be cleaned with disinfectants. Whenever an employee touches something that has a tendency to retain the coronavirus; the employee must wash/disinfect their hands immediately afterwards. Leaving the site during a shift must be prohibited. Tissue or some form of fabric (inc. gloves) must be used to handle objects to the extent possible. Employees must also ensure safe distances on staircases and in lifts – a notice must be displayed detailing the maximum no. of people allowed in the lift at a time. Meetings onsite must be limited to the extent possible with a maximum of three people attending in person. Objects that are likely to be touched frequently must be disinfected continually. Sufficient time should be allocated for cleaning before and after each shift. Work should be done in the office or at home, rather than onsite, to the extent possible.
What are the instructions concerning handwashing?	Contractors must make water, soap and disinfectant available at construction sites. Employees must wash and disinfect their hands whenever necessary. Visitors must wash their hands with soap or disinfectant, as well as have their temperature checked, before being granted access to the site.

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What are the instructions concerning transport and construction projects?	Contractors must provide transport options for construction sites, and employees must refrain using public transport as much as possible. Employees must wear face masks and ensure safe distances while on route to and from work; keys, mobile phones, etc., must be cleaned with disinfectant as frequently as possible.
What are the instructions concerning the supply of construction materials?	Only the supplier and the receiver may occupy the place where the provision of material takes place, and they must ensure that no unnecessary physical contact takes place during the encounter. Materials may pass through various supply chains before reaching the site; hence, they must be cleaned before use.
What are the instructions concerning accommodation and assigning of employees to various tasks?	If the construction site so permits, meals and accommodation may be arranged on site. Assigning employees to various tasks must be arranged in a way that protects the health and safety of the employees.

Shipping and Logistic

Question	Answer/points for consideration
Has the government imposed travel restrictions?	The only restriction to date is on travel by ground transportation across all Ethiopian borders, though this does not apply to Ethiopian citizens. Furthermore, the national flag carrier – Ethiopian Airlines – has suspended flights to and from 80 destinations across the globe. However, cargo service will continue flying to and from all destinations. The airline continues to operate all domestic flights.
Has the government imposed restrictions on the carriage of goods?	The above travel restrictions do not apply to freight transport and logistics. The only restriction imposed to date applies to the carriage of goods across land borders, which has been limited to essential goods. Cargo flights and related activities are fully operational. Freight transport by sea is also operational, but at limited capacity due to congestion in Djibouti.
Have any costs been reduced in relation to logistics or the carriage of goods?	The Ethio-Djibouti Railway Share Company is providing transportation service free of charge for export products produced at Ethiopia's industrial parks. This free transportation service commences 1 May and will last three months, though it may be extended by up to five months if needed. Ethiopian Shipping & Logistics Services Enterprise is providing a discount in port and transport services for export products that are loaded from Mojo dry port onto trains and export products that are to be transported from places that cannot be reached by train due to their remoteness. The discount is effective until the end of the state of emergency. Specifically, Ethiopian Shipping & Logistics Services Enterprise has: a) reduced dry port service fees by up to 50% for all types of freight; b) reduced transportation service fees by 50% for freights that originate from Hawassa Industrial Park and are loaded onto a train through Mojo dry port;

Question	Answer/points for consideration
	c) reduced (in collaboration with other transportation companies) transportation fees by up to 50% for export products that originate from places that cannot be reached by train for manufacturers that wish to transport their export goods to Djibouti; and d) reduced service fees by up to 73% compared to the market price for those who use Ethiopian Shipping & Logistics Services Enterprise to transport their export products from Djibouti to various destinations.
Has the Ethiopian government secured any tariff reductions for the export of goods?	Ethiopia has secured a benevolent measure from the government of Djibouti, which announced an 82% reduction of port tariffs for export products. Ethiopian export cargo to the world gated in Djibouti Ports will be granted free terminal handling charges for 60 days starting 16 April.

Miscellaneous

Question	Answer/points for consideration
Which government body is managing the crisis?	Ethiopia is a federal republic whose constitution distributes power between the federal government and the regional governments. The prime minister and a ministerial committee established by the state of emergency proclamation are overseeing the management of the crisis. However, regional governments too are imposing restrictions that affect intra- and inter-regional inland transport – residents and travellers are thus advised to pay attention to regional government decisions that involve their work and/or travel.
Has the government introduced any measures that could affect administrative services?	The government has directed its workforce to work from home, except for a few employees considered essential for day-to-day operations; therefore, usual administrative services are affected.
Has the government introduced any measures to ensure the supply of protective equipment?	The Ethiopian Food and Drug Administration has issued a directive that creates a new line of certificates of competence for businesses that want to engage in the production, import and distribution of protective gear for Covid-19 (i.e., gloves, masks and hand sanitiser). Currently, import trade is reserved exclusively for domestic investors. However, Ethiopia's most recent investment proclamation was issued on 2 April 2020, and the council of ministers is expected to adopt a new regulation that will revise the list of areas allowed for foreign investors. Overall, the directive's aim is to: a) provide the public certified, safe equipment to protect them against the spread of Covid-19; and b) ensure that individuals and businesses engage in trade with professional integrity. The directive sets up a mechanism that is only provisionally effective. Its scope of application covers both existing businesses and new businesses that are interested in engaging the market.

Question	Answer/points for consideration
	Under the directive, manufacturers, importers and distributors must obtain a temporary six-month certificate from the Food and Drug Administration before starting manufacturing or supply. Manufacturers and importers must do the following to obtain the certificate: 1. Manufacturers: a) Ensure production quality through a production manager, a quality control division manager, and a technical head who has a bachelor's degree and competencies in: i) healthcare, ii) biology, iii) chemistry, or iv) chemical engineering. b) Set up, if they manufacture masks and gloves, a quality assurance mechanism and submit the following technical specifications: i) For surgical masks: a document proving that the raw material has the necessary filters. ii) For N95 (or higher) masks and gloves: a quality assurance certificate from a third-party laboratory or a document issued by the manufacturer's own laboratory. 2. Importers: a) Ensure technical management and store management roles are led by individuals with a qualification in: i) healthcare, ii) biology, iii) chemistry, or iv) chemical engineering. b) Ensure that gloves and face masks have CE marking or, failing that, provide documents that ensure their quality. c) Provide quality assurance certificates for sanitisers.
Have the government's actions affected dispute resolution?	The Federal Supreme Court announced that federal courts will be partially closed from 19 March 2020. Federal courts are presiding only over matters involving national security until the restriction is lifted.

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