

Bradford Confers Honorary Doctorate on Ethiopia's Deputy PM

Friday December 6th, 2013



Bradford University in the UK has conferred an Honorary Doctorate Degree of Education on H.E. Demeke Mekonnen, Deputy Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

The Deputy PM earned his post-graduate degree in Peace Studies from Bradford where he read *inter alia* philosophy, history, sociology and politics, which informed his leadership career in various capacities and portfolios.

H.E. Demeke Mekonnen has delivered outstanding service in his current post and also in his previous posts as Minister for Education and, prior to that, as Deputy Head of the Amhara Regional State.

Expansion of educational facilities, quality improvement and popularizing science and technology at all levels were the hallmarks of his time at the Ministry of Education, which was tasked with laying the foundations for capacity building crucial to realising speedy and sustainable economic growth.

In today's Ethiopia, a quarter of the population, about 24 million, attend school, signalling the bright future of the second most populous country in sub-Saharan Africa. Hundreds of thousands of young men and women are working hard on their studies in the numerous newly established public universities and colleges. These students will be well equipped to serve their nation with skills and knowledge, which are in high demand in one of the fastest growing economies on the emerging continent of Africa.

Introducing the Bradford Honorary Graduated of 2013, Head of the Peace Studies Department, Professor David Francis, described the DPM as a diligent and outstanding student, focused on his research and his studies, which Professor Francis believes have greatly contributed to his success in the subsequent high responsibilities he assumed in his country.

He said "the honorary Graduated has worked tirelessly to put education at the heart of Ethiopia's post-war economic growth, development and socio-political transformation."

"We are...delighted and privileged that our Honorary Graduated is the first, in the history of Peace Studies, to hold such a high profile public office, serving as Deputy Prime Minister in one of Africa's most populous and strategically important players in continental and global affairs.", the professor added.

Vice-Chancellor Professor Brian Cantor CBE, on the occasion, spoke of how the Bradford University community in general and himself particularly are delighted to host and confer an honorary Doctorate degree on Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen, a person of remarkable public service. His role in the expansion of education and bringing peace and stability to his country has won him respect from his own people and colleagues.

The Vice-Chancellor assured the Deputy Premier of his unreserved efforts in strengthening existing relations between the University of Bradford and higher learning institutes in Ethiopia.

H.E. Demeke Mekonnen, addressing government officials, the University community and invited guests, underlined the critical role education plays in the fight against poverty and said "I have been part of the leadership that brought about a paradigm shift which gave prominence and emphasis to science and technology, with the sole aim of enhancing our capacity to achieve progress and improvements in the livelihoods of our citizens."



“In spite of challenges and occasional setbacks, Ethiopia is no longer defined by her problems but by the achievements and opportunities it offers.”

“Ethiopia”, he said, “has been growing in double digits over the last decade and we are determined to maintain the rate of growth and sustain the on-going transformation with the heightened commitment and diligence of the people and particularly that of the leadership.”

The Deputy Premier said "I certainly hope that, with the determination displayed by all stakeholders, our vision of Ethiopia, fully transformed into a democratically mature, stable and peaceful nation with freedom and opportunity for all, will become a reality".

On Wednesday, H.E. DPM Demeke gave a public lecture under the theme ***"Building Peace After War: the Growth & Transformation of Ethiopia"***. In a lucid presentation, he expounded how Ethiopia emerged from complex political, economic and social problems into a nation of peace and stability with a fast growing economy.

The new Ethiopia adopted a new constitution and a multi-party system and put in place a federal democratic government that empowered the people as both owners and active participants in the building of a new order that caters well for the welfare and development of its people.

“The pro-poor economic policies of the government”, he said, “focused on infrastructure and human capital development, major expansion of social services in the health and education sectors, as well as the consolidation of peace and stability, to ensure economic growth from which the people could benefit at all levels.



The various development programmes adopted by the government have made it possible to lift millions out of poverty, reducing the prevalence rate from 54 to 29.6 per cent over the past two decades with per capita income doubling in the same period.

Ethiopia is undertaking mega projects under the latest development programme, the GTP, which will be a stepping stone to the national objective of joining the community of middle-income countries in 2023, sustaining the momentum of Ethiopia's Renaissance.

He replied to comments and questions on issues related to development, the rights of nations and nationalities, opposition and the press, election and multi-party systems.

The Deputy Prime Minister, during his stay in Bradford, visited the various departments of the university and the businesses located in the newly-constructed environment and eco-friendly building.

The Lord Mayor of the City of Bradford, His Excellency Khadim Hussain, invited the Deputy Prime Minister to visit the City Hall where he had a consultation with council officials about forging relationships with the City of Bradford.

Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen also visited Nottingham University, where he met and encouraged Ethiopian students to pursue their studies with passion, to enhance their expertise and live up to the responsibilities of serving the people of Ethiopia.

He also met and held talks with the Vice-Chancellor of the University, Foreign Secretary of the Royal Society, Professor Martyn Poliakoff, who is also an acclaimed chemist, and his colleagues on the relationship between Nottingham and Ethiopian Universities. He promised to promote dialogue and experience-sharing in the spirit of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Institute and the Ministry of Education. Exchange of academicians and technical support will be the focus of future engagements between the parties.



Foreground (l-r): H.E. Ambassador Berhanu Kebede, Prof. Martyn Poliakoff and H.E. Deputy PM Ato Demeke Mekonnen;
Background (l-r): Ethiopian students Habtamu Melesse, Girma Worku Awoke, and Getaneh Adera Nigussie

The Royal Society supports the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences which has been active in promoting scientific research since its establishment a few years back. The Deputy Premier appreciated the role of the Royal Society and called for more help to shore up the institutional capacity of the Academy.

While in Nottingham, the Deputy Premier also paid a visit to the Queen's Medical Centre where he was shown around by a resident Ethiopian Neurosurgeon, Mekdim Tsegaye. The hospital is one of the biggest health facilities in the UK with an emergency ward famous for its highly efficient services.

He also met and held talks with senior officials of the British Council on ways to further enhance the existing cooperation, and especially on a new co-operation, where Britain could share its experience on the university-industry nexus.

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