

Dr Tedros at Illegal Wildlife Trade conference; meets Ethiopian Community Leaders

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Ethiopia's Foreign Minister, H.E. Dr Tedros Adhanom was in London this week to participate in the London Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade, hosted by the UK government on 13th February. The conference brought together global leaders from over forty nations who vowed to help eradicate illegal wildlife trade and better protect the world's most iconic species from the threat of extinction. The conference heard first-hand from the Presidents of Botswana, Chad, Gabon and Tanzania.



Group photo of the London Conference on The Illegal Wildlife Trade, which was also attended by the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Cambridge and Prince Harry

The aim of the conference was to agree high-level political commitment to tackling the illegal wildlife trade. The focus was on elephants, rhinos and tigers, and the Conference aimed to tackle three interlinked aspects of illegal wildlife trade: strengthening law enforcement and the criminal justice system; reducing demand for illegal wildlife products; and supporting the development of sustainable livelihoods for communities affected by illegal wildlife trade.

UK Foreign Secretary, William Hague who chaired the conference, said the illegal wildlife trade was not just an environmental crisis, but it had become a global criminal industry, to be ranked alongside drugs, arms and people trafficking.

Dr Tedros noted that Africa was hit particularly hard by the upsurge in the illegal trade. Tourism industries in many African countries depend largely on wildlife as a major attraction. He said wildlife tourism had become a priority area in Ethiopia's development agenda, and the country was promoting its national parks along with cultural heritage sites. Measures were being taken to prevent poaching by reinforcing the law enforcement capacity, adopting appropriate legislation, he said.

Dr Tedros highlighted the need to support local communities that were negatively affected by the growing illegal trade in wildlife, noting the need for their full cooperation to prevent the killing and to protect wildlife resources. Without this, he said, efforts to stop illegal trade and achieve successful conservation programmes will not yield results. Cooperation, he added, could best be achieved through the creation of an environment in which local communities can generate income from wildlife-based activities like tourism. Dr Tedros

announced the proposal of an **Elephant Protection Initiative** to secure new funding from private and public sources for the implementation of the African Elephant Action Plan.



(l-r) President Idriss Deby of Chad, President Kikwete of Tanzania, President Ian Khama of Botswana, President Ali Bongo Ondimba of Gabon, Dr. Tedros of Ethiopia and UK's Foreign Secretary, William Hague

The plan includes commitment to an extended moratorium on ivory sales, and plans to put ivory stocks beyond economic use. The UK Government announced it would provide support to help the Initiative get up and running.

Dr Tedros noted that the illegal trade was being run by well-organized criminal networks and was being used to finance terrorism. For Ethiopia, the commitment to combat terrorism had to be linked to efforts to contain the illegal wildlife trade. Fighting wildlife crime, said Dr Tedros, could not be viewed in isolation from politically motivated terrorism funded by the trade in ivory.

The conference produced the **London Declaration**, which contains commitments for practical steps to end the illegal trade in rhino horn, tiger parts and elephant tusks that fuels criminal activity worth over \$19 billion a year. Botswana announced that it will host a further Conference in early 2015 to review progress against the commitments made in the London Declaration.



Later that day, the Foreign Minister held a frank and lively discussion with leaders and members of the Ethiopian community in the UK on issues of development and the extensive engagement of the Diaspora in nation building endeavours.

Ethiopia is engaged in a multi-faceted development programme under its Growth and Transformation Plan that addresses the delivery of social services and overhauls and modernises infrastructure including roads, telecommunications, hydroelectric dams and railway networks.

Dr Tedros told participants of the need to cement bonds to foster the growth and prosperity of the beloved country. This, he said, could be achieved in spite of differences in political persuasions. Diaspora associations should facilitate united action, both at home and abroad, to meet members' needs and demands, to enhance their involvement in development endeavours. They should cater for the needs of the younger generation, focus on strengthening ties to the homeland to help them acquire its rich culture and traditions and remain dedicated to its progress and transformation.



He underlined the importance of setting up cultural centres and mentioned plans by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for internships in Ethiopian missions abroad and visits to Ethiopia as part of the familiarisation initiative for young Diaspora Ethiopians.

Tens of thousands of Diaspora Ethiopians are now actively taking part in investment, trade and tourism as well as knowledge transfer, joining hands in the national drive to beat poverty, and boosting the double-digit economic growth the nation has achieved over the past years.

Responding to queries from participants in the housing scheme, the Minister explained the government plan to provide housing to different sections of society. Members of the Ethiopian Diaspora community are beneficiaries of the scheme and a directive has been drawn up for its implementation. Registration for the scheme will proceed after preparations are finalized by respective regional states to process applications for the provision of housing.

There were comments and questions on relations with lower riparian countries, investment incentives, ID cards, returnees from Saudi, the fight against corruption, information dissemination and the Renaissance Dam.

Dr Tedros emphasized Ethiopia's interest in a win-win solution for the utilisation of the waters of the Nile and announced that GERD will start generating 700MW of electricity in less than a year. Ethiopia plans to be a power hub and is working, as a member state of the IGAD regional grouping, to enhance infrastructural linkage in order to forge economic integration that could lead to collective growth and development in the region.

On the returnees, he cited efforts for their rehabilitation but underlined the long-term solution to be growth and development, using to the full extent, the opportunities created in the country.

Dr Tedros called on community members to further dedicate resources and know-how to the growth and development of the new Ethiopia where sovereignty and equality of peoples is respected.

Leaders of the Ethiopian community promised enhanced involvement in nation building efforts and appreciated the government commitment to transforming economic and social conditions, in line with its pro-poor policies.

During his 3-day visit, Dr Tedros met and held consultations with the Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister, John Baird, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development, Lynne Featherstone and Mark Simmonds, UK Minister for Africa at the FCO. The discussions focussed on bilateral ties and issues of mutual concern including peace and stability, as well as development partnership. He also met officials from CDC, the private sector development and investment wing of the DFID and GlaxoSmithKline, the biggest pharmaceutical company in the UK. CDC has already invested in 7 projects through private equity financing.

Earlier in his visit, the Minister briefed diplomats and staff at the Ethiopian Embassy in London on the major accomplishments and future plans of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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The London Declaration and the Elephant Protection Initiative are available on demand. For further details contact the press office on 0207 838 3880/3; info@ethioembassy.org.uk.