

# **Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn's address to UN General Assembly**

Mr. President,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to congratulate the President of this 67th session of the General Assembly on his election. I also thank him for the very inspiring speech he made at the opening of the General Debate. We are confident that the spirit highlighted in that speech will guide him during his presidency. Let me also take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the outgoing President.

Mr. President,

The reason why I am here at this podium, to make my maiden speech to the General Assembly as the leader of the new Ethiopia, is because we lost our leader only a little more than a month ago. The passing of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi is a huge loss for Ethiopia; and undoubtedly for Africa, as well. He was a man of prodigious intellect who was uncompromising in his insistence that Ethiopians and Africans should own and protect their development strategies and their approaches to governance and democratization. The late Ethiopian Prime Minister, and the party he led, have facilitated the emergence of the new Ethiopia, which has rekindled the hope of Ethiopians in the future and strengthened their confidence to overcome adversities. Ethiopians proved their mettle, and what they are made of, when unexpectedly they were told about the tragedy the nation faced. It is an honour and a blessing to be a leader of a people who are generous in paying tribute to those, like Prime Minister Meles, who served them selflessly; a people who had the maturity and wisdom to see, and even lucidly articulate, who did what for the nation and for the people of Ethiopia.

Naturally, this would make any normal human being, with the opportunity to lead the country, to ask himself what more one can do for his people, not in words but in deeds, as our late Prime Minister often emphasized. There were indeed, as should be expected, doomsday scenarios bandied around about Ethiopia's future. But the people of Ethiopia - from north to south, from east to west, across the length and breadth of the country - were categorical in stating in unison how much they embrace the unity of the country, unity that celebrates their diversity and built on the bedrock of their federal constitution. Let me take this opportunity to thank, on behalf of the Ethiopian people and that of my own, all those leaders and heads of delegation who came to Addis Ababa to be with us at our time of grief. We cherish your friendship. I wish to reiterate my

condolences to the people and Government of Ghana, Malawi and Guinea Bissau, who have also lost their leaders recently.

Mr. President,

We Ethiopians are confident that we have come a long way. Never in its entire modern history has Ethiopia had the kind of rapid economic growth that it has witnessed over the last decade or so. For the first time in its modern history, Ethiopia has begun to see a bright light at the end of the tunnel in terms of real prospects for economic transformation. We are, no doubt, on a hugely promising trajectory. Our Growth and Transformation Plan to which our late Prime Minister was devoted and which is now embraced by our people, is designed to catapult our nation to that destination which has eluded our people for so long but which is now within reach.

We do all this also with full recognition of our responsibility, as the second most populous country in Africa, to contribute to regional integration. We foresee huge possibilities for bringing the countries of the greater Horn of Africa together. We have already gone some distance in playing a catalytic role in laying the infrastructural basis for consolidating economic ties with the countries of our region. The electric power interconnections and the road networks that we have built, and are in the process of building with Djibouti, Sudan, Kenya and South Sudan, are emblematic of our resolve to play our part in regional integration. We are confident that Somalia and others, without exception, will follow suit.

But our success in all this hinges on a number of conditions being met, all of which are not exactly amenable to our unilateral initiative. First is the question of peace and stability and the challenge of extremism. Here as well, we have made much progress. Somalia is gradually coming out of the woods. We salute all those, most particularly the troop contributors to AMISOM, for the sacrifice they have made. The African Union has made enormous contribution to laying the basis for the progress that has been made by Somalia. We also acknowledge the very useful cooperation between the AU and the UN, the AU Peace and Security Council and the Security Council of the United Nations. We have to recognize the role of partners as well. But much, and much more needs to be done in Somalia to ensure that the new Government stands on its own feet. We would be naive, however, if we believed that the enemies of peace of Somalia and the region are completely defeated. That is why it is so critical that the momentum is not lost in Somalia and Somalia's ownership of the process of national reconciliation is strengthened. We will continue to assist Somalia, and the new President of the country, H.E. Hassan Sheikh Mahamud; and the people of Somalia can count on that. We are pleased that there is also a major progress in the peace process between Sudan and South Sudan. We are confident the two parties would maintain the momentum toward durable peace, which is the basis for ensuring the viability of both.

We are indeed indebted to former President Mbeki and the AU High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) for their perseverance and for their commitment to

peace between the two sisterly countries. What has been achieved by the two parties over the last few days which culminated in the signing of the much anticipated agreements on vital matters is a significant breakthrough which needs to be consolidated and is used as a basis for resolving the still remaining outstanding issues. We are confident the two parties appreciate how much their joint effort for a win-win outcome is so vital, not only for their peoples, but also for us all. For us Ethiopians peace between Sudan and South Sudan, and close partnership between the two, above and beyond the benefit it has for us all, does also have an additional emotional and sentimental value - This was an issue that our late Prime Minister even as he was struggling for his life was following with the same intensity as before and continued to offer whatever added values he could bring to bear on the peace process. Let me thank both Sudan and South Sudan for placing their trust in us as has been so manifest in the deployment of UNISFA. Indeed, we are proud of our troops in Abyie as we are of all our people serving under the UN flag, including those in Darfur.

Let me, before I move on to the second challenge we face, to say a few words on broader issues that help put in perspective the challenge our region faces in securing sustainable peace and stability. No doubt, the major war we have to win is the war over poverty. The most difficult challenge we face here in developing the most effective means to wage that war is the difficulty we have had to ensure the rule of law is observed, both in inter-state relations and in the domestic sphere. At its most fundamental level, the struggle against extremism is one aspect of the struggle to ensure the rule of law is respected and tolerance is adhered to. Wherever intolerance and the violation of laws occur, sometimes in an egregious manner, such as the one in Bengazi, it needs to be condemned.

Mr. President,

The second challenge we face to sustain our development agenda relate to a host of issues impinging on our capacity to ensure sustainable development. Let us be frank and admit that there is a huge deficit in international cooperation for the development of low income countries and those that are the least developed. At the end of the day, without ignoring other impediments to development, the major bottleneck for countries such as Ethiopia for ensuring sustainable development and successfully achieving the MDGs is related to shortfalls in development finance. We have said so much in the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action, and recently, in the Bussan partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. But the results have been few and far between. The current global economic situation, in our view, should never be allowed to detract attention from the critical need for development finance of low income countries.

Our challenge in this area is compounded and made even worse by climate change, which is a global challenge calling for responsible and wise leadership at the international level. This should rest on full commitment to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. It might be boring to repeat something that is

universally acknowledged - while not having contributed to climate change, countries such as Ethiopia nonetheless happen to be the most affected. But still, we recognize our obligation. That is why Ethiopia has already opted for green growth path, and our current five years Growth and Transformation Plan is based on developing a green economy whose strategy has already been issued and is being implemented. We seek effective cooperation in this endeavor.

We would have hoped that the Rio+20 UN Conference would have achieved more than it had. But nonetheless, we look forward to a meaningful and effective work by the Working Group on sustainable development to which we are ready to contribute the best we can. We are also hopeful that the intergovernmental process under the auspices of the General Assembly in connection with financing for development will not end up being a filibustering exercise with no effect on this critical issue for the development of low income countries.

As I conclude, Mr. President, I want to agree with previous speakers that the 21st century is indeed an African century. As also referred to by my brother the President of Ghana, out of the 10 fastest growing economies in the world last year, 6 were Africans and I should mention, Ethiopia is among the sixth. Africa is indeed changing, and changing for the better. There is no greater human rights violation than attempts to put obstacles to the success of this ongoing transformation of Africa which would have enormous salutary implications for hundreds of millions of Africans. Africa is no longer the marginalized continent of the 1980s and of the period even a little beyond that. Ethiopia will continue to play its part to ensure the success of this transformation, as it will for the success of multilateralism under the auspices of the United Nations.

I Thank You.