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**Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
LONDON**

Mr Tony Hall
Director General
BBC New Broadcasting House
Portland Place
London W1A 1AA

Tuesday 18th February 2014

Dear Director General,

At the outset, I wish to acknowledge various recent positive BBC reports on Ethiopia, which reflect the reality on the ground. It is against this backdrop that I would like to lodge, on behalf of the Government of Ethiopia, and in the strongest possible terms, my grievances at the damaging and factually incorrect statement made by Mr Frank Gardner (a BBC security correspondent) in the wake of the Feb 17 first ever incident, whereby an Ethiopian passenger plane was redirected from its scheduled destination by its own co-pilot.

In a manner contrary to professional ethics, Mr Gardner has gone to great lengths to have the world believe that the security details at Addis Ababa Bole Airport leave much to be desired. We need not remind anyone that, Mr Gardner's groundless remarks notwithstanding, Bole Airport is highly reputed for its exceptional security provisions amongst international flight-safety regulatory bodies. We hasten to add that the airport is periodically audited and at no time has it been found in breach of the international standards that world-leading airport service providers are required to meet.

In this regard, Mr Gardner's BBC testimony of his own experience, in which he relates how he himself was at one point in time recalled for additional inspection after crossing a check-point, does not support his allegation about the laxness of security procedures at Bole Airport. If anything, it reinforces the periodically issued audit reports which certify the high security standards maintained by Ethiopian authorities charged with the responsibility of air-passenger safety.

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The case of flight 702 can, in no way, be cited as a consequence of breach of security at Addis Ababa Airport as Mr Gardner suggests. If put in proper context, what Mr Gardner prematurely commented on is an isolated case of failure of responsibility on the part of a single crew member who was in charge of the aircraft. As a security correspondent, we believe that Mr Gardner should at least have carefully considered that, to the extent that this incident was preventable, it could by no means have been, even by any additional safety-ensuring mechanism, as the source of this rarest of sad mishaps lies elsewhere.

In closing, we would like to reiterate that, confident as we are in our flight security systems, we shall spare no effort to avoid a repeat of the February 17 incident to ensure even greater safety to the increasing number of long-distance air travellers and transit travellers through our airport.

In the same spirit, we expect nothing less from the BBC, a prestigious global media than, in the interest of fairness, to redress our grievance by balancing Mr Gardner's prejudicial testament by voices better qualified to render expert opinion on such matters. Only then will your global audience have an opportunity to judge for itself the security standards of Addis Ababa Bole Airport, home to Africa's first-class airline.

Yours,

Berhanu Kebede
Ambassador

