

## PRESS RELEASE

Date 7<sup>th</sup> November 2013  
Release – Immediate

### Ethiopia Celebrated at World Travel Market

An Ethiopian cultural event in London, jointly organized by the Embassy and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, brought Ethiopians and friends of Ethiopia together to celebrate and promote Ethiopia's rich and diverse culture, as well as its exotic heritage, flora and fauna. Tourism Associations, tour operators, travel writers, prospective investors and representatives from the airline industry were among the guests.

The evening reception, held on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> November, [was organized to] coincide with the World Travel Market (WTM, 4<sup>th</sup> -7<sup>th</sup> November), where a 20-member delegation, led by Solomon Tadesse, General Manager of the Ethiopian Tourism Organization, introduced Ethiopia's tourist sites to visitors from across the globe.

Ethiopia showcased tourist destinations including UNESCO designated heritage sites with outstanding universal value. UNESCO has designated 129 World Heritage Sites in Africa, located in 37 countries, and nine of the sites are in Ethiopia.

#### Cultural Event



Addressing guests at the event at the Ethiopian Embassy in London on Wednesday, Ethiopian Ambassador to the UK, HE Berhanu Kebede, said Ethiopia is known for its cultural heritage and artefacts.

Famous for its world-class elite athletes and for being the cradle of humankind, Ethiopia is also a habitat for the Gelada Baboon, Mountain Nyala, the Red Wolf and a number of other exotic wild animals that live in Ethiopia's woodland, savannah grassland and lush meadows, valleys and high rugged mountains.

The five-year Growth and Transformation Plan, he noted, envisages further developing essential infrastructure and the hospitality industry so as to cater for the needs of the ever rising number of tourists visiting Ethiopia.

The government has recently announced several new authorities including a Tourism Agency and an Organization, which will address any challenges and implement the country's tourism vision, boosting climate-neutral tourism, which Ethiopia needs to tap into as a source of revenue and job generation.

The Ambassador stressed that conserving tourist attractions, both tangible and intangible, is crucial to maintaining and enhancing the flow of tourists and ensuring the protection of Ethiopia's coveted treasures. Ethiopia is set to be one of the top ten tourist destinations on the African continent in the coming years, he said.

In remarks made at the event, Director General of the Tourism Organization, Solomon Tadesse, said that the Government has set up a **Tourism Transformation Agency** under the Chairmanship of HE the Prime Minister, the **Ethiopian Tourism Organization** which he heads, and the **Ethiopian Tourism Board**, which will be fully established when the delegation returns to Ethiopia and will include members from both the public and private sectors, which will give the sector a competitive edge.



Ato Solomon Tadesse addressing guests

He said he appreciated the Ethiopian tour operators' hard work and diligence in promoting Ethiopian tourist attractions to visitors at the World Travel Market.



Ethiopian cuisine and refreshments were served at the event, a musical show was staged and a film, "Heaven and Earth" was screened, which depicts the role of religious institutions as custodians of culture and tradition and their contribution to traditional education and literacy.



Mekonnen Michael, producer of Heaven and Earth

In an introduction to the film, author and producer of the film, Mekonnen Michael, expressed his belief that the documentary tells untold stories about Ethiopian culture and tradition.

The new democratic Ethiopia has enshrined in its Constitution the right of the people to freely practice their religion. This has paved the way for enhanced endeavours to safeguard and preserve the country's religious and cultural assets for posterity.

#### WTM

The Ethiopian stand at the WTM was opened on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> November in the presence of HE Ambassador Berhanu Kebede, Director General of the Ethiopian Tourism Organization, Solomon Tadesse, Ethiopian Airlines Area General Manager Michael Yared and Ethiopian tour

operators. Ethiopian Airlines is one of Africa's top carriers, renowned for its safety record and superb service.

World-renowned dance troupe Dankira delighted visitors to the Ethiopia stand with a wide range of dancing styles and music. The stand has attracted a record number of visitors this year and offered networking opportunities for the UK tourism sector and the newly formed Ethiopian Tourism Organization, Ethiopian Airlines, tour operators and lodges.

At the WTM, the Director General of the Ethiopian Tourism Organization and the Ambassador, took part in a Ministerial Meeting which discussed the prospects for global tourism, the contribution of aviation to the tourism industry, regional integration, airport infrastructure, the impact of taxation on the development of tourism and the interface of private and public sectors in enhancing the role of tourism as an engine of economic growth and sustainable development.

**\*\*\*ENDS\*\*\***

For further information contact the press office on 0207 838 3880/3 or send an email to [info@ethioembassy.org.uk](mailto:info@ethioembassy.org.uk).

Video coverage to follow.