

**Remarks by H.E. Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu Minister of Foreign Affairs of the  
Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia  
at the Atlantic Council Washington D.C. February 15, 2018**

Ethiopia is one of the most visible countries in Africa. It is big in terms of its population (we have the second largest population in Africa we are over one hundred million). Ethiopia is big in terms of the size of its economy and territory; including the size of Ethiopia's military strength. Ethiopia has been playing active role in the region and beyond. The obvious reason is Ethiopia's belief that foreign policy should serve the twin objectives of rapid economic development for the benefit of all members of society and democratization to ensure the complete participation of people in administering their own affairs. Ethiopia took its own peace and security as linked to the peace and security of its neighbors and vice versa. It is this that underlines Ethiopia's very active commitment to peace and security in the region, and more widely. Ethiopia registered an impressive record of economic growth and it has been acknowledged as one of the fastest growing economies in the world.

Ethiopia is the founding member the regional organization for the Horn of Africa, Inter-Governmental Authority for Development – (**IGAD**) which plays an significant role in terms of regional peace and security as well as the economic integration. **IGAD** is made up of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya Somalia South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda. Eritrea withdrew from membership in 2007 Ethiopia is currently serving as a chair of the IGAD at all levels.

Ethiopia is the seat of **the African Union**, and attaches high value for the organization. Ethiopia fully subscribes to the AU's vision for an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, working for the Africa 2063

Agenda, making sure the AU fulfils its role as a forum of debate in the struggle to enhance Africa's role in the world. Ethiopia plays an important role in various AU bodies.

Currently, Ethiopia is a non-permanent member of the **UN Security Council**. As one of the founders of the UN, Ethiopia is a strong supporter of the concept of collective security. It has been playing and will continue to play a major role in international peacekeeping with, currently, the first largest troop contributor for UN operations.

In fact, Ethiopia's belief is that development must be shared and it should be carried out at regional level. This has driven our vision of support for peace and development, notably through infrastructural development, connecting the sub-region. The creation of economic conditions for regional integration is vital, and so we have taken specific action to promote it through infrastructure development. Ethiopia is developing a series of major hydropower projects which will triple our power generation capacity. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam will be of major benefit to Ethiopia and other countries in the basin, as well as contribute to the East African power pool and more widely. We already supply power to our neighbors. It will be sustainable power using hydro, wind, geo-thermal and solar resources and its part of a green economic strategy to achieve a carbon-neutral economy by 2030. Some US companies are investing in this sector.

Our longer-term policies involve further expansion of cross-border roads and railway lines – with far reaching goals not only for Ethiopia but also for the whole east African region – for the IGAD. It means continued investment in regional infrastructure development and human resources,

development of professional skills and scientific knowledge and capability, scaling up of research and technology especially for the green economy, and resilience in the face of climate change. We are working urgently to develop agro-industrialisation, expand employment and so on. It also involves structural economic transformation in Ethiopia, improving productivity and competitiveness of small-holder agriculture, and promoting industrialization, value addition and export development. We currently use 70 per cent of our budget, in pro-poor activities such as education, health, and agriculture and food security. Ethiopia continues to expand its relations with the neighboring countries. Ethiopia's role in IGAD is not limited to the issue of peace and security in Somalia and South Sudan; it goes far beyond to all aspects of the relations.

We also have excellent bilateral relations with **Kenya**, where we are developing and expanding economic links. We have signed Special Status Agreement and created active joint commission to discuss all range of issues. Cooperation in security and in infrastructure is growing steadily. Examples of such co-operation can be seen in the Addis Ababa to Nairobi highway, the Gilgel Gibe III Dam and the development of the Lower Omo River, and the LAPSSET corridor.

With **Djibouti**, of course, Ethiopia shares long-standing cultural, historic and economic ties. We have invested over 4 Billion USD on the new replacement railway – which will cut the time between the two cities from 30 to 10 hours or so. Djibouti remains Ethiopia's main access to the sea and as a result our economic relations are closely inter-twined. Ethiopia is Djibouti's biggest customer. The new rail link to the port of Djibouti will lower high transportation costs and expand Djibouti's trading capacity more widely across the region. The new railway is the first stage

of a cross Africa link to reach Dakar in Senegal eventually. Similarly, the upgraded road link to Nairobi, nearly complete now in Kenya will link Addis Ababa to Nairobi and Mombasa and even down into Tanzania.

Relations with **Sudan** remained strong and we have been making successful efforts to develop our economic links. We have free trade agreement and are making use of Port Sudan. We have bilateral forum to discuss on common issues of concern. We have close ties in security and other areas and we are both are committed to bringing about economic integration in the region and have been working together in addressing regional problems.

We have been actively in working to resolve conflict in **Somalia** and deal with the terrorist activities of Al-Shabaab, both as a member of the AMISOM and in other ways. It is in Ethiopia interest to see a peaceful and stable Somalia and for the Somali government to strengthen its institutions. Ethiopia helped Somalia Defense forces (at the request of the Somalia government) in making considerable progress to drive Al-Shabaab out and creating a situation in which the government is working to make considerable progress in all respects.

Ethiopia has also been actively involved, both through provision of peacekeeping forces and through IGAD mediation, in South Sudan. It helped to bring about the Peace Agreement, hosting the IGAD and IGAD Plus processes in Addis Ababa after the outbreak of fighting in December 2013. The process has been difficult yet we are still optimistic that they will adhere to their words. Recently, Ethiopia is highly involved for the successful achievement of the high level revitalization forums. The first phase of revitalization forum was concluded by signing agreement in

Addis Ababa on 21 December 2017 on the Cessation of Hostilities, Protection of Civilians and Humanitarian Access. The second phase of the High-Level revitalization Forum (HLRF) which seeks for the full implementation of peace agreement, restore permanent ceasefire, develop revised and realistic timeline implantation schedule towards democratic election at the end of the transition period is underway in Ethiopia. The second phase of the high-level revitalization forum is the last chance to rescue the peace agreement from collapse and Ethiopia is ready to do anything possible in its capacity to bring lasting peace in the Republic of South Sudan. The Forum deliberated on the issue of Governance and discussion are to be held on issues of Permanent Ceasefire and Transitional Security Sector Reform tomorrow onwards. The parties are sitting for talks on permanent ceasefire and transitional security reform. Those who violate the agreement will be held responsible.

Our leadership remained engaged with IGAD members and we hope that the UN authorized Regional Protection Force will be fully deployed soon in and around Juba. Ethiopia deployed its troops together with others in the mission. I would like to mention that Ethiopia provides the entire UN Force for Abyei (UNISFA). Abyei is an area of dispute between South Sudan and Sudan. Both sides in this requested Ethiopian troops to keep the two sides apart, a tribute to their professionalism.

The problem with **Eritrea** is not of Ethiopia's choosing but arises out of the war launched by Eritrea in 1998 and Eritrea's subsequent defeat. Eritrea remains in a state of no peace no war with Ethiopia. In fact Ethiopia has accepted the Boundary Commission's decision on the delimitation of the border, and has repeatedly asked Eritrea to hold a dialogue over demarcation on the ground and over normalization of

relations. Eritrea consistently refuses to talk. More, it has continued to use aggression as an element of foreign policy – attacking Sudan, Djibouti and Yemen as well as Ethiopia at various times since its independence. In addition it has also made continuous efforts to destabilize its neighbors and even supported Al-Shabaab terrorists in Somalia. One effect of this has been that it is now under UN Security Council sanctions. We hope Eritrea will stop its efforts to destabilize activities, change its behavior act to normalize relations with neighbors. So far we have seen no sign of this.

Overall, policies towards our neighbors are based on mutual benefit, non-interference, respect for sovereignty and a very real commitment to cooperate in regional development through IGAD as well as bilaterally. The only exception is Eritrea.

At last I want to make few remarks on the current political dynamics in Ethiopia. There's been a widely publicized wave of protests over the last two year or so. These largely peaceful demonstrations were compounded by some violent protests. The public voiced grievances on the lack of good governance and a failure to provide services create adequate access for employment. There has been a consensus about the need for reforms which are now going to be introduced to deal with the main criticisms, including the lack of opposition representation, identified both within the government and the ruling party. The Executive Committee of the ruling party (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) had conducted a thorough and extensive assessment on the current situation in Ethiopia during its meeting held from December 12 to 29, 2017.

The Ruling party identified that the challenges in the democratization process need to be addressed in a timely manner. EPRDF looked in to the disparities in development provisions across various parts of the country due to lack of efficiency in the implementation of programs and policies while recognizing contribution of the Federal system to address issues of equity and equal opportunity for development. There were gaps in promoting national identity that encompassed diversity within the context of the constitutional order. One of the problems was the gap in terms of accommodating pluralism and diversity of views in the country which have been assessed as hindrance to further march to widen the political space.

We decided to continue building multiparty democratic system by harnessing the constructive role that can be played by opposition political parties, scholars and members of the civil society. In this respect, the government released prisoners including some members of political parties that were prosecuted suspected of committing crimes and those sentenced by court were pardoned in accordance with the relevant law of the country.

The Government expressed its commitment to further strengthen solidarity in nation-building and forging national unity in line with the constitutional order of the country while maintaining diversity.

Thank you!