

**Remarks by H.E. Ambassador Teshome  
Toga on the occasion of Ethiopian  
Cultural and Musical Festival at Bozar  
Fine Arts Centre**

**March 5 2016**

**Bruxelles**

**Your Excellency Mr Didier Nagant, Ambassador of Belgium to Ethiopia**

**Mr. Paul Dujardin, CEO and Artistic Director**

**Distinguished Guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

At the outset I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you all to this Ethiopian musical and cultural festival organised for the second time here at Bozar, the prestigious art centre of Europe. Allow me to extend my sincere congratulations to the Belgo-Ethiopian Association on the occasion of its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, during which it served to building bridges and understanding between the peoples of the two friendly Countries of Belgium and Ethiopia. The Association also played a great role in promoting Ethiopian music, art and culture for the last two decades by building the real images of the Ethiopia.

Today we gather here in this magnificent venue of Bozar yet again for another festival aimed at promoting Ethiopian culture and music to Belgian's in particular and the international community in Brussels in general.

Ethiopian culture and music is not so alien for European audience especially for Belgians as similar cultural show was held here in Bozar suing the celebration of Ethiopian Millennium eight years ago. The Event clearly manifested that Ethiopia with its oldest civilisation has rich culture and unique musical melody.

Similarly, last February, the Father of Ethio-jazz and a notable musician and arranger Mulatu Astateke presented his live concert in Antwerp at De Roma. Thanks to the Ethiopian restaurants who played their part Serving Ethiopian cuisines and music along with its cultural makeup, most Europeans and Belgians are well exposed to the spicy Ethiopian delicacy.

Ethiopia is a country that embraces over 80 nations, nationalities with their languages and 200 dialects each of which having its own unique culture, traditional musical instruments, cultural dances and mosaic of costumes. This other and rich face of Ethiopian cultural heritage was not what was depicted by the media. Today we have a country in transformation and under nation building with the new narrative of Ethiopia rising, Ethiopia is one of the fastest growing economies and tourist friendly country.

In 2015 the European Council for Trade and Tourism selected Ethiopia as a world best tourism destination, in view of the fact that country exhibits nine world heritage sites inscribed by UNESCO, and to this effect the media reiterating Ethiopia as nation in the process of transformation. Several years have passed since we officially declared the renaissance of our country and with a great determination of our people and government; we are registering overwhelming multi-faceted achievements and we are strongly determined to continue working to deepen our renaissance and transformation to claim the rightful place of Ethiopians in the community of nations.

As they seeing is believing, I would like to take this opportunity to invite you all to visit Ethiopia to experience a genuine test of the country.

**Your excellency**

**Invited Guests,**

**Ladies and Gentleman,**

Ethiopia is a country where it all begun. We are a country where the cradle of humanity originated. The country was never under the foreign hands thanks to our fathers and forefathers. We remain pioneers for pan-Africanism and this has enabled us to keep our own identity, culture and musical harmonies unique to Ethiopia. This is the reason why Nelson Mandela wrote in his autobiography as follows, I quote

*“Ethiopia always has a special place in my imagination and the prospect of visiting Ethiopia attracted me more strongly than a trip to France, England and America combined. I felt I would be visiting my own genesis unearthing the roots of what made me an African”* End of quote

When it comes to Ethiopian Music, St Yared who was born in the city of Axum in 505 AD is considered to be the first Ethiopian head professor for creating Zema and Poetry or the chant tradition of Ethiopia, particularly Chants of Ethiopian Orthodox Church. St Yared’s innovation of notation is centuries old before Europeans created the present musical Notation. St Yared, with his enormous

musical talents, is considered to be a composer of music, a writer and a poet of his time.

Ethiopians are indeed a big fan of music and to this date our lives are highly intertwined with music and songs. We Ethiopians use music in every part of our life to express our feelings in times of peace, war, sorrow, love, harvest season, weeding and to express our spirituality both at church and mosques.

Presently, many talented young Ethiopians are pursuing their music education at the school named after St. Yared established in 1954 which is now under the administration of Addis Ababa University. And some of today's concert presenters were students of Yared school of Music.

**Your Excellency  
Invited Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would like to seize this opportunity to highly appreciate the Musicians of the Addis Aquatic Band who are amongst us tonight to entertain us with Ethiopian finest popular songs of the past and the contemporary. Allow me to also acknowledge all the partners and organizers of this festival especially Bozar, Ethiopian Airlines and Belgo- Ethiopian Association together with the Ethiopian Embassy in Brussels for exerting their utmost effort in making this event with

the view of promoting Ethiopian diverse mix of culture and vibrant music in this splendid venue.

It would be remiss of me to conclude my remark if I fail to mention the diligent contribution of the whole staff of Bozar especially Mrs Kathleen Low and Mr. Van der Eecken Tony on one hand and the leadership of Belgo-Ethiopian Association, especially of Mr Philippe Meert and Ato Thewodros Berhanu on the other.

Allow me to officially open the most expected part of this festivals; the Musical concert organized by Guitarist and accordion Girum Mezmur along with the finest Musicians such us Ayele Mamo who plays mandolin, Henock Temesegegn(Double Base); Nathnaiel Tesemma(drums Percussions ) Aklilu Wolde Yohannes (Clarnet,flute) and Misale Legesse(Kebero Percussions)

While wishing you a pleasant entertaining and educating time, I would like to once again invite you to visit Ethiopia where you will experience enchanting culture, nature and welcoming people.

I thank you!