

**Speech of Ambassador H.E. Teshome Toga at the inaugural  
ceremony of the new Chancery Building  
Brussels, 16 June 2016**

**Your Excellency Mr Hailemariam Desalegn,  
Prime Minister of the FDRE,  
Excellency Madam Roman Tesfaye, First Lady of Ethiopia,  
Mr Dirk Achten, President of the Direction Committee of Federal Public Service and  
Foreign Affairs Committee  
Representing the Government of Belgium,  
Excellency Amb Berhane Gebrechristos, Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of  
Ethiopia,  
Ato Yonas Yosef, State Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Excellencies Ambassadors from Eastern Africa Region, Friends and partners from  
EU Institutions,  
Excellency Amb. Ajay Bramdeo, Permanent Representative the AU,  
Dear invited guests, and members of the diaspora  
Ladies and gentlemen,**

Allow me, from the outset, to welcome you all to this official opening ceremony of the newly acquired premises that will house the Ethiopian Embassy in Brussels. I am indeed honoured and privileged to especially welcome the Hon PM and the First Lady and thank them for gracing this ceremony by their presence. We are pleasantly overjoyed to have these premises inaugurated in your presence, Mr. PM. I am also grateful to our friends and partners from our region, EU institutions, Belgian officials, the private sector, representatives of diaspora and leaders of universities for joining us today.

**Excellency, PM Hailemariam,  
Ladies and gentlemen,**

Ethiopia, the second most populous member of the ACP group of states, like many members of the group, has been in Brussels for over forty years now. However, unlike many ACP

countries, including countries in our region, it never had premises of its own until we acquired this property on December 19, 2014, that we can now proudly call a place of our own, or even an Ethiopian House in the heart of Brussels.

**Mr. Prime Minister,  
Excellencies,**

Our presence here has two objectives: to represent Ethiopia in the Benelux countries bilaterally, and to the EU institutions multilaterally. Ethiopia has a longstanding and strong partnership with the Benelux countries and the EU, which has evolved from donor-recipient relation to an all-rounded cooperation over the years. I believe, it is in the realization of this fact that Ethiopia and the EU agreed to take their partnership to a higher and strategic level. Your participation, Hon PM, in the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the EDDs is yet another manifestation of such a strategic engagement

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and gentlemen,**

The foundation for our partnership with the EU is the Cotonou partnership agreement. This agreement is due to expire in 2020. Both sides are not only reflecting on the past but also looking into the future beyond 2020. Therefore, the time between now and 2018, when the formal negotiations will begin, is critical. Ethiopia was selected by our region, Eastern Africa, to chair both the ACP Council of Ministers and the Committee of Ambassadors beginning 2017, for which we are grateful. We will be in the bureau as incoming and outgoing chair. This will give us sufficient space and time to contribute to the debate about future perspective of ACP EU partnership. We are currently consulting with relevant sectors back home and with colleagues from the region in order to find the best way we could influence the negotiations and the framework for partnership in our future engagement with the EU.

As I said earlier, the Embassy also represents Ethiopia in the Benelux and Baltic countries. Our bilateral relations with the three countries of Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxembourg is also witnessing positive trends, especially in the areas of trade, investment, tourism and cooperation in higher education. Given the rapidly growing participation of the Dutch private sector in trade and investment in Ethiopia and the size of our diaspora in the country, we

strongly recommend that it is time to reopen the Consulate General office in The Hague and maintain political representation from Brussels. The Consulate General, if opened, could focus on trade and investment, diaspora participation and consular services.

**Your Excellency,**

With these multifaceted duties and representations, it is only befitting, albeit long overdue, that we have a place we can comfortably and conveniently work from.

Surely, this facility, situated on one of the main avenues of Brussels, very close to European institutions, at walking distance from the ACP secretariat and not far from the institutions of our host country, is strategically located and suitable for our daily engagements with our partners and interlocutors. It is also easily accessible to our clients so that members of the diaspora, business community, tourists and other visitors to Ethiopia could access the services rendered by the Embassy without any difficulty.

With this new facility, we will be able to comfortably organise receptions, business forums, diaspora meetings, cultural shows and exhibit our export items; not to mention the savings on our rents and the positive image it will portray about Ethiopia and its culture.

**Hon Prime Minister,**

I know that several efforts were made by my predecessors including, Amb Berhane and his predecessor, to acquire a facility here. We finally succeeded. This was only made possible with your personal support and that of your government, which was also in line with your government's scheme of acquiring properties for our diplomatic missions on priority and strategic considerations. I am immensely grateful to you and your government for that decision. I wish to pay tribute to FM Dr. Tedros, who unreservedly espoused my proposal and rolled it out in the budget process. He also followed closely the conclusion of the purchase process, which was not easy. I had to persevere. On behalf my colleagues and on my own behalf, I sincerely express our deep appreciation for the understanding and commitment of the government, which in turn is a clear expression of Ethiopia's desire to pursue a long term partnership with the EU and the BENELUX countries.

I would also like to thank the government of Spain through the Director of Cervantes, Mr. Felipe SANTOS RODRIUGUEZ for the smooth transaction & handing over of the property and donation of some fixtures as a gesture of friendship between Ethiopia and Spain.

**Mr. Prime Minister,**

I recall that I had submitted a proposal to acquire not only the chancery building but also an official residence for the Embassy. However, the minister held the view that given financial constraints for other priorities we should acquire one property at a time. And I complied. Of course, I was well aware of the situation but wanted to take advantage of the real state value then. I know investments like this one can be stressful but long term return is obvious. Diplomacy has thought us that one should grab every opportunity that comes one's way. Therefore, Hon Prime Minister, you would agree with me that it is time now to complete what we started two years ago. May I appeal to you to do good also on acquiring the official residence before the real estate value appreciate once again.

Finally, can I assure you, Your Excellency, that my colleagues and I would spare no effort to make sure that the investment on the chancery creates value for our tax payers' money. Once again. thank you for gracing the occasion with your presence and with that of the First Lady. I also thank our friends and partners for their Presence at this ceremony.

I thank you.