



ETHIO NEWS

Politics

HIGH-LEVEL ERITREAN DELEGATION VISITS ETHIOPIA



PM Abiy and Foreign Minister Workneh welcoming the Eritrean High-Level Delegation at the airport

Photo: mfa

A high-level Eritrean delegation to Ethiopia, headed by Eritrean Foreign Minister and Envoy to the African Union Osman Saleh, and Presidential Adviser Yemane Gebreab, arrived in Addis Ababa, on June 26 for a three-day visit. It was the first such visit for twenty years. It followed Prime Minister Dr. Abiy's "olive branch", extended to the Government of Eritrea with the intention of ending the stalemate between the two countries that has existed for over eighteen years, as well as President Isaias' positive response to Ethiopia's call for peace, reconciliation and dialogue. It was on June 5 that Ethiopia announced its commitment to implement the Algiers Agreement and the decisions of the Ethio-Eritrea Border Commission unconditionally in order to resolve problems with Eritrea in a peaceful manner. Prime Minister Abiy again underlined this resolve on June 18 when he stressed that it was time to put an end to the situation between the two countries and bring jobs and prosperity to the people living along the border. Eritrea's President Isaias, speaking on the occasion of the celebration of Martyrs Day in Asmara, and referring to the "positive signals issued in these past days", announced he would send a delegation to Addis Ababa. He said events and developments that had unfolded in the region in general and in Ethiopia in particular warranted appropriate attention. "For this reason, and outside any myopic considerations of public relations stunts and advantages," he said, "we will send a delegation to Addis Ababa to gauge current developments directly and in depth as well as to chart out a plan for continuous future action."

Expressing his gratitude to President Isaias' positive response to his olive branch,

the Prime Minister reiterated the fact that Ethiopia and Eritrea shared lots of commonalities, from culture and languages to politics and economy. He also referred to the unwanted inter-generational repercussions of wars: "wars consume time, human lives and above all, minds", adding, "wars should not be the heirlooms we pass on to posterity."

The high-level Eritrean delegation that arrived at Bole International Airport on June 26 was, therefore, aiming to take part in a constructive engagement with Ethiopia in the bid to restore and normalize relations between the two countries. The delegation was warmly welcomed by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed and Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu. Several scholars, artists, religious leaders and cultural troupes were also present at the colorful welcoming ceremony in honor of the delegation whose members were garlanded with flowers. The flags of both countries fluttered from lampposts in Addis Ababa along with a banner reading "Welcome!" In his remarks, the Prime Minister suggested that flights to Asmara might soon start: "For Ethiopians who have longed for heading to Massawa for a stroll, I call on you to be ready as Ethiopian Airlines will start services there soon," adding, "Artists, prepare yourselves since we will celebrate the Ethiopian New Year in both Asmara and Addis Ababa." Eritrea's Foreign Minister, Osman Saleh said, "Today is a day of joy because two identical peoples and two generations have been separated throughout that period. But through struggles, we have opened the door of peace." Following talks with the delegation, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy hosted a dinner in honor of the Eritrean delegation to Ethiopia at the National Palace in the evening. Religious leaders, athletes and invited guests attended the event.

The Prime Minister called attention to the fact that the historic occasion marked a new dawn in Ethio-Eritrean relations, adding that the "black curtain" has now been torn, and this offered a new chapter of relations between the two sisterly countries. He said, "Today is a special day for both Eritreans and Ethiopians; we want to have and build peace with all our neighbors, especially with Eritrea."

His message, he said, to the people of both countries was a message of solidarity and collaboration and he stressed the need to further expand "this hard earned and historic journey into a far broader peace." "Our desire is to love rather than hate. What we miss is to hug our brothers in Asmara. If we are in love, then the other things are minor. And if we do that, we might not need a border. Our neighbor-

liness is sharing things and drinking coffee together." The head of the delegation, Eritrea's Foreign Minister Osman Saleh, noted the warm welcome accorded to his delegation by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy and expressed his satisfaction at the historic event. He said: "This is now time for peace and the joy here in Addis at this historic event reflects the same in Asmara too," adding, "We are brothers and sisters; we are one and same people."

ETHIOPIAN STATE VISIT TO EGYPT



PM Abiy and President el-Sisi

Photo: mfa

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed returned to Addis Ababa on June 11 after a State Visit to Egypt and a meeting with Fattah el-Sisi. The two leaders held a joint press conference at the end of Prime Minister Dr. Abiy's visit, and President el-Sisi, describing Egypt's relations with Ethiopia as "strategic", promised to maintain cooperation with Ethiopia for the best interests of both nations. The President noted: "I would like to reiterate that the relation between Egypt and Ethiopia is a strategic partnership relation, and that Egypt's strategic policy is to enhance common interests with Ethiopia in all fields."

Prime Minister Abiy expressed his delighted in making his first official visit to Egypt, "to a great Nation and its great People." He said: "What I would like to convey to the People of Egypt today is that we Ethiopians are people who discern and value brotherhood and neighborhood as well as the fear of God deep in our heart. We, the People of Ethiopia, never, never, have any intention or interest to harm our brotherly



people of Egypt.” He added, “Despite our conviction that we can and have to use and develop the river of Abay [the Nile], utilizing the river to develop our country, we believe, that this should not be at the expense of the interests of Egypt and Sudan. Hence, I would strongly urge the People and Government of Egypt to put their full trust in this.”

The Prime Minister conveyed a strong message to the media. He said that members of the media had toiled to create animosity over the years. He said, “You have a name, the Fourth Estate. The Fourth Estate doesn’t serve as a government of mayhem but as a bridge between the people and the government.” To the media in Ethiopia as well as in Egypt, Prime Minister Abiy said, “You must work to bring about sustainable peace and development that can ensure a prosperous common journey in the future.” In the past, the Premier added, false propaganda could easily be accepted, whereas today “we have witnessed here that in a country of 29 million educated people this would be unthinkable.” He said that in this age of literacy “what the educated people need is truth, reason and cooperation.”

Prime Minister Abiy underlined that “For the past one hundred years we all have been offering our support to a neighboring country while stabbing another neighboring country in the back. No country has either profited or triumphed from this behavior. The only road for success is cooperation. While our peoples have no job to sustain their lives and are quite impoverished, the precious time we have wasted to harm one another is a total loss.” Maintaining such actions have never helped and will never help the people of Africa and the Middle East, the Prime Minister noted that the two leaders had emphasized the need to understand. He said, “We have agreed that the ties that we would forge hereafter will be based solely on a spirit of solidarity and on “win-win” principles. He re-affirmed that he and President el-Sisi had agreed to work together not only the issue of the Nile but in other ways, including industrialization, road and railway connectivity in all areas of development.

The two leaders also affirmed their commitment to set up a joint fund for infrastructure development, including energy. They agreed to cooperate on the Somalia and South Sudan peace processes. President el-Sisi particularly appreciated Ethiopia’s new initiative to end the Ethiopia-Eritrea stalemate. Prime Minister Abiy commended President el-Sisi for the release of 32 Ethiopian prisoners from jail in Egypt. The prisoners returned to Addis Ababa along with the Prime Minister and his delegation.

ETHIOPIAN STATE VISIT TO UGANDA



PM Abiy and Ugandan President Museveni

Photo: mfa

In Uganda, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy and President Museveni met on June 9 to discuss ways to strengthen issues of mutual interest between Ethiopia and Uganda, including trade and political ties. They agreed to concretize cooperation in priority sectors, including energy, trade, agriculture, transport, tourism and culture. They stressed the need to increase the volume of bilateral trade between the two countries by bringing together the respective private sectors to identify opportunities for trade and investment. They also emphasized the need to work on road transport links between North Eastern Uganda to Southern Ethiopia through Northern Kenya. The two leaders also discussed the situation in South Sudan and urged all parties to the conflict to redouble efforts to find a peaceful political solution through dialogue under the IGAD-led High Level Revitalization Forum. They further agreed on the need to convene an extra-ordinary IGAD Summit to address outstanding issues. In a joint communiqué issued at State House after the bilateral talks between the delegations of the two countries, President Yoweri Museveni congratulated Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali upon his election by the Ethiopian Parliament as the Prime Minister of Ethiopia and said this confirmed the confidence the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front and the entire population of Ethiopia had in his leadership.

During his visit, Prime Minister Dr. Ahmed Abiy was honored by the presentation of the Most Excellent Order of the Pearl of Africa Grand Medal, Uganda’s highest accolade. It was presented by President Yoweri Museveni for Dr. Abiy’s “reconciliatory leadership in achieving peace and stability in Ethiopia and for extending an olive branch to Eritrea”, on Uganda’s National Heroes Day. This is celebrated in Uganda every year on June 9 in memory of those who sacrificed their lives in order to restore peace and security to the country. The only other African leader to be given this honor has been Equatorial Guinea’s President Teodoro Obiang Mba-

sogo. Addressing the crowds gathered for the occasion, Dr Abiy Ahmed Ali noted that Ethiopia’s relationship with Uganda was “built on a strong foundation of understanding and mutual respect not to interfere with each others’ internal affairs.”

ETHIOPIAN STATE VISIT TO SOMALIA

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed made a state visit to the Federal Republic of Somalia on June 16 at the invitation of the President Mohamed Abdullahi of Somalia. During his visit, Dr. Abiy unveiled his vision of a single market where the two nations were tied together with a shared purpose and a shared respect for each other. The two leaders held talks on ways to elevate their brotherly ties to new heights. They agreed to renew commitments to further rejuvenate their relationship and urged the need for renewed engagement to intensify cooperation on commonly agreed comprehensive frameworks for forging robust diplomatic relations between the two countries. They, therefore, welcomed the formation of the Joint Cooperation Commission (JCC) at the Ministerial Level. They also emphasized that peace and stability were a prerequisite to mutual prosperity.

UAE CROWN PRINCE VISITS ETHIOPIA



Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed enjoying an Ethiopian Coffee Ceremony with PM Abiy

Photo: mfa

Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces of Abu Dhabi, arrived in Addis Ababa for an official visit on June 15, the day of the celebration of Eid Al Fitr. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed headed a delegation that included Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs; Sheikh Hamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Chief of the Abu Dhabi Crown Prince’s Court; Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation; Sheikh Theyab bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Chairman of Abu Dhabi Department of Transport; Sultan bin



Saeed Al Mansouri, Minister of Economy; Reem bint Ibrahim Al Hashemy, Minister of State for International Cooperation; Noura bint Mohammed Al Kaabi, Minister of Culture and Knowledge Development; Dr. Sultan bin Ahmad Sultan Al Jaber, Minister of State; Ali bin Hamad Al Shamsi and other senior officials.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, Al Nahyan, was received at Bole International Airport by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed, along with Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, Minister of Government Communications Ahmed Shide as well as other high-level Government officials. Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed tweeted on arrival, "I was pleased to arrive in Addis Ababa, a city of history, civilization and cultural diversity." Dr Abiy then drove Sheikh Mohammed from the airport to Jubilee Palace, where the two sides discussed issues ranging from enhanced friendship and cooperation, business, economic and people-to-people ties to matters of regional and international peace and security. The Crown Prince was reciprocating the visit to the UAE by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy on May 19. Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh also visited the UAE in January when the two sides expressed their deep-seated commitment to give due emphasis to work together in the finance, investment and employment sectors.

STATE OF EMERGENCY LIFTED



State Minister Hirut briefs the diplomatic community following the lift on the national state of emergency

Photo: mfa

Ethiopia lifted the six-month state of emergency two months earlier than originally planned, and the decision was widely welcomed as one of the most significant reforms so far by the new Prime Minister, Dr. Abiy Ahmed, who has promised extensive changes in the country. The Council of Ministers in its regular meeting earlier had reviewed the security situation of the country, noting that law and order had been restored, and approving the draft law to lift the State of Emergency.

The House of Peoples' Representatives passed the draft bill forwarded by the Council of Ministers with only 8 abstentions

this week on June 5. A State of Emergency for six months was declared on February 16, and with current peace and stability in the country, MPs said lifting the state of emergency was instrumental for building a democratic political order in the country.

Following the vote, State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs. Hirut Zemene gave a briefing to the Diplomatic community on June 6. The State Minister laid particular emphasis on the bold decisions of the Executive Committee of the ruling coalition Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) at its meeting earlier in the week, and noted the developments on privatization and on Eritrea in particular. The State Minister, reiterating the fact that Ethiopia had registered fast and sustainable growth over the past 15 years, stressed the Committee's decisions, in light of a recent fall in economic performance, to enhance production capacity and the productivity of the agriculture and industry sectors with special emphasis on exports. This, Mrs. Hirut pointed out, included the possibility of either full or semi-privatization through shared ownership with the private sector in established firms. In her briefing, Mrs. Hirut also stressed the Government's determination to unconditionally accept the Algiers Agreement and the decisions of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC). She noted that after closely considering the current Ethio-Eritrea situation, the Government is fully committed to the effective implementation of the Algiers Agreement on the basis of the relevant international legal instruments.

Activism

ABIY AT THE RALLY FOR FORGIVENESS AND TOGETHERNESS



Crowd gathered in support of PM Abiy

Photo: mfa

Hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians from all walks of life and all corners of the country flocked to Meskel Square in Addis Ababa on June 23 to show their support for the popular reforms Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed had undertaken and for the positive and rapid changes he had brought to the nation since he took office. During this massive and historic rally, dubbed the "Rally for Forgiveness and Togetherness", the Prime Minister extolled the people of Ethiopia for their determination and commitment to be part of the wave of radical changes that are sweeping the nation and encouraged people to believe in the prospect of a bright future for the country.

Abiy expressed "the extraordinary optimism, honour and great pleasure" he felt for "seeing so many Ethiopians gathered on this special occasion to celebrate love, forgiveness, unity and harmony as defining values of the nation." He said: "We have not yet served six months since we assumed responsibility, we have not yet lifted the shadow of overwhelming challenges ahead of us; therefore, we have yet to earn your gratitude." However, he went on: "My fellow Ethiopians, filled with hope, you commenced today with a grand gesture of appreciation, believing that hatred has ruined us and reduced our standing, but love will offer dividend and create a bridge"

Honouring the sacrifices so many martyrs have paid to achieve the betterment of the nation, Dr. Abiy called attention to the fact that "it is imperative to express gratitude to those martyrs who did not live to witness this day, who died so that we could live, who were dishonoured so that we could walk in dignity, who were incarcerated so that we could walk free, who sacrificed their lives so that we could live ours. They could have lived without us; but we would not be here without them." Alluding to the rampant factionalism that has affected the nation for so many generations, leading people astray and forcing them to succumb to hatred, division and inter-cine conflicts, the Prime Minister repeated that "nothing shall stop us from rising to the great heights we aspire to reach, if, with unconditional love, we unshackle ourselves from the hatred and resentment which previously impelled us to undervalue what we possess, in search for what we don't have."

Shortly after the Prime Minister concluded his inspiring address, a grenade attack occurred at the rally. The Prime Minister was unscathed and in a broadcast on Ethiopian Television shortly afterwards said the attack had been orchestrated by anti-peace forces who wanted to undermine the rally. The explosion claimed the lives of two individuals and left scores injured. A dozen suspects were arrested and are currently under police investigation. Experts from the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation are providing technical assistance in bringing the perpetrators to justice. A number of police officials, including the Deputy Police Commissioner of the Addis Ababa Police Commission have also been detained for security failings.