



ETHIO NEWS

Politics

PRIME MINISTER DR. ABIY'S HISTORIC VISIT TO ASMARA



PM Abiy and President Isaias signing the Joint Declaration

Photo: mfa

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed landed in the Eritrean capital, Asmara on July 8 on an epoch-making two-day official visit to Eritrea. It marked the end of twenty years of diplomatic disconnect and the state of "no peace no war" which had persisted since 2000. He and President Isaias told their peoples they were choosing love and forgiveness over hatred and violence. The Prime Minister headed a delegation which included Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu; the Speaker of the House of Peoples' Representatives, Mufarihat Kamil; and the Speaker of the House of Federation, Keria Ibrahim. On arrival, the Prime Minister and his delegation were warmly welcomed at the airport by President Isaias, high ranking Eritrean government officials and residents of Asmara.

From the outset in their highly successful talks, the two leaders were committed to the need for a common understanding to set the tone for rapid, positive changes on the basis of respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity, equality and the mutual interest of both their countries. The success of their meetings was demonstrated by the major outcomes of their discussions including agreement for the commencement of diplomatic relations between the two countries, the use of ports, the resumption of flights between the two countries as well as the opening of telecommunications, defunct for twelve years.

At the end of their summit deliberations on July 9, Prime Minister Dr Abiy and President Isaias signed a five-point "Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship" that will serve as a roadmap for the future of relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea. This exemplified the wide-ranging desires and aspirations of

the two peoples, outlining five major areas in which Ethiopia and Eritrea have reached consensus which would serve as the basis for future progress.

In a letter to President Isaias on his return to Addis Ababa, Dr. Abiy said he was "elated with the historic breakthrough we have made in our sincere effort to bring a lasting peace between our two nations. I am immensely encouraged by the great strides we were able to take and the mutual trust and friendship we quickly forged." He said: "we can confidently say we have effectively closed a bitter and destructive chapter in our two nations' histories that had lasted way too long," adding "the Government of Ethiopia is deeply appreciative of the cooperation and readiness that your Government has shown to make this historic milestone possible." Dr. Abiy said both peoples were eager for normalization of relations between the two nations and "what we have achieved during the summit is to bring to reality our peoples' hopes and dreams." He said his Government was keen to implement the terms laid out in the Joint Declaration to make up quickly for lost opportunities and said: "I sincerely hope and believe that the process we have started will continue with the same enthusiasm and energy as was evident during this summit. The Prime Minister concluded by saying he looked forward "to continue to work with you and to further deepen our engagement. It is

and implementation of economic, political, social, and other agreements. They would be supervised by the two foreign ministers and would study details of Assab port usage as well as look into questions of sharing or leasing usage of ports and land and air transport tariff issues. When air travel starts next week, visas would still be required but removal of visa requirements would be considered in the future. One committee would also study and propose solutions over prisoners of war captured during the 1998-2000 war. A technical committee would be set up to resolve the border dispute and help implement the Algiers peace agreement signed in 2000. It would follow-up the implementation of the border decision, the Algiers Agreement, and related issues.

A number of other developments are already being discussed, including plans for visits by high-level Eritrean political and public diplomacy delegations to Tigray and Afar Regional States, Ethiopian and Eritrean music festivals, as well as Ethiopia's use of Assab port, the removal of visa requirements, and the opening of embassies in Addis Ababa and Asmara respectively, possibly as early as September.

The two leaders agreed that Eritrea would re-join IGAD and contribute toward the peace and progress of the region. It was also agreed that Ethiopia would make efforts to resolve the dispute between Eritrea and



The Five Pillars of the Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship

1. The state of war between Ethiopia and Eritrea has come to an end. A new era of peace and friendship has been opened.
2. The two governments will endeavor to forge intimate political, economic, social, cultural and security cooperation that serves and advances the vital interests of their peoples;
3. Transport, trade and communications links between the two countries will resume; diplomatic ties and activities will restart;
4. The decision on the boundary between the two countries will be implemented.
5. Both countries will jointly endeavor to ensure regional peace, development and cooperation.

my earnest hope that our efforts will lay the foundation for a positively inter-twined and bright future for our two nations."

Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh provided further details of the agreements reached, noting that the two sides had already established two commissions headed by the respective foreign ministers of both countries. "We're going to have sub-committees that will work out in detail when and how each and every issue will be implemented," he said. These would be tasked with details

Djibouti and for the lifting of international sanctions on Eritrea. Indeed, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy on July 8 handed a letter to the UN Secretary-General in Addis Ababa, requesting the lifting of sanctions against Eritrea. IGAD's Executive Secretary-General, Ambassador Mahboub Maalim sent a letter to Prime Minister Abiy, the Chair of IGAD, the same day welcoming the "normalization of relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea and the resolution of the border issue", reiterating IGAD's support for the ongoing bilateral



developments, and adding: "As you pursue your policy of peace in the region and rapprochement towards Eritrea, we also look forward to Eritrea re-joining the IGAD family and collectively advancing peace and development in our region."

The response of the international community and of the media to this groundbreaking agreement and to the changing relationship on the ground has been uniformly positive.

PRESIDENT ISAIAS AFWERKI'S HISTORIC VISIT TO ETHIOPIA



President Afwerki, President Mulato and PM Abiy

Photo: mfa

A high level delegation led by the President of the State of Eritrea, President Isaias Afe-works arrived in Addis Ababa for a three-day state visit on July 14. It was his first in over two decades. Upon arrival at Bole International Airport President Isaias and his delegation was welcomed by Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu, Minister for Government Communication Affairs Office, Ahmed Shide and many other dignitaries, athletes, celebrities and religious leaders.

Thousands of Ethiopians from all walks of life, young and old, lined the streets of Addis Ababa, all the way from the Airport to the Jubilee Palace, singing, cheering and ecstatically welcoming President Isaias as his motorcade passed on Africa Avenue.

On his arrival at the National Palace, President Isaias was once again warmly welcomed to his "Second Home" – Addis Ababa – by President Dr. Mulatu Teshome, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy, Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh, Oromia Presidents of regional states and a crowd of athletes, musicians, artists and other guests of honor including former President Dr. Negaso Gidada. Following the welcoming ceremony, Dr. Abiy hosted quite a State Luncheon in honor of President Isaias.

In his opening remarks the Prime Minister expressed his heartiest gratitude for President Isaias' unconditional acceptance of Ethiopia's call for peace, reconciliation and love. President Isaias, said he was "short of words to express the unfathomable happiness" he felt and experienced during this ep-

ochal ceremony. He also expressed his gratitude to the people of Ethiopia, especially the residents of the City of Addis Ababa for the warm welcome they accorded to him and his delegation. President Isaias said: "The one who still says that the people of Ethiopia and Eritrea are two different people from this day onwards is a fool", further accentuating the new wind of change, of peace and love that is blowing between the two peoples. During the luncheon, President Isaias was presented with a plethora of gifts. The most memorable of which was a surprise gift of a horse, a shield and a spear, from Oromia Regional President Lemma Megersa.

The Prime Minister said: "Forgiveness frees the consciousness. When we say we have reconciled, we mean we have chosen a path of forgiveness and love," he stressed. He added: "When I spoke with Isaias, I told him that there may not be enough hotels as Ethiopians visit Massawa and Asmara. He said he would leave his house for them and stay in balconies." In a keynote address, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy also called the attention of those present and those watching live around the world to his assertion: "Peace is the mother of freedom and freedom in turn is the mother of prosperity." He said the value of peace and freedom must be equated with the unfathomable value of health. The value of health, he said, "is often overlooked when people are healthy, while its value is most treasured when we are overcome by sickness."

On July 16 together with Prime Minister Dr. Abiy, President Isaias attended the re-opening of the long defunct Eritrean Embassy, closed in 1998. The two leaders jointly raised the Eritrean flag inside the embassy as a military band played Eritrea's national anthem before touring the building. During the inauguration ceremony, the Prime Minister handed over the keys of the Embassy to President Isaias. The gesture was welcomed by the international community as well as the media corps, classified as an example of the "rapid thaw between the two countries" and celebrated as well as an example for the whole sub-region. In a tweet Eritrea's Information Minister, Yemane Gebre Meskel described the reopening of the embassy as "yet another milestone in the robust and special ties of peace and friendship both countries are cultivating with earnestness in these momentous times."

President Isaias left for Asmara at around noon at the end of a highly successful, most welcome and epoch-making state visit. It's been an extraordinary three weeks, – from the arrival of an Eritrean delegation in Addis Ababa on June 26, and Prime Minister Dr. Abiy's arrival in Asmara and his embrace with President Isaias on July 8 and the declaration of the end of war the next day, to President Isaias' welcome visit to Addis Ababa on July 14. The same week, telecommunication links between Addis Ababa and Asmara were re-opened, and Ethiopian Airlines resumed daily flights to Asmara.

OFFICIAL SIDELINE MEETINGS IN THE UNITED STATES



PM Abiy and Vice President Pence

Photo: mfa

On the sidelines of a major Diaspora tour to the United States, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy held several other meetings on July 27, with US Vice-President Mike Pence, the President of the World Bank, Jim Yong Kim and the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Ms. Christine Lagarde.

The Prime Minister met Vice President Pence at the White House. Both sides underlined their countries' shared values, noting that Ethiopia and the United States enjoyed a strong partnership and bilateral ties. They also emphasized their commitment to building an even stronger partnership in the days ahead. Vice President Pence congratulated the Prime Minister on Ethiopia's democratic reforms and reinforced US commitment to support Ethiopia's development. He applauded the Prime Minister's historic reform efforts, including improving respect for human rights, reforming the business environment, and making peace with Eritrea. The Vice President encouraged continued Ethiopian leadership to resolve regional conflicts in the Horn of Africa, as well as strengthening U.S.-Ethiopia trade and investment.

In his meeting with the President of the World Bank, Jim Yong Kim, the two sides discussed ways of enhancing cooperation. The Prime Minister underlined that Ethiopia had started big dreams; and "we've the potential to realize our dreams". He noted Ethiopia's greatest potential lay in its human capital, with youth accounting for 70% of the country's population, but added, "Our dream will only remain a dream if we fail to tap this potential". The Prime Minister said his government would work hard to tackle corruption, and it would also focus on changing peoples' attitudes towards corruption. President Kim said the World Bank had been "closely following you ever since you took office, and we commend your efforts in establishing transparent and accountable structures". He added, "We endorse the reforms being



taken and we support your efforts". He said: "The World Bank is ready to provide robust support to Ethiopia". Overall, the discussions covered a range of issues including the future of disruptive technology, human capital, sustainable debt financing and the risk of debt distress.

Dr. Abiy also met with Ms. Lagarde Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund at IMF Headquarters in Washington and had productive discussions over IMF support for Ethiopia's reform plans and priorities. After their meeting, Ms. Lagarde said she had been very pleased to welcome the Prime Minister to the IMF. She said they had an engaging and productive meeting. She had congratulated the Prime Minister on the Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship recently signed with Eritrea, which, she said, would have a positive impact on the stability of the region. She also commended his recent policy announcements and what she described as "his ambitious economic reform agenda." She stressed that she had reiterated "the IMF's commitment to work with the Ethiopian authorities to ensure that the economy achieves high rates of sustainable and inclusive growth to reduce poverty."

Diaspora

DIASPORA OUTREACH TOUR IN NORTH AMERICA



PM Abiy arriving in Minnesota

Photo: mfa

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed held a successful six-day Diaspora outreach tour in three major cities in North America, Washington DC, Los Angeles and Minnesota until July 30.

The Prime Minister arrived in Washington DC on July 26 at the beginning of a visit of scheduled meetings with the Ethiopian Diaspora community residing in North America. The meetings were held under the theme: "Break the Wall and Build a Bridge". The Prime Minister led a delegation including Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh Gebeyehu; the Minister for the Government Communication Affairs Office, Ahmed Shide; the President of the Oromia Regional State, Lemma Megersa; and other high-level government officials. Upon arrival at Dulles International Airport, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy was warmly welcomed by Ethiopia's Ambassador to the

US, Ambassador Kassa Teklebirhan and members of the Ethiopian Diaspora community.

In an electrifying address to over 25,000 members of the Ethiopian Diaspora in Washington DC, Convention Center and an additional 55,000 more watching the event on TV screens outside the hall on July 28, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy capitalized on his call: "Let's break the wall, let's build a bridge," adding that "the bridge that we build is not only beneficial for us but also one that passes to posterity". He said: "Let's build one Ethiopian community. Let's look inward and examine ourselves-let's only take the best from our history and join in common purpose. Let's build a just society." "Over the past 40 years, a wall of hatred, revenge and division had been built," which he said, was "a divisive wall built by every one of us and one that set us apart from one another". He called on the Diaspora to join hands to tear down this divisive wall.

He described the Ethiopian Diaspora as pillars of Ethiopia's growth, freedom and prosperity, further stressing that "If we want to build a country where democracy and justice prevailed, we must first reconcile with ourselves". He told the Diaspora that it embodied "our rich, diverse nationhood and are our global ambassadors". He said: "We come to you not because of our immediate needs. It's because you're integral to our identity, our renewal, our democracy, our growth, our healing and our human capital." While reminding the Diaspora of the pledge he made to them to save a dollar a day to support development projects in Ethiopia, in education and health services, the Prime Minister revealed that a committee of 10 professional Ethiopians residing in North America has been set up for the facilitation of the Diaspora Trust Fund. He added that this fund would primarily be used to finance the education of the Visually Impaired and People with Disabilities. He reminded his listeners that the government has provided a bank account number for the Ethiopia Diaspora Trust Fund.

On July 29, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed arrived in Los Angeles for the second leg of his Diaspora outreach tour in North America. He was welcomed by the city's Acting Mayor, Antonio Villaraigosa, who also declared July 29 "Ethiopia Day in Los Angeles, and scores of members of the Ethiopian Diaspora Community. Prime Minister Dr. Abiy was the first Ethiopian Prime Minister to visit Los Angeles. During his address to hundreds and thousands of the Ethiopian Diaspora in Los Angeles, Dr. Abiy again underlined the importance of unity and touched upon the fact that Ethiopia will once again be a great nation. He said, "A nation who has introduced the Gaada System to the world cannot fail to conduct democratic elections". Recalling that Ethiopia has been able to maintain its sovereignty and freedom, he underlined the importance of translating such glorious treasures to building a peaceful, prosperous and democratic Ethiopia. He called on all mem-

bers of the Ethiopian Diaspora residing in North America to stand together in one spirit for their motherland.

Prime Minister Dr. Abiy arrived in Minnesota for the third and final leg of his Diaspora visit, and was warmly welcomed by the city's governor and local senators, as well as members of the Ethiopian Diaspora community including activist Jawar Mohammed. In his address, the Prime Minister once again reiterated the need to "break the wall and build a bridge". He said: "We already hit and broke the wall in Washington DC and in Los Angeles; and here in Minnesota, it's time to clear the ruins." He further underlined the need to learn from Ethiopia's history and from the experience of other countries, and "once again build a great nation called Ethiopia." Also speaking on this occasion was Lemma Megersa, President of the Oromia Regional State who underscored the importance of "strengthening our unity." He added: "When we stand as one, our country-Ethiopia - will always remain to be strong."

During his meeting with the members of the Ethiopian Diaspora in Minnesota, the Prime Minister also announced the decision of Foreign Minister Dr. Workneh to open a Consulate-general Office in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This will be the second city in the US to have an Ethiopian Consulate-General Office, along with Los Angeles.

The Prime Minister also held discussions with over 24 US-based Ethiopian competing political parties at a political Consortium held in Washington DC. He underlined the importance of capitalizing on dialogue between all political stakeholders and the need for working together for the best interests of the nation. Leaders of the parties said this was the first time they had been proud to call an Ethiopian prime minister "Our Prime Minister". They also emphasized the need for an all-inclusive political convention in a bid to advance the national consensus.

Many different Ethiopian diaspora communities all around the world rallied in support of Prime Minister Abiy's international efforts. A large such meeting was held on July 30 in Germany while Abiy's American tour drew to its conclusion.



Members of the German diaspora and embassy staff showing support for PM Abiy

Photo: emb