



# ETHIO NEWS

## Politics

### PRIME MINISTER ABIY VISITS ROME, DAVOS AND BRUSSELS



Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte and PM Abiy

Photo: mfa

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed arrived in Rome on January 20 for an official visit at the invitation of Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte. The two Prime Ministers held a press conference after their talks which Abiy described as productive. He said: "The comprehensive discussion which I had with Giuseppe Conte was important to take the bilateral relationship between the two nations to the next level." He called enhanced cooperation between Ethiopia and Italy in the areas of development, peace, and tourism, and said Italy had agreed to finance the first stage of a feasibility study for a railway to link Addis Ababa to the Eritrean port of Massawa. As Eritrea's Minister of Information, Yemane Gebre Meskel, tweeted later: "Implementation will depend on feasibility study/concurrence of the parties". Italy also agreed to support projects to tackle food insecurity of school-aged children and rehabilitate Ethiopian soldiers who returned from Ethio-Eritrea border following their rapprochement. During his visit, Abiy paid a courtesy visit to President Sergio Mattarella and expressed his appreciation of the changes taking place in Ethiopia and its role in regional integration. The historic relationship has developed into an excellent, exemplary cooperation in all spheres of economic, political, and development cooperation. Prime Minister Conte visited Ethiopia in October last year; and President Mattarella came to Ethiopia in March 2016. The Prime Minister hailed Ethiopia's strategic partnership with Italy and called for further strengthening of partnership between the two countries especially in economic and cultural cooperation. President Mattarella expressed his immense appreciation of the Wind of Hope, the Wind of Harmony blowing

across the Horn of Africa producing a "new sense of optimism for regional peace and stability."

Prime Minister Abiy also met separately with the heads of World Food Program (WFP), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) which are all based in Rome. FAO Director General, Jose Graziano da Silva commended reforms being undertaken during the past nine months and their significance for peace, normalcy and development. Abiy welcomed FAO's work in Ethiopia and highlighted the need to tackle poverty, food security and development in a concerted and synergized manner to realize Ethiopia's transformation agendas and the Horn region as an integrated economy for holistic regional growth. In his meeting with Gilbert Houngbo, President of The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Prime Minister emphasized the need for strengthening irrigation and food security interventions. IFAD's support to Ethiopia is centered on the Government's commitment to the poorest communities through enhancing the productivity of small-holder farmers, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists. They agreed to continue building on collaboration in irrigation and rural financing. In his talks with WFP Executive Director Mr. David Beasley, Prime Minister Abiy acknowledged the work of WFP and the crucial role it has been playing in supporting food security, nutrition and capacity building.

The World Economy Forum in Davos opened on January 22, and this year's theme was "Globalization 4.0: Shaping a New Architecture in the Age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution." In his address to the Forum on January 23, Prime Minister Dr Abiy told participants about the nationwide reforms undertaken during the past nine months and the economic growth registered in the country. He underlined the practical outcomes and the progress of the sweeping reforms Ethiopia is undertaking in good governance, democratization, opening up political space and most importantly, efforts to ensure regional peace, stability and integration in the Horn. "Ethiopia today is among the fastest growing economies in the world, consistently averaging growth of over 9%. Poverty has been halved and education enrolment has markedly increased," he said. The gross domestic product had multiplied 10-fold in 25 years. The Prime Minister said investment in infrastructure had contributed a lot to the growth and attracted Foreign Direct Investment, making Ethiopia one of the leading FDI destinations in Africa. At the same time, "Our challenges however, remain formidable," and they included the need to sustain the level of growth, and especially to find jobs for a rapidly expanding young popula-

tion. In order to ensure the continued upward trajectory and achieve even more rapid and sustainable growth, Ethiopia had embarked on a comprehensive reform process since April, he said. And this was deeply rooted in the philosophy of "medemer", an Amharic word for coming together. "Medemer" is people-centered and has three interdependent pillars, vibrant democracy, economic vitality and regional integration and openness to the world. The Prime Minister pledged to make it easier to do business for everyone who wished to invest in Ethiopia, and he called on investors from across the world to take advantage of the huge investment and business potentials available in the country. He emphasized that his government was committed to opening up the economy to international investors in telecommunications, logistics, energy, aviation, railways, and industrial parks. It would also continue to foster public private partnerships.

On the side-lines of the Forum, the Prime Minister convened an Investment Strategy Dialogue with selected CEOs of multinational corporations to highlight the progress that is becoming evident in Ethiopia and the improvements that are tangible despite challenges and setbacks. A robust discussion showcased untapped investment opportunities and policy priorities in Ethiopia. The Prime Minister stressed Ethiopia, one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, was located in the crossroads between Africa, the Middle East and Asia with enormous untapped investment opportunities in agriculture, textile, agro-processing, infrastructure and various segments. He briefed the CEOs on the great strides Ethiopia is taking with its Growth and Transformation Plan, becoming the embodiment of the 'Africa rising narrative'. This was principally attributable to the Government actively promoting private sector investment with attractive incentive packages, coupled with major government projects aimed at achieving the Sustainable Development Goals as Ethiopia aims to become a middle-income status by 2025.

Prime Minister Abiy met various interna-



PM Abiy speaking at Davos

Photo: mfa



tional development partners on the margins of the Forum and held numerous bilateral meetings. He conducted talks on bilateral issues with Charles Michel, Prime Minister of Belgium, and discussions with the Interim President of the World Bank Group, Kristalina Georgieva. Abiy commended the Group's robust and strong technical and financial support to Ethiopia and asked for this support to be sustained. They shared views on new pipeline projects that have both regional and national dimensions. The Prime Minister met with Bill Gates, co-Chairman of Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and thanked him for the work of the Foundation in health, agriculture and state capacity building. They agreed to enhance cooperation in agriculture, irrigation and technology.

The Prime Minister discussed the importance of "a collaborative approach among governments, the private sector and civil society in addressing key global challenges" with Professor Klaus Schwab, Founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum. They agreed that Ethiopia should host the African meeting of the World Economic Forum in Addis Ababa in 2020. He also had a meeting with George Soros, Head of the Open Society Foundation, who praised the progressive measures taken in Ethiopia and the speed with which they are being delivered, mentioning particularly reforms in enabling civil societies and the progressive refugee law. They shared views on electoral integrity, challenges of democratization, access to justice and economic inclusion, institutional and regulatory reforms. The Prime Minister expressed his desire to work for the exchange of ideas and experiences with the Open Society Foundation to enhance Ethiopia's electoral integrity, and address major challenges of democratization, institutional and regulatory reforms for economic inclusion and holistic country growth.

The Prime Minister also met and held discussions with Mohammed Al Shaibani, CEO of Investment Corporation of Dubai, a US\$200 Billion Sovereign Fund. The ICD has said it is keen to invest in the hospitality and agro-business industries in Ethiopia. He had what was described as a 'very productive discussion' with Jack Ma, Chairman of the Alibaba Group on the future of disruptive technologies on markets and society. Mr. Ma agreed to consider potential investment in a technology city in Ethiopia that will impact the daily lives of the people in the region.

Following his successful visit to the World Economy Forum at Davos, Prime Minister Abiy moved on to Brussels for meetings with EU Commission leaders. He held talks with Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker on January 24. President Jean-Claude Juncker said that he was pleased to welcome the Prime Minister in Brussels; he also welcomed Ethiopia's courageous reforms and said he shared the Prime Minister's ambition for an even stronger EU-Ethiopia partnership. Ethiopia is one of the EU's important partners on the African continent.

They share a common vision for a peaceful, safe and stable Horn of Africa, a precondition for the political, economic and social development of the region as a whole. The two sides are also looking at ways of maximizing the social and economic impact of development cooperation while ensuring sustainability. This includes improved alignment of EU donors with Ethiopia's Growth and Transformation Plan II and its Climate Resilient Green Economy Strategy.

During their discussions, Prime Minister Abiy and EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker witnessed the signing of three financing agreements. The agreements, worth Euros 130 Million, were signed by Foreign Minister Workneh Gebeyehu and EU Commissioner for International Cooperation, Neven Mimica. They cover sustainable energy initiatives, establishment of agro-industry parks and job creation.

The Prime Minister also met with the president of the European Council, Donald Tusk, and the High Representative/Vice President Federica Mogherini. Ms. Mogherini expressed the EU's whole-hearted support for the Prime Minister's progressive agenda. They discussed implementation of the EU-Ethiopia Strategic Engagement signed in June 2016, and their dialogue and co-operation on social and economic development, investment and trade, governance and human rights, as well as regional peace and security. They agreed on the importance of expanding this close partnership. They also exchanged views on regional issues, including the tripartite agreement between Ethiopia, Eritrea and Somali, the prospects for regional integration and economic co-operation.



President of the European Council Donald Tusk and PM Abiy

Photo: mfa

During his visit to Rome, the Prime Minister visited the Vatican and had an audience with His Holiness, Pope Francis. According to the Vatican, their "cordial talks" emphasized "important initiatives underway for the promotion of national reconciliation and for the integral development of Ethiopia". The talks also focused on the "role of Christianity in the history of the Ethiopian people". Abiy also held talks with the Secretary of State of the Holy See. He visited the Church of St Stephen of the Abyssinians where he was received by Cardinal Berhane Yesus. The

church, built in the early 5th CE, is the oldest surviving church in Vatican City.

## GERMAN PRESIDENT VISITS ETHIOPIA



German President Steinmeier and PM Abiy

Photo: mfa

The President of the Federal Republic of Germany Frank-Walter Steinmeier came to Ethiopia for an official 4 days state visit on January 31. He was accompanied by a delegation of several heads of German companies. President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, while striking constructive in-depth dialogue with PM Abiy Ahmed praised the courageous steps the Prime Minister undertook to shed light on the domestic politics triggering a sweeping political, economic reforms with a fast pace to rejuvenate a plethora of matters such as good governance, inclusive democracy, a wider political space stepping up Ethiopia's defining moment of democracy into a viable continental success championing the hearts and minds of Ethiopians. PM Abiy emphasized Ethiopia's firm grip to accelerate growth through a concerted effort redressing youth job creation and opportunities.

On grander scale President Frank-Walter Steinmeier admired the paramount Ethio-Eritrea peace accord which became extraordinary historic jubilation for the people of the two countries that spurred a powerful wind of hope blowing steadily in Horn of Africa a model for peace, normalcy and growth through the wisdom and leadership of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

President Frank-Walter Steinmeier also held a dialogue with President Sahle-Work Zewde, expressing Germany's full support for Ethiopia's reform process at a critical time for strengthening mutual interests between Ethiopia and Germany. He said he is convinced that it was the right time to be in Ethiopia.

President Sahle-Work Zewde commended on the multifaceted support from the government of Germany among others in vocational, technical, education, and health as well as development cooperation. President Sahle-Work accentuated the fact that Ethiopia has much to learn from Germany's historical development reform nexus to achieve an inclusive economic growth for the prosperity



of Ethiopia. During his 4 days stint in Ethiopia President Frank-Walter Steinmeier saw Volkswagen sign an agreement to launch its first car plant in Ethiopia which stipulates Ethiopia welcoming the decision of Volkswagen to resume manufacturing and assembly of cars in Ethiopia.

President Frank-Walter Steinmeier also took time to visit the historical sites of Lalibela and took the pleasure of enjoying Ethiopia's brand coffee ceremony.

## IRELAND'S PRESIDENT LEO VARADKAR VISITS ETHIOPIA



President Varadkar and PM Abiy

Photo: mfa

Leo Varadkar, Taoiseach (Prime Minister) of Ireland arrived in Ethiopia for a working visit on January 8. During his visit, Mr. Leo Varadkar held talks with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on bilateral, regional and international matters. The Prime Minister also paid a courtesy call on President Sahle-Work Zewde, met with the Acting Chairperson of the AU Commission and visited the Lalibela Rock-Hewn churches and Irish Aid supported projects in Tigray Regional State. 2019 marks 25 years of diplomatic relations between Ireland and Ethiopia and 25 years of Irish Aid's work in Ethiopia. The visit of the Taoiseach underlined the depth and strength of the relationship between the two countries and the achievements of the partnership to date.

During his talks with Prime Minister Abiy on January 9 both sides underlined the importance of further strengthening the longstanding and excellent relations between the two countries. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed noted that the visit by the Prime Minister of Ireland was a testimony of the strengthened ties between Europe and Ethiopia. The Irish Prime Minister praised the reforms being made in Ethiopia over the last few months and reiterated his government's continued support to Ethiopia, particularly in agro-processing investments. They also discussed Ireland's support for the political and economic reforms underway in Ethiopia, the growth of Ireland's development cooperation program with Ethiopia and regional issues in the Horn of Africa, including the historic rapprochement between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Prime Minister Varadkar paid a courtesy call

on President Sahle-Work who welcomed the Prime Minister and underlined the excellent relations between Ireland and Ethiopia which is moving forward. She stressed the importance of strengthening cooperation on bilateral and multilateral fora and thanked the Irish Government for the support provided in agriculture, health, education and social protection sectors. She underlined the role of the Irish investors in Agro-processing and encouraged Irish investors to take part in agro-processing in the industrial parks. The Prime Minister, who mentioned that he was the first Irish Prime Minister to visit Ethiopia for a decade, highlighted Irish/Ethiopian collaboration on a myriad of bilateral and regional issues of common interest. He said: "Ethiopia has been our single key international partner for 25 years and we would like to further deepen our relations" adding, "We support the recent political and economic reforms undertaken by Ethiopia." "Ireland", he said, "is committed to boost business, trade and investment cooperation with Ethiopia." During his visit, the Irish Prime Minister met with Irish NGOs working in Ethiopia and attended a reception with the Irish community in Ethiopia where he launched the Ethio-Irish Alumni Association. On January 10 he flew to the Lalibela Rock-Hewn Churches, a UNESCO World Heritage where he announced a new partnership between Ireland and Ethiopia on cultural heritage and rural tourism. Mr. Varadkar said this partnership would allow for exchanges and experience sharing between Irish and Ethiopian institutions, focused on cultural heritage tourism and rural job creation through tourism. He said Ethiopia's Minister for Culture and Tourism, Dr Hirut Kassaw would visit Ireland to meet with relevant bodies in Ireland, and finalize a program of experience sharing between Ireland and Ethiopia. There is already an existing partnership covering cultural heritage tourism but the new program will deepen the partnership over the next two years. He said Lalibela would join the 2019 'Global Greening' and, along with hundreds of other sites across the world, will go green on St Patrick's Day 2019, to mark the deep friendship between the Ethiopian and Irish people. Ethiopia and Ireland have a very strong and excellent relationship cemented on longstanding diplomatic and people-to-people ties. Ireland opened its embassy in Addis Ababa in 1994, and Ethiopia resumed its mission in Dublin, in 2003, but the relationship is based on wide ranging issues of mutual interest and precedes formal relations. The most visible example of this was during the height of the 1984 famine: Ireland's response to that catastrophe remains a vivid and warming memory for Ethiopians. Most notable among the humanitarian efforts of the Irish people was the work of the Irish rock star, Sir Bob Geldof, whose initiative in organizing the Band Aid program mobilized the international community to provide the support that enabled the survival of millions of Ethiopians. The passionate and full-heart-

ed response of the Irish people and their government to that crisis has remained a linchpin underlying current bilateral cooperation as well as people-to-people relations.

## ABIY BRIEFS ETHIOPIA'S AMBASSADORS ON FOREIGN POLICY



PM Abiy during the briefing

Photo: mfa

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed opened the week-long annual Ambassadors meeting held with the leadership of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Director Generals, Ambassadors and diplomats on January 14. The discussions covered the country's ongoing reforms, the impact on foreign policy, the progress and challenges in responding to contemporary global issues of national interest, enhancement of economic diplomacy, Diaspora engagement, the reforms within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and considerations of lessons learned in the last year. The Prime Minister emphasized that Diplomacy was one pillar of economic development; it was the vital bedrock for socio-economic progress. He said: "Our Ambassadors and diplomats are the face and soul of Ethiopia abroad. An Ambassador should relentlessly promote Ethiopia abroad for national gain, stimulate a positive country image, mobilize investment, tourism and better engage the Diaspora for national dialogue." He said, "We want the Foreign Ministry to become a catalyst for economic development, to maintain the positive country image and most importantly trigger citizen-centered diplomacy in our bilateral, regional and multilateral diplomatic activity nexus." Abiy commended the Ambassadors for their tireless effort and hard work over the years abroad, concomitantly stressing the importance of the embassies playing a much more active role in updating potential investors on investment opportunities, trade, and tourism sectors. He stressed the importance of Ethiopian diplomacy in the future focusing on safeguarding the rights and interests of Ethiopian nationals abroad, concentrating on relations with immediate neighbors and on the promotion of integration within the Horn of Africa.