

Ethioobserver has conducted a comprehensive interview on major issues and current affairs pertaining to Ethiopia with Dr. Ghelawdewos Araia, and while we are pleased to present a discussion forum to our subscribers, we also like to extend our deepest gratitude to the interviewee for his cooperation and his time.

Part I: On History

Ethioobserver: You have written many historical accounts on Ethiopia in the past. What is your view on those who say the three thousand-year-old history of Ethiopia is a myth?

Dr. Ghelawdewos: Well, all societies, in one form or another, incorporate some myth in their oral tradition and/or historical anecdotes. But, to dismiss Ethiopian history as myth is to misunderstand and debunk history itself. If we rely on historiography, brushing aside oral tradition for the time being, we will explore abundant archeological and documentary evidences that prove beyond the shadow of the doubt that Ethiopian history stretches back to three thousand years. Mind you, from the golden ages of Aksum to present alone, the historical timeline covers slightly over two thousand years. Put otherwise, before Aksum there was Yeha and before Yeha, now we know that there was one other civilization that thrived in a place called Gobedra, just seven kilometers (about four miles) outside the city of Aksum. This was substantiated by an archeological finding of a ceramic and pottery-making community and was dated to circa 3,000 BCE. If we begin with Gobedra, thus, the history of Ethiopia would then cover 5,000 years. Ethiopia indeed is a very ancient land. Ethiopian historiography is not mythology; it is rather an authentic historical account that helps us understand significant junctures in the Ethiopian experience.

Ethioobserver: So what do you say to those people who claim that Ethiopian history is just a century old?

Dr. Ghelawdewos: I will bluntly say, “Take a history lesson!” This silly notion of “one hundred year old nation” perhaps refers to modern Ethiopia, but those people who advance this argument forget that modern Ethiopia, in turn, is a continuation of medieval Ethiopia and the latter a direct descendant of ancient Ethiopia. We are the continuation of our forebears who live in this land for several millennia!

Ethioobserver: Are you then saying that Ethiopia, as we know it today, was in existence without interruption for the last 3,000 years?

Dr. Ghelawdewos: This question embodies two important component parts: 1) ancient and modern Ethiopia, and 2) continuous existence of a state. In order to answer the question, thus, it is important to underscore the context of the

component parts. No, I am not saying that Ethiopian history continued without interruption. There were intermediate periods characterized, for instance, by the Gudit (Yodit) period in ancient times; the Ahmed Grañ sixteenth century Jihad wars; and the civil wars (also known as Era of Princes) between 1769 and 1855. The state was interrupted (political vacuum occurred) several times, but it did not vanish. With respect to modern Ethiopia, I would not say it is a replica of ancient Ethiopia, but I would argue that it is its torch bearer because the legacy of ancient Ethiopia (culture, artifacts, literature, music, religion etc) are very much alive in modern Ethiopia today.

Ethioobserver: How about the controversy over ancient Ethiopian civilization as an implanted South Arabian culture?

Dr. Ghelawdewos: As you know South Arabia, which is essentially Yemen today, is only 12 miles away from Djibouti on the Gulf of Eden side. Therefore, it is not surprising that the two lands on either side of the Red Sea could have made cultural exchanges in ancient times. But the claim that Arabs civilized the African Ethiopians is a sinister inverted logic that attempts to justify that Africans were recipients and not givers of civilization. I have argued on many of my writings that Ethiopia and Yemen were connected in history and that there were trade, cultural, and diplomatic relations between the two countries. However, the Ethiopian civilization of antiquity was much closer, in many respects, to the Nile civilizations of Nubia and Egypt rather than to Yemen. The names of the kings and queens who reigned long before Askum emerged were similar to those of ancient Egyptians; the stele of Askum are similar to the Egyptian obelisks; the Ethiopian calendar of thirteen months is identical with that of Egypt, except that the Ethiopian calendar consists of four seasons with 3 months each and that of Egypt was three seasons with 4 months each; either way we have 12 months plus the short thirteenth month with 5 days in both calendars. With Yemen, the Sabeen letters and names of places such as Hawzen, Mereb, Saba etc could be the connection. Other than that, neither Aksumite mint coins (Aksum/Ethiopia was the only kingdom that had its own currency in Africa) nor the unique Geez alphabets (quintessentially Ethiopian letters) are to be found in Yemen. On top of this, historical documents testify that ancient Ethiopians exercised hegemony over Southern Arabia during Aphilas in the last quarter of the 3rd century AD and during Kaleb in the first decade of the 6th century AD. At present, the official historical account of Yemen admits that the country was a colony of Ethiopia in ancient history.

Part II: On Politics

Ethioobserver: What is your view on the current regional states of Ethiopia that have been restructured along ethnic and language lines?

Dr. Ghelawdewos: The question of nationalities in Ethiopia, which was one of the foremost slogans of the Ethiopian Student Movement during Haile Selassie, has been addressed and answered by the EPRDF. But, demarcating territories in order to forge

states based on language and ethnicity is wrong. The states should have been demarcated based on history, geography, and political expediency. For instance, Tigray used to accommodate the Tigrigna, Agaw, Kunama, Saho, and Afar nationalities. These nationalities could have stayed in the original setting and yet enjoy self-determination. The same logic applies to Wollo, which also had accommodated several ethnic groups throughout the history of Ethiopia. I think the one regional state that comes close to my idea of demarcation is the Southern Ethiopian Peoples region, in which a cluster of different linguistic groups have decided to live side by side in the same region and still use Amharic as their lingua franca for communication, business, and education.

The one other pitfall that emanated from the new structure of the regional states is the fact that Ethiopians from all over the country could not relocate and invest in any respective state other than theirs. For instance, it is not easy for a Tigrayan merchant to relocate to the Oromia region and conduct business as s/he wishes, unless s/he opts to settle in Addis Ababa. This kind of constraint is perhaps the unintended or unforeseen consequences of the regional formation EPRDF style.

I personally was very much worried vis-à-vis the ethnic/language divide because I thought it could foment animosity and even conflict among the plethora of ethnic groups of Ethiopia (and there were ethnic clashes several years ago), but it looks that Ethiopians don't seem to foster ethnic conflicts and on the contrary they seem to like to celebrate their diversity (their respective cultures) together.

Ethioobserver: In relation to the ethnically demarcated regional states, there is some controversy surrounding Wolkait and the Woldia-Alamata areas, lands apparently taken from Gondar and Wollo respectively and were made part of Tigray. How do you analyze this controversy?

Dr. Ghelawdewos: There is no doubt that it is controversial, but a part of the Ethiopian opposition in the Diaspora is focused on the taking of land and incorporation into Tigray, and not on the politics of self-determination. I have yet to hear from Ethiopians in the Diaspora raising their voice with respect to the role of the people. They should inquire whether the Ethiopian people have had a voice in the making of the regional states. Were these regional states formed by political fiat or by a referendum in which the Ethiopian people have spoken out? The former reflects the reality of the newly restructured Ethiopia and we all know that there was no referendum regarding territorial demarcation. The only one referendum that Ethiopians witnessed was the referendum on Eritrean independence, and ironically Ethiopians were not invited to voice on the fate of Eritrea. It was, again, decided by political fiat and only Eritreans were allowed to vote and vote for independence only.

Going back to the Wolkait controversy, however, I like to shed some light on the evolution and history of this region. One could make reference to the history of

Tigray and figure out whether Wolkait was administered by Tigray or not. Tigray had always been the northern most region of Ethiopia, and as part of Ethiopia it administered proper Tigray, present-day Eritrea, and Wokait on the western frontier and the Alamata-Woldia area on the southern (Alwaha Milash). In the middle of the 17th century AD Dejazmach Galawdewos of Shire administered Wolkait and in the early 20th century, both Wolkait and Tselemti were paying tribute to Ras Gugsa of Tigray, whose power was terminated in 1930 when the Prince Regent Ras Tafari was crowned as Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia. Consequently, Tselemti and Wolkait were gradually incorporated (1930-1957) into the Gondar area. If scholars are interested to know more about the geographical extent (area) of Tigray in the early 17th century, they could refer to a book entitled 'Tractatus Tres Historico-Geographici' (Portuguese) or 'A Seventh Century Historical and Geographical Account of Tigray, Ethiopia' (English) authored by Manoel Barradas in 1634, translated into English by Elizabeth Filleul, and edited by Richard Pankhurst in 1996. The map of Tigray in this book covers Alwaha-Milash in the south, Lemalimo in the west, the Afar depression in the east, and the Dahlak archipelagos in the northeast (these are islands on the Red Sea, now in Eritrea). Tigray in the 17th century was four times the size of the present regional state of Tigray.

Ethioobserver: How about the question of dominant nationality in Ethiopia at present? Some Ethiopian observers, in particular the Diaspora Ethiopian opposition, believe that the TPLF is the dominant party in the ruling EPRDF party and hence the Tigray nationality is a dominant nationality and therefore Tigray is the most privileged regional state. What is your answer to that?

Dr. Ghelawdewos: The question of dominant nationality and dominated nationalities in Ethiopia is over, not because the EPRDF came with a policy of devolution of power to nationalities but because the Derg, the preceding military regime, had already demolished the old system of national domination. However, even under the old system of Haile Selassie, as I have indicated in one of my essays, compared to other nationalities the Amharas were privileged especially in terms of culture and language dominance, but we know for a fact that the majority of the Amhara people were poor, and some were even destitute. The same reality applies to Tigray and it does not logically follow that the people of Tigray would be exceptionally privileged just because the TPLF is a Tigrayan and dominant party. In the same essay, I have also indicated that one's destiny in a certain nationality is purely accidental; one could not choose to be born in this or that nationality. Some Ethiopians, then, used this phrase, as a cliché without acknowledging its source, but that really does not matter. What matters is that we Ethiopians should begin to understand that it does not really matter to which nationality individuals are born or belong to; what matters is the cognitive ability to forge an overarching pan-Ethiopian identity that could, in turn, enable Ethiopians foster a greater pan-Ethiopian agenda.

Ethioobserver: But, the opposition in the Diaspora has repeatedly argued that Tigray is amassing wealth at the expense of the rest of Ethiopia. Is there any grain of truth in this?

Dr. Ghelawdewos: This portrayal of Tigray taking advantage of the rest of Ethiopia is an inverted and backward thinking; it impugns the reality in Tigray. There is no doubt some development projects, institutions, and public services hitherto nonexistent have been installed and established. But, similar projects and institutions have been established in other regional states as well. Nowadays, a visitor to Ethiopia could witness changes not just in Mekelle but also in Bahr Dar, Adama (Nazareth), Hawasa, and Harar etc. The opposition in the Diaspora does not talk about these changes that took place or are in the making in other parts of Ethiopia, other than Tigray. If the opposition could prove to me that more has been done in Tigray than in other parts of Ethiopia, I would be the first to oppose the discrimination policy of the government. But I very much doubt if they could offer any concrete evidence.

Ethioobserver: Lets digress from the nationality-related questions and ask you about the policies and practices of the EPRDF. What kind of party is the EPRDF? How do you think it managed to capture state power? Do you think the 2005 and 2010 elections were free and fair? What is the policy of the EPRDF toward the opposition in Ethiopia? Do you think we will make a democratic transition under the EPRDF?

Dr. Ghelawdewos: Let me briefly address the questions in right order. The Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) is a coalition of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), and the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO). In this coalition, the dominant party is the TPLF, but the ANDM and the OPDO also exercise significant power and authority. In fact, the TPLF could have not possibly governed the country without the two parties in the coalition. We must bear in mind that the military prowess of the TPLF, the cooperation of the ANDM and OPDO, the collapse of the Derg military in the late 1980s and the weakened position of other opposition forces like the EPRP during the same period, gave rise to a new political scenario in Ethiopia. By 1989-90 it was fait accompli because the military confrontation between the TPLF/EPRDF and the Derg was in its final stage and the former won the day. That is how and why the TPLF/EPRDF managed to capture state power.

I don't believe the 2005 and 2010 elections were free and fair. In order for an election to be free and fair, the people in general and the opposition parties in particular should have the right to freely express themselves, travel freely throughout Ethiopia, and they should be immune from intimidation and imprisonment. This did not happen in 2005 and 2010. On the contrary, the ruling party unleashed unnecessary force against the opposition and demonstrators were killed in 2005; the 2010 election, by contrast, was peaceful but it was not free and fair either, if we critically examine the way the electoral process was handled; there was some semblance of fairness in the

pre-election period, manifested, for instance, in the debates conducted amongst the contesting parties but in the end the election process was dominated by the EPRDF and the opposition did not have same privileges like the ruling party. However, it is also important to recognize that the EPRDF was not simply manipulating the election process; it had made necessary organizational tasks in mobilizing the electors in its favor while the opposition was neither united nor able to mobilize the people.

The policy of the EPRDF toward the opposition is pretty obvious. The EPRDF, and in particular the Prime Minister, Ato Meles, have told Ethiopians many times that they would not tolerate the opposition forces and will not hesitate to take necessary action against them if they organize public demonstrations and challenge the status quo. This is unfortunate, because I always had faith in my generation and after the butcher regime of Mengistu Hailemariam was done away with, I thought Ethiopians would enjoy at least a modicum of democratic rights, tolerate one another, and build a new Ethiopia together.

The overall trend and political atmosphere in Ethiopia does not seem to favor democratic transition. Democracy in Ethiopia, I believe, is forestalled at least for now. However, if the EPRDF reconsider and its present stance and permit genuine contestation for local, regional, and national powers and allows, constitutionally and practically, multi-parties to operate, then it would be possible that Ethiopia will make a transition to democracy. Both the ruling party and the opposition must understand that politics is inherently contestable, but power (the unit currency of politics) operates in relationships and interactions amongst divergent parties and it could also be shared, for instance, as in a coalition government. I am implying here the exact opposite of zero-sum politics and appeal rather to what I call 'mutual constitution'. However, in the final analysis, democracy does not flourish by the whim or decree of a given regime or because we simply wish it to happen. It can flourish, and Ethiopia can make a genuine transition to democracy only if we wisely come up with alternative forms of discourses in which Ethiopians construct some sort of permutation in their thinking. Simply put, Ethiopians must adjust their psychological makeup to tolerate one another and lay the foundation of a political culture in which democracy thrives.

Ethioobserver: Do you think the opposition in Ethiopia is viable?

Dr. Ghelawdewos: whenever we address the opposition we must differentiate between the genuine and fake opposition parties or organizations. By the way, there are at least four dozens of political parties, save the civic organizations, in Ethiopia today. Some of them are a one-man party with virtually no political program; others are prefabricated for an occasion, as for instance the registration of new parties during the pre-2010 elections; still others pose as opposition but they operate in full accord with the ruling party. Just few weeks ago, a new political organization named Blue Party (whatever the color blue signifies) has been heralded. The only genuine

opposition party is the Ethiopian Federalist Democratic Forum (EFDF) or simply Forum (Medrek) as it is popularly known in Ethiopia. In all probability, Forum is going to be viable because it has a clear agenda and political program as well as mass support from Ethiopians at home and the Diaspora, but it is struggling against all odds and its success in politics is not going to be easy.

Ethioobserver: How about Meles Zenawi? Is the characterization or more specifically the negative portrayal of Meles by the Diaspora opposition palatable to you?

Dr. Ghelawdewos: some individuals and groupings of the opposition in the Diaspora are sensible and their political agenda and the concern they have for Ethiopia should be appreciated. The majority, however, are angry charlatans and as a result they were unable to focus on substantive issues and seize the moment. Whether it is by design or by default, these charlatans seem to have opted to attack the person of Meles and not his ideas. Instead of opposing Meles on his policies, they condemn him because of his stature or his physiognomy, and some of them condemn him simply because he is Tigrayan; others even go further and curse him because, they say, he is “of peasant background”. This is really a shame and I sometimes wonder how low can a person get! If we oppose Meles, we must oppose his ideas or outlooks and not his looks.

Ethioobserver: Do you know Meles personally and can you evaluate him on his merits?

Dr. Ghelawdewos: Yes I know Meles. I know him since the days of Haile Selassie University (now Addis Ababa University). He was clever then as he is clever now, but I know the younger Meles who joined the University from Wingate; I also knew him between the time he joined the TPLF and the time the EPRDF captured state power. Frankly I don't know the present middle-aged Meles and I am not qualified to evaluate him. I would not pretend to be a psychologist and undertake 'observed behavior' and even that would not help us understand the complex Ethiopian politics, but it could distract us from pressing issues.

However, as I have stated earlier, it is important to evaluate Meles on his merit and demerit (and all of us have those qualities) and not on his looks and class background. Incidentally, Meles is not of peasant background; for all I know, he is an urbanite originally from Adwa and later Addis Ababa. But even if he has a peasant background, there is nothing wrong in it. Doesn't Ethiopia constitute 80% of peasant population? Don't we know that there were peasant revolutions in history? Have we forgotten that the most successful peasant revolution in history was that of the Peoples Republic of China? Are we ignoramus of the fact that peasants are in many ways uncontaminated by the ills of an urban setting, seemingly "modern and civilized"?

Ethioobserver: What is your advise to Meles Zenawi and the EPRDF regarding the overall governance and politics in Ethiopia?

Dr. Ghelawdewos: My advice could be two-penny worth, but it is at least clear and simple. Meles and the EPRDF should completely change (if they could) their exclusive domination of state power and accommodate opposition parties like Forum; they should allow multi-party democracy; permit other opposition parties from the home country and the Diaspora to officially register in Ethiopia and participate in elections; invite Diaspora Ethiopian intellectuals and professionals irrespective of their political outlook so that they could participate in the development of Ethiopia; and last but not least, my personal message to Ato Meles is: "Do not forget our university days when we had to flee for our lives in the face of government troops who would aim at us with their shotguns as if we were ducks!"

Ethioobserver: What is your advise to the opposition at home and in the Diaspora?

Dr. Ghelawdewos: The home and Diaspora opposition forces are important, but it is the home opposition that would play a crucial and pivotal role in making a difference in Ethiopian politics and bring about change; the Diaspora opposition can only cushion the home opposition in terms of policy-related issues and also in terms of

material support in the form of funds. My advise to both the home and Diaspora opposition organizations ranges from having a clear political and ideological perspective to demonstrating effective organizational tasks (including diplomatic works that could bridge the Diaspora with the US Department of State and the major actors in Europe such as Germany, France, and the UK), and further more to fostering a pan-Ethiopian agenda, and also to have the courage to recognize the EPRDF and initiate dialogue with it. I have proposed this idea of dialogue in the context of national reconciliation that I wrote in the form of essay in the past. It is in the nature of politics to enter dialogue with a contending or opposing party, and Ethiopia will benefit if the opposition and the government could talk on a round table. What we have now, especially in the Diaspora, is oppose and oppose only, but what the Diaspora did not realize is that making noise from outside the political arena, in the end, would be a defeatist strategy; operating and struggling within the political arena (even if the EPRDF does not allow it), on the other hand, would be a correct political strategy toward achieving the goals of political parties.

Part III: On Economics

Ethioobserver: What do you think of the overall economic conditions in Ethiopia?

Dr. Ghelawdewos: Ethiopia is potentially a rich country, but in terms of overall political economy analysis, it is one of the poorest countries in the world and this is simply because the country was unable to meaningfully exploit its potential and implement development programs that could overhaul the Ethiopian economy.

Ethioobserver: But commentators who support the government claim that Ethiopia has made a double-digit economic growth in the last decade; they say the current economic growth shows 11% GDP growth. What is your take on that?

Dr. Ghelawdewos: The 11% growth is a fabrication and it is provided in sketchy accounts by commentators, and the government does not officially endorse it. That percentage is scored by countries like Botswana in Africa and China in East Asia. Ethiopia is probably growing at 4-5% per annum and the World Bank, the IMF, and UN agencies like United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), world institutions that provide reliable data from relatively dependable sources, have not supported the 11% growth claim. Besides, if Ethiopia is growing at 11% per annum, why do we then have widespread unemployment, abject poverty, and famine in the country?

Ethioobserver: What is your view on the economic policy and development programs of the EPRDF? Do you think the current government has scored some achievements in development?

Dr. Ghelawdewos: Let me begin with the last question. The EPRDF government has indeed scored some achievements in the expansion of schools and universities and in infrastructure such as roads, bridges, and dams. Compared to Mengistu Hailemariam's Derg that was enmeshed in war economy and Haile Selassie's government that was dormant, the EPRDF's achievements in infrastructure (especially roads) are impressive. With respect to economic policy and overall development programs of the EPRDF, however, I have a major reservation. EPRDF's frenzy on cash crop in order to garner hard currency would ultimately hurt Ethiopia. The country ought to give priority to food crop and manufacturing industry and learn from the High Performing Asian Economies (HPAEs) such as Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Thailand. Moreover, the government must change its policy of literally selling all Ethiopian products (ranging from eggs to cows) abroad for the sake of amassing hard currency. By doing so, it disturbs the supply-demand nexus in the domestic market, and that is why market prices for commodities and other consumer items have skyrocketed in Ethiopia. Currently, a hen costs 80 Birr; sheep/goat 700 Birr; and cow/oxen range between 10,000 and 12,000 Birr. These exorbitant prices have effectively emasculated the purchasing power parity (PPP) of an average Ethiopian. The cost of living is simply unbearable and the Ethiopian people are hurting.

If Ethiopia can afford to rent or lease huge tracts of lands to Indian and other foreign investors for price plantation, it should be able to grow food crop and feed its people. Our slogan should be 'Food First; the Ethiopian People First!' Incidentally, India does not permit its farmers to sell rice outside India because it has to feed its one billion people. Ethiopia must learn from India.

Ethioobserver: What is your view on the Ethiopian Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP)?

Dr. Ghelawdewos: I don't mind the GTP in its conceptual framework, but the practical dimension of the Plan could altogether be different. For instance, constructing dams is part of the GTP program, but I personally would have preferred labor-intensive micro dams to gigantic capital-intensive dams like the Millennium Dam. In order to realize the latter project, Ethiopia would have to generate billions of dollars, and even after it is complete the country would still have to generate millions of dollars to run and maintain it. Ethiopia, of course, could make revenue out of the dams by selling electricity (as it is now intended) to neighboring countries, but the return income could be far less than the cost for the construction and maintenance of the dams. Moreover, there is no guarantee that Ethiopia would remain the sole generator of electricity for its neighbors; the latter could also initiate similar projects to satisfy domestic energy and eventually discontinue electricity service from Ethiopia.

I don't mind dams; I even supported the completion of the Gilgel Gibe III Dam despite protestation from some green movements. However, if Ethiopia gives priority to micro dams (and the country is blessed with major and minor rivers as well as tributaries), it could transform its agriculture potential with irrigation and mechanized farming. Then and only then could Ethiopia triumph over famine and reduce poverty meaningfully. Just to be fair, in some of the regional states earth dams and irrigation schemes have been initiated and Ethiopians would be better off if the government augments these initiatives without being distracted by the major dams.

Ethioobserver: Can we really have transformation in Ethiopia in the foreseeable future?

Dr. Ghelawdewos: Why not? But, this requires the suggestion I have made earlier. The government should open up, accommodate the opposition, attract Ethiopian professionals, and rethink its cash crop obsession and give priority to food crop and manufacturing industry. As a passing remark, I also want to comment on the word 'Transformation', as it is currently used by the Ethiopian authorities and the ordinary Ethiopian alike; they all say 'transformation' in English as if there is no equivalent or substitute word in Amharic. They could have said 'Meseretawi Lewṭ' so that the average Ethiopian citizen understands it.

Ethioobserver: In concluding the interview, we like to direct one final question to you. How do you think you personally can contribute in the transformation of Ethiopia and what do you say to other intellectuals like you in the Diaspora in this regard?

Dr. Ghelawdewos: That is a fair and good question. We all have responsibilities for our country and we can be successful only if we work together and collectively strive for the development of Ethiopia. I have reiterated this idea of gregarious undertaking of development projects many times in the past. I personally am committed to contributing my expertise for the development of Ethiopia irrespective of the different outlook and political stance I have with the EPRDF. Our contribution to the development of Ethiopia has nothing to do with EPRDF, which is going to pass anyway; our contribution is going to be a legacy for future generations of Ethiopians and for a country that is going to stay and if we are engaged in the salvage and development of Ethiopia, we will remain in history; if not we will become spent forces. Above all, we contribute for the development of Ethiopia not because we want to please this or that person or group, but because we love our country and we are concerned with the welfare of the Ethiopian people. However, unless the EPRDF government exhibits a more liberal and tolerant policy of accommodation, the hopes of Ethiopians who would like to make a difference will be dashed. We should also not easily give up if we try and fail in our willingness and efforts to contribute to the development of the motherland. For instance, several months ago I sent a proposal

via the conventional mail on “how to end famine once and for all in Ethiopia” to the Minister of Agriculture of Ethiopia, but I did not get any response. I will not give up and if the worst comes I will seek other means and ways to realize my dreams. I personally have no ambition other than see Ethiopia being respected and treated on equal footing among the nations of the world and this could happen only if the country proves to the world a status beyond the threshold of the middle-income countries. And the latter would not happen unless all of us try! And if we try in unison, not only do we invoke the proverbial ‘united we can stand’, but also channel economic development and democratic transition, as in correlation of growth, and create an overarching structure for Ethiopia. Therefore, my appeal to my fellow Ethiopian intellectuals and professionals is quite direct: Let's chip in and play our part in the development of Ethiopia and the concomitant structural change and transformation will follow suit.

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