

INAUGURAL SPEECH BY:

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REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA**

TO

**HONORABLE MEMBERS OF HOUSE OF
PEOPLES' REPRESENTATIVES**

APRIL 02, 2018

Distinguished House of Speaker

Honorable Members of Parliament

Distinguished Peoples of Ethiopia

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

First and foremost, allow me to express how humbled and honored I am to be standing before you on this occasion.

On this historic day we bear witness to peaceful transfer of power. I would like to therefore begin by expressing a particular appreciation to His Excellency Ato Hailemariam Desalegn, who has been part of the solution to ease the political instability that was evident in the past few years and ensure peaceful reconciliation. In a similar tone, I would like to cordially thank all Ethiopians who have been, over the years, exerting unrelenting efforts to make this day a reality.

Today is a historic day. Ethiopia is an ancient civilization and has gone through a long and arduous political journey. There are times we have missed occasions to embark on an inclusive political chapter. We should not squander this window of opportunity at this critical moment in time.

Ethiopia's womb is fertile. There is a heightened sense of patriotism and steadfast conviction to bring back our national dignity and glory. Ethiopian people are toiling tirelessly to regain their country's grandeur and ensure peace and justice to all citizens without any discrimination. Ethiopians both at home and abroad have not refrained themselves from voicing opinions about justice and equality to ensure the reign of the rule of law.

This transfer of power signifies two major realities; on the one hand, it confirms the verity that the Government was able to build a peaceful, resilient and all inclusive democratic system and, it also demonstrates the Government's resolve to continue to play pivotal role in a fast changing socio-political and economic demand of the people.

For over the past two decades, EPRDF has built a constitutional democratic system that transformed our political discourse. Today our situation presents us with both

opportunities and threats. Today, we are in the midst of prominent changes where the international community was following these changes not only with awe and surprise but also with a careful watchfulness. Although there have been achievements, there are also formidable challenges. We need to address existing inequities that led to recant unrests. It is in our nature as Ethiopians to be resilient and pursue our aspirations with steadfast resolve by turning existing challenges into opportunities. By learning from our mistakes, we are focused in developing a better country for all of us just like our ancestors.

Our fore-Fathers have died for our liberty, sacrificed themselves in Adwa, Maichew, Metmea, and Karamara (Ogden). We are blessed and have a beautiful country. We are a great nation with a strong sense of identity. In addition to preserving our sovereignty we were also emblems of de-colonial struggle for other peoples.

Our identity is interwoven and inextricably linked.

Go to Karamara (Ogden), you will find remains of the Amhara soldiers while defending their motherland. Go to Metama, you will discover the blood of the Tigryans who lost their lives while pushing back foreign invaders. Go to, the mountains of Adawa you will find the remains of the Oromo that daringly gave his life to his Ethiopia. You will be sure to find the remains of Sidama, Wolayta, the Harrari and Gambela, the Afar and the Somali, the Benishangul, the Gurage, the Silte, the Kembata, the Hadiya and others mixed with the soil of Badme. We are born Ethiopians; we die as Ethiopians as our body becomes part of the earth.

Ethiopia is our country- Ethiopia is our home.

It is only natural to witness different perspectives that vividly differ from each other in one country. We will leverage this diversity for a greater purpose; and in nations, difference are assets not liabilities. We are a budding democracy and it is in our difference that we often come up with groundbreaking solutions to existing problems. Ethiopia is our home and the only one we got. We need to find more issues that unite us than divides us. We have, however, to underscore the fact that unity doesn't mean uniformity. Our unity has to embrace our diversity decorated with all colors of Nations and Nationalities.

We Ethiopians need democracy, freedom and liberty, and indeed we deserve it,

Democracy is not a foreign concept to us. We have had democratic systems enshrined in our traditional systems. Even during the time when democracy was not known to many societies and nations, we have governed ourselves by the Gada system and lived an exemplary life. And still now, more than any other nation in the world, we believe that democracy is a matter of survival to us.

Democracy cannot be realized in the absence of rights. Right of people to express opinions, right of people to organize themselves and engage in effective dialogue and participate in the governance system. Democracy is inherent in our humanity, and it is not for any government to bestow them upon people as it sees fit. All the human and democratic rights declared on our constitution, especially of the right to self-expression, the right to be organized and the right to participate in government activities must be respected. Our role as a government is to ensure that the constitution has life beyond print.

What we need to understand is that democratization as a process demands being open to different views. We will continue to respect the rights of citizens, the right to question, criticize and hold its public servants to accountability. Our binding principle must be the sovereignty of the people. The alpha and omega principle in a democratic system is having a platform that entertains the different views through dialogue. We all need to have a platform to voice our concerns. I would like to stress the fact that our democratic rights should not be realized at the expense of the rights of others. The paradox to fight for one's right while violating others' debilitates the very nature of democracy. People should voice their concern in a respectful and non-violent manner. Democratic system must be built on the basis of respecting citizens' right to self-expression. It is impossible to advance in democracy without peaceful activities of citizens and the wise leadership of the government. It is thus the obligation of the government to respect and ensure the rule of law.

Throughout our struggle to maintain the rule of law, we have to bear in mind that what our people are looking for is not the mere presence of law rather it is the realization of justice. The will of the people is not a law that is no longer in connection with justice, but it is a law that is molded and stands with justice. It is the will of the people to see independent law enforcement institutions that are loyal to justice and that work ardently for the rights of the people.

The law can uphold our inherent human dignity only if it can treat all of us in equal terms. In this regard, we are ready to make all necessary reforms for liberty and justice cultivated, the rule of law be realized and thus democracy be flourished.

Justice is the foundation for peace, and peace is not the mere absence of conflict, rather it is the active pursuit of finding common grounds for differences. Peace is a journey we all take together with a common understanding and will- it is a guarantee to our unity.

Distinguished House of Speaker

Honorable Members of Parliament

Ladies and Gentlemen

The Horn of Africa is a complex region. On the one hand, that complexity poses challenges as the region has many actors with diverse interests. On the other hand, this same complexity presents us with huge opportunities for cooperation since the area is home to peoples that are connected by blood, culture, and language. Regarding our foreign relations, our country is the pioneer in pan-Africanism, the founder and home of the African Union, not only is the founding member of many international organizations but is an active participant and an important role player in regional, continental and international issues. We shall continue to champion our policy that is based on equality and equitable use of resources. We shall continue to stand with our African brothers and neighbours through thick and thin.

It is our strong desire to once and for all end the long standing issue with Eritrea. We are fully committed to reconcile with our Eritrean brothers and sisters and express our readiness to address our difference through dialogue. I also would like to use this opportunity to extend an invitation to the Eritrean government to have similar stand and be willing to open doors for discussion.

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Corruption is one of the reasons that created discontentment on our people. We should understand that we cannot tackle this problem simply by having anti-

corruption institutions. Therefore I call on you all humbly to work together in facilitating an environment where no one steps over the success of others and where everyone can work on a fair and leveled ground.

A nation that wants to live the future from the wealth it has stolen from the past cannot step forward. In a country where the opportunities are vast and wide, people have the chance to work and prosper, there must be no reason to be greedy and steal from one another. As the famous Indian freedom fighter Mahatma Gandhi once said “there is enough on this planet for everyone’s need but not for everyone’s greed”. We must rather blend the opportunities presented to us with our abilities as a nation and ward off scarce mentality and put our collective efforts for prosperity. As we have embarked on a new chapter, we have to work day and night to fight against theft, organized corruption and wastage of resources.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Scoring unprecedented growth down the road, our country has made a giant leap forward in terms poverty eradication, infrastructural development, human resource capacity building and others.

In this regard, the Government has put in place policies and forges activities to mitigate the inflationary pressure, to prop up exports, to stabilize foreign currency, to keep the financial sector healthy, to stimulate savings, increase per capita income of individuals, as well as boost employment opportunities, etc.

To the contrary, major challenges have been witnessed that skewed the macro-economic momentum and economic growth of the country over recent years: the dawdling growth of foreign trade, the deficit in foreign currency, the increase in cost of living, pressure due to foreign debt, the huge disparity between domestic saving and foreign trade among others. Albeit the considerable efforts being exerted on the area of agriculture, much remains to be done regarding supporting the sector with the necessary technology to garner more benefits from the sector.

Putting a strong belief on the ideal that education is the key to solve our ardent problems and to land to the zenith of our success, the Government has been working tirelessly in this light. However, there is much assignment left undone in terms of proffering quality education. Cognizant of this very fact, the Government will forge

various activities in uplifting the standard of education in the country. The Government will give particular emphasis to students attending higher institutes as well as Technical and Vocational Educational Training Institutes in making sure they have acquired all the necessary knowledge and skills that match their category.

Distinguished Ethiopian Youth,

The future belongs to you as much as the present does. You should continue being at the forefront of the impetus towards building our nation. It is our firm belief that, the demands of the youth are not merely economic and equity-related but also democracy and justice. Over the years, there were gaps in the improvement of the economic equity, social justice and political participation of the citizenry.

Despite our country's track record of a considerable economic growth over time, it has not been properly accommodative of the dynamic demands of the younger generation. This, we believe, has pushed our people to desperation. We also believe that, without youth participation and empowerment, it is impossible to imagine the betterment of a nation. I solemnly promise to make Ethiopia a beacon of hope to its youth, one that does not lead them to despair. In our future endeavors, we will capitalize not only on job creation for the youth but also laying the ground for the creation of wealthy young people. The government will work hard to institute a favorable environment for the flourishing of a just and fair socio-economic system, by tackling belligerent attitudes and eradicating unfair, excessive bureaucratic rigmaroles. In this regard, a fact we should all bear in mind is that, the prime responsibility to create wealth either for the benefit of the youth or the nation at large, depends a lot on the unrelenting efforts the youth.

Distinguished Ethiopian Women,

We have arrived at this critical moment bearing witness to your contributions in nation building, making history and shaping generations through thick and thin. In your selfless sacrifices you strove hard in the realization of a better Ethiopia. Your struggle is a struggle for justice; your struggle is a struggle for respect; your struggle is our struggle. We are of the conviction that the government is doing a lot to ensure the women play a leading role in the developmental transformation of our country, but we also believe that we have more work to do. This being the case, I call on you to continue being instrumental in building this country.

Our national identity is nothing without you, Ethiopian women. It is impossible to bring about a national awakening by relegating the painstaking contributions of women's role in building, serving and laying the foundation for the country. It is to be noted that, the government's commitment to women's rights and equality is not just a modest gesture for their services rather for the good of all of us. The government profoundly understands that, it is unthinkable for a nation to have either a full image or to embark on a progressive journey if one forgets its significant half- women. In this light, our government, more than ever before, is committed to ensuring the holistic participation and empowerment of women.

Honorable Speaker

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Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

We have numerous and critical issues.

If you take a step back and look at the challenges that lay before us, they are forbidding. Lack of a well-cultivated democratic culture, deep-rooted destitution, organized corruption and the ubiquity of red tapes coupled with lack of good governance have posed a wide array of challenges to our endeavors. They are extremely complex and require equally complex solutions that cannot be delivered by a single individual, a party or a government alone. We are a nation that has overcome more menacing adversaries. We have to understand that the source of our strength lies in our unity. As such, we invite all stakeholders out there to closely work with us.

Honorable Speaker

Honorable Members of Parliament

Distinguished People of Ethiopia

Ladies and Gentlemen

Dear members of the Ethiopian Diaspora Community

Wherever Ethiopians go, either for work or education, he/she carries the Ethiopian esprit de corps along with him. This is why we like to say, you can take the Ethiopian out of Ethiopia but not the Ethiopia in the heart of the Ethiopian. Through your demonstrable diligence, excellence as well as Ethiopian decency you are the champions of Ethiopian values.

We can speed up the process of forging a better country with your support. We understand that your heart is at the right place. I salute your steadfast commitment to our country. Our ambassadors across the globe could not possibly represent what our country offers in its entirety. We look forward to your copious contributions wherever you are and also invite you to come home and share the treasure troves of your knowledge and experiences with your countrymen.

Dear our development partners:

We appreciate the steadfast support of our development partners who have been assisting us in our peace and development efforts. I am hopeful that you will continue to stand with us in our renewed efforts to ensure the peace and development of our country.

Let us embrace love and forgiveness!

We want justice, freedom, peace and prosperity to reign in our country. Wishful thinking alone is not enough. We have to work hard to achieve these aspirations. We need to chip away our negative perceptions and rectify our moral compass. We must clear our view of hatred, resentment and racist tendencies.

Much has been sacrificed. Thousands have been killed, displaced and otherwise, psychologically frustrated. Over the years, there have been irrevocable damages done to the lives of our people and destruction of property. I am deeply sorry for all those have lost their loved ones. I also express my gratitude to members of the security elements who lost their lives while discharging their constitutional duty.

As a government, we have reflected long and hard on what we would have done better. We have identified gaps that should be addressed immediately. We are prepared to better serve our people. After all, we are here to serve you. We need to learn from our mistakes and learn to forgive each other.

Dear leaders of opposition parties,

We view political parties outside of EPRDF as competitors not as enemies and opponents. We regard you as friends with alternative ideas and as citizens who love their country. I would like to extend an invitation to those of you who are in the business of non-violent struggle. We vow to create a level playing field for fair competition.

I call upon all political parties to omit all ways which endanger our coexistence, unity and national interest. Instead, you should work in the spirit of political farsightedness, patriotism, give and take, and assist our efforts to create a better political culture.

Ethiopian farmers, Pastoralists, those engaged in various occupations, security forces, intellectuals, business engines , residents of urban and rural areas, people of all trades, elders of the country, Muslims, Christians, Waaqefattas and followers of other religions, nations, nationalities, and peoples living from north to south and from east to west, let us all build our mature democracy. Let us take our country out of the abject poverty. Let us get rid of racism and divisiveness from our country. Let us create a citizen who is educated and rationally argumentative.

Today marks the 7th year of the inauguration of our Grand Renaissance Dam, which was launched by all Ethiopians. The finalization of the dam will ensure that we can alleviate and solve the problems that are facing our country. We live up to the spirit that we continue to live up to the height of our country's prosperity.

Finally, I ask you to allow me to thank various bodies that deserve credit for my assumption of this high responsibility.

First of all, I would like to acknowledge EPRDF and my people who have entrusted me with the responsibility of serving our country.

My Special thanks go to a woman who has prophesized that I will be with you today and instilled this vision in me since I was at a tender age of seven. This special woman is my mom, who has passed away. My mother is one of the kind, innocent, and hardworking Ethiopian mothers. She did not either material wealth or worldly knowledge. She has been instrumental in instilling unquenchable thirst for knowledge and sense of civic responsibilities. This is the same for all mothers who play great role in all of our children's lives. Our children are the ones who play a leading role in

ensuring the renaissance of this country in the future, so I ask all mothers to continue to play their motherly role with great responsibility.

Third, the contribution of wives could be two-fold, and the same time, three –fold. One for themselves; the other for their husbands, and the third is for their children. There are exceptional women who exceed all expectations. I would like to extend my special thanks you to my beloved wife, W/o Zenash Tayachew, who has been there with, replacing my mother. Nothing gives me more honor than having you by my side; so I will simply say Thank you.

I would like to also thank friends near and far-as you have been a source of strength and motivation. I appreciate all of you for standing by my side.

Today is not only a historic day but a day of renewed spirit and conviction.

I am confident that together we will do everything we can to ensure Ethiopia takes her rightful place in history.

Ethiopia shall flourish, cherished by her children.

Long Live Ethiopia!

May God bless Ethiopia and its peoples!

Thank you.