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Indian Council of World Affairs
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Inaugural/Keynote address

by

H.E. Amb Markos Tekle
State Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia

at the Conference

on

**India's engagement with North Africa and Horn of
Africa: Issues, Initiatives and Prospects**

(29 March 2019)
(Hyatt Regency Hotel, Addis Ababa)

Excellency Mr. Anurag Srivastava, Ambassador of India to Ethiopia, Djibouti and the African Union

Mr. Soumen Bagchi, Deputy Director General, Indian Council of World Affairs,
Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to address this august gathering attending the Conference on India's engagement with North Africa and Horn of Africa: Issues, Initiatives and Prospects that is being hosted in Addis Ababa. I wish to, first of all, express appreciation for the invitation and the arrangements that have been made by the Indian Council of World Affairs and the Embassy of India. It is my conviction that such conferences provide insight and mutual understanding between Africa and India.

India's ties with African nations go back a long way. During colonial times, India has been a beacon of light in the struggle for freedom with Mahatama Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru serving as models of inspiration. In our age and times, India serves as an inspiration for Africans for rapid economic development and scientific and technological advancement.

The historic and friendly relations that India has with Africa have progressed at a fast pace in the last decade. India entered into a structured engagement with African countries with the launch of the first Indian Africa Forum Summit in 2008 in New Delhi. This was followed by the Second India Africa Forum Summit in Addis Ababa in 2011. The third India-Africa Forum summit, held in New Delhi in October 2015, renewed the focus of India on strengthening and enhancing its partnership with countries in the African continent.

In the past few years we have witnessed a growing engagement with African countries. Several visits have been made to Africa at the Prime Minister, the President and Vice President level. In October 2017, H.E. Mr. Ram Nath Kovind, President of the Republic of India visited Ethiopia and met with the leaders of our country. His visit has demonstrated to us the Indian government's desire to intensify high level dialogue and consultations aimed at enhancing our relations.

We have also noted that on the diplomatic front, India wishes to strengthen its diplomatic presence in Africa. It is encouraging to hear media reports that indicate India's desire to strengthen its presence in Africa with the opening of 18 new embassies in the continent by 2021.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ethiopia sees India as a very important partner. In recent times, Ethiopia's relations with India has grown to an all-round development partnership that covers trade, investment, development assistance in the form of soft loan and technical assistance.

Our two countries enjoy a robust trade and investment relations. The trade relations between our two countries has been growing steadily with an average growth rate of more than 20% over for the last ten years and the total trade volume has reached around 1.37 billion USO in 2017. However, a lot remains to be done as the trade balance remains in favor of India. Currently, Indian investment in Ethiopia is among the top three in terms of number and the largest in agriculture and agro processing.

Our bilateral co-operation is also growing by leaps and bounds. Ethiopia has benefited from the line of credit (LOC) from India. So far, India has granted more than USO 1.1 billion LOC to Ethiopia mainly to finance sugar projects and rural electrification.

Ethiopia has drawn meaningful lessons from India's experiences and expertise in various fields, including sugar, textile and small scale industries. Ethiopia has benefitted from scholarships and short-term training programs offered by India. In fact, human resource development is the main cooperation between our two countries whereby Indian teachers are engaged in many universities and Ethiopian students being sent to India for further studies.

Our cooperation, however, is not limited to bilateral issues alone. We cooperate closely on multilateral issues as well. Ethiopia, for instance, has joined the International Solar Alliance' India's flagship initiative for cooperation on solar energy. Ethiopia highly appreciates India's contributions to the fight against terrorism and to global peace and stability around the world.

Last year, Ethiopia and India have celebrated the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations and marked it by commemorating it through a series of events. A major activity was the holding of the second Ethio-India Joint Ministerial Commission in New Delhi where the two sides renewed their commitment to enhance their cooperative relations in all areas.

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As you are well aware, India is the largest democracy in the world. It has built a strong multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious and secular nation state. In the span of seven decades India has seen lot of development in the field of science, technology, education, agriculture, and infrastructure. A country which is rich in culture and source of major religious, Africa has an excellent opportunity to learn from India's good experience in managing possible fault lines of religion, ethnicity and languages into factors that unite the country.

We are greatly impressed by the achievements of India in maintaining such steady and inspiring progress in fighting poverty especially over the last quarter of a century. India has now emerged as the fastest growing major economy in the world and it is expected to be one of the top three economic powers of the world over the next 10-15 years, backed by its strong democracy and partnerships. The decline in the poverty rate in India is also an important model for African states. India's progress in its growing ability to feed its people and in meeting the challenges is now matched with its development in many other areas including its impressive advancement in ICT, Space Science and engineering. Its latest remarkable success in launching to space the Anti-Satellite Missile or ASAT missile is a case in point.

In conclusion, we believe India has a lot to contribute to our region. My appreciation, once again, goes to the organizers for convening this conference which I believe will shed light on India's ties with our region and beyond and prospects for continued engagement. It is my expectation that this conference will showcase and focus on further opportunities of cooperation in addition to existing ones for mutual benefit. Finally, please accept my best wishes for productive deliberations.

I thank you!
