



Statement

By

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And

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the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the United Nations

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At

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Diaspora Ministerial Conference

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Mr. Chairman,
Director General of IOM,
Honorable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates

I would like to take this opportunity to express our best wishes to Ambassador William Swing on his well deserved reelection by acclamation as the DG of IOM. We look forward to further deepening our active engagement with IOM under his leadership.

We thank IOM for convening this Diaspora Ministerial Conference. The growing impact of Diaspora engagement on social and economic development of countries of origin and destination has attained greater magnitude as explained by the DG in his opening statement. This Ministerial Conference is thus timely to exchange views on best practices and contribute to the achievement of MDGs and to the debate on post 2015 development agenda.

We need to take more focused and concrete measures to address the hurdles preventing the diaspora from making even more profound contributions to society and enjoy benefits of their positive engagements. Firstly, we need a political and institutional framework to reduce the vulnerability of migrants, in particular migrant workers. Labour recruitment should scrupulously abide by labour standards and migrants must be protected from abuse and exploitation. Women migrant workers have been the most vulnerable to violence and exploitation. Effective policy and institutional response for the protection of the rights of migrant workers should involve migrants in both countries of origin and destination.

It is imperative that countries hosting diaspora communities should actively combat violence, exploitation, xenophobic and racist attacks through effective legislation,

enforcement actions and policies aimed at promoting social inclusion and addressing marginalization.

They need also address the challenges of de-skilling and the downgrading of qualified migrant workers through the joint action of countries of origin and destination in the collaboration with IOM and ILO. We should also intensify the combat against human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants through better coordination, effective implementation of global treaties and exploring new avenues for immediate action.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government of Ethiopia has long recognized the positive contributions the diaspora could make to the development of the country. Ethiopians and foreign nationals of Ethiopian origin reside in important numbers in North America, in Europe and the Middle East. They send substantial amount of remittances and are increasingly undertaking investment activities, transfer of knowledge and charity work in the country.

The potential for enhancing this engagement is significant. The Government has taken various measures to further harness this potential and provide conducive environment for the diaspora to engage effectively in national development. On 28 December 2012, the House of Peoples' Representatives of Ethiopia endorsed the Diaspora Policy developed in collaboration with the World Bank's Institutional Development Fund and IOM. It was developed through the widest possible consultations among stakeholders in the country and the diaspora. The discussion abroad was undertaken in 25 cities around the world involving around 15, 000 diaspora participants. The Policy is aimed at ensuring the rights and interests of the Ethiopian diaspora, improving diaspora engagement in investment, trade and tourism, enhancing knowledge and technology transfer, encouraging foreign currency inflows, promoting cultural values and image building, advancing diaspora participation in good governance and democracy, and encouraging philanthropy and development associations. The new Diaspora Policy was launched on 15 June 2013 at the Conference of Ethiopian diaspora representatives from around the world.

Even before the adoption of the new Policy, the Government has taken various measures to encourage diaspora engagement. It has issued Persons of Ethiopian Origin identity cards, granting foreign nationals of Ethiopian origin to participate as domestic investors and involve in local activities. It has provided the diaspora attractive investment opportunities, and opportunities in housing development. It has made it possible for the diaspora to open foreign currency accounts in Ethiopia to increase the transfer of remittances where the diaspora could use the account as collateral to get credit in local currency from domestic banks and made it possible for them to buy Government bonds to contribute to development activities.

The investment regime provides numerous attractive incentives to the members of the diaspora to invest either through 100% equity ownership or in joint ventures. In the last ten years alone, some three thousand investment projects, worth around 22 Billion Ethiopian Birr, have been implemented creating significant employment opportunities.

The Government is also implementing a Temporary Return of Qualified Nationals Project aimed encouraging professional diaspora returnees from abroad to facilitate the transfer of skill and technical know-how to the country. This will address the lack of adequately trained manpower. Ethiopian diplomatic missions abroad are also attracting qualified professionals from abroad to work in Ethiopia.

In closing, we congratulate the IOM for this successful Conference and encourage for more tailored dialogue forums for interactive dialogues among countries of origin, transit and destination in collaboration with relevant regional and international organizations such as IOM and with active involvement of representatives of the diaspora.

I thank you.