

*Ambassade d'Ethiopie  
en France*

*Paris, le* 8 march 1993

COMITE CATHOLIQUE CONTRE LA FAIM  
ET POUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT

FONDATION POUR LE PROGRES DE L'HOMME

PARIS.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia has received your invitation to the Government to send a delegation to the meeting you plan to hold in Paris from March 11 - 13, 1993. I would like to take this opportunity to express the views of the Ethiopian Government vis a vis the planned meeting.

The Gouvernement, of course, appreciates your interest on Ethiopia and desire to contribute in the evolving democratic process within the country. The establishment of a democratic Ethiopia is the foundation of enduring stability and progress. However, the Government is concerned by the content and tone of the letter of invitation. The references to seemingly endless wars, the spiral of violence, the lack of dialogue and reconciliation, the volatile situation that are expressed in the letter indicate that there is a clear lack of understanding of the realities pertaining Ethiopia today. I wish to draw your attention to the following points.

1. A thirty-year long war is over in Ethiopia. Although there have been flareups and tensions in the early days of transition, these have subsided to a very large extent. One can measure stability by the fact that an 18 year long curfew has been lifted throughout the country.

2. Ethiopia is beginning to experience democratic life. Some 80 political organizations, fronts and social groups, are operating openly and freely in the country. Organizations that do not advocate violence are free to operate in Ethiopia and the Government is proving its commitment to resolve differences peacefully.

3. The Government is made up of some 30 organizations in the Council of Representatives. This demonstrates its commitment to pluralism, and further underlines its character as a government with the broadest possible representation of various interests and constituencies in the country.

4. The application of humane policies is the hallmark of the Transitional Government. With the establishment of independent courts, former officials are appearing to answer charges, while over 700 persons have been released. This is in addition to the over 16,000 OLF prisoners of war who, recently released, are in the process of reintegrating into society.

5. The Constitutional Drafting Commission has been established with parties and individuals both in and outside the Government, monarchists, republicans and all other shades of political opinion.

6. Power is devolving from the center to the regions. For the first time in the country's history all nationalities have begun to participate in national life on an equal footing. The birth of a federal system is fitting in well with the development of democratic life and behaviour.

7. Democracy is being exercised, aided by the promulgation of laws banning censorship (the press law), greater access of political groups to the media, and the respect accorded to freedom of expression, of assembly and worship.

8. The country is moving away from a central command to a market oriented economy - a reflection of democratization of the society. The international community have recognized and supported the measures being taken to liberalize and privatize the economy.

9. Reconciliation is sending root with the growing presence of Ethiopian individuals and organizations formerly based abroad. This is being widely regarded as an example to other countries currently undergoing severe strife.

10. Ethiopia is seeking to help find solutions to the problems in the region and is playing a unique and internationally recognized role in bringing the warring factions in Somalia together.

This is the scenario that describes present day Ethiopia. We do admit that we have shortcomings and challenges that continue to face us. The Transitional Government, however, is committed to face the challenges and resolve issues in a fair manner. The recent measure to set up an independent body to investigate the unfortunate incident at Addis Ababa University of January 4 is a case in point.

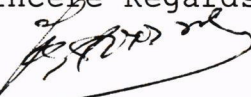
This being the case, the Transitional Government cannot but wonder as to how the organizers of the meeting in Paris could have so completely misread the situation on the ground in Ethiopia. While it is true that there are a number of disgruntled elements which have chosen to remain abroad and agitate against the emerging situation in Ethiopia, one would have thought that responsible organizations would have arrived at a more objective analysis of the realities in the country.



The Government is not convinced that the democratic process in Ethiopia would be served by the intended meeting. It is amply evidenced by developments in Ethiopia since the fall of the previous regime that the democratic process can be freely and peacefully advanced within the country. All Ethiopians including those who have chosen to reside abroad, are at full liberty to engage in this process as indeed to promote following for their ideals without advocating violence. For this reason, the Government sees no need for its participation in the proposed meeting.

My Government however recognizes that the organizers may be moved to call the meeting out of a genuine concern for Ethiopia. It therefore wishes to take this opportunity to extend an invitation to both organizations to send a delegation to visit Ethiopia and ascertain the facts on the ground. If this is acceptable to you, please inform us of the dates suitable for your visit.

Sincere Regards.



**IYASSU MENGESHA**  
**AMBASSADOR.**