Commemorating PM Melese’s Extraordinary Legacy

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The late Prime Minister MelesZenawi, who transformed Ethiopia, has been widely praised both in life and in death. Three years ago this month, Ethiopians from far and near paid their last respects to the “Man of the People” with rivers of tears. Ethiopians are at the final stages to commemorate the third year of the death of the strong and dedicated PM Meles Zenawi. In addition, many countries of the world had paid tribute to the late Ethiopia's PM.

President Barack Obama said PM Meles deserves recognition for his lifelong contribution to Ethiopia’s development, particularly his unyielding commitment to Ethiopia’s poor and pro-poor policies. He said I had met with Prime Minister Meles at the G-8 Summit and recalls my personal admiration for his desire to lift millions of Ethiopians out of abject poverty, through his drive for food security.

President Obama added that he was also grateful for the late PM’s dedication to peace and security in Africa, his contributions to the African Union, and his voice for Africa on the world stage. Going forward, we encourage the Government of Ethiopia to enhance its support for development, democracy, regional stability and security, human rights, and prosperity for its people.

David Cameron, British PM on his part had said that Prime Minister Meles was an inspirational spokesman and ardent advocate of Africa on global issues and manifested amazing leadership and vision on Somalia and Sudan. His personal contribution to Ethiopia's development, in particular by lifting millions of Ethiopians out of the mire of poverty, has set extra-ordinary example for the region. Mr. Cameron said his thoughts went out with his family and with the nation of Ethiopia, he will be greatly missed.
Similarly, the Ex-British PM Tony Blair had said PM Meles Zenawi was a hugely significant figure in Ethiopia's history, in particular helping guide his country from extreme poverty to an era of economic growth and development. Blair said that the seed of mutual respect and trust which Meles had sowed at his visit has today produced strong bilateral relations unheard of in the annals of Ethiopia and the United Kingdom. Ethiopia stands out as the largest recipient of UK aid, which currently stands at £1.3 billion over five years.

Same Ex-PM Gordon Brown also said that the poor of the world had lost one of their greatest champions with the death of Prime Minister Meles. Ethiopia, one of the poorest countries in the world, made more progress in education, health and economic development under his leadership than at any time in its history and it is a tragedy for the Ethiopian people that they had lost a committed leader and a champion of children at such a young age. He was a leader not just for Ethiopia but for Africa and for global development, leading the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), sitting on the G20 as Africa’s representative, and a member of the 2005 Africa Commission.

When I met him we held meetings about how we could ensure every child would be in school in Ethiopia by 2015. His passion was in abolishing poverty and our hope is that he will inspire a new generation of men and women who will champion the cause of eradicating poverty.

Chinese President Hu Jintao on his part had said Meles was an outstanding leader of Ethiopia and a renowned African statesman who was dedicated to the great cause of national development and Africa’s revival. “Meles was an old aide of the Chinese people and paid high attention to advancing ties with China; we will never forget the great contributions that he made to the establishment and development of the China-Ethiopia comprehensive cooperative partnership,” Hu said.

Indian PM Manmohan Singh spoke about Zenawias a towering statesman who effectively articulated and advanced the continent’s interest in the international form. The PM noted, “in his death, Ethiopia had lost a remarkable leader whose contribution towards peace, progress and development of his country will be long remembered.”
UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said Mr. Meles would be remembered for his exceptional leadership and advocacy on African issues within and outside the continent and for overseeing his country’s economic development.

European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso also said Prime Minister Meles was a respected African leader. He demonstrated strong personal commitment over many years to improving the lives of not just his own but all African peoples, through his work on African unity, climate change, development and in promoting peace and stability in Africa at large in the Horn in particular.

Secretary of State Department Hillary Rodham Clinton said that she admired the Prime Minister’s personal commitment to transforming Ethiopia’s economy and to expanding education and health services. He was an important and influential voice in Africa, and we especially valued his role in promoting peace and security in the region. I am confident that Ethiopia will peacefully navigate the political transition according to its constitution.

Ambassador Susan E. Rice U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations on her part said that Meles was disarmingly regular, unpretentious, and direct. He was selfless, tireless and totally dedicated to his work and family. True, he never belied any lack of confidence in his judgments. He was tough, unsentimental and sometimes unyielding. For, among Prime Minister Meles’ many admirable qualities, above all was his world-class mind. A life-long student, he taught himself and many others so much.

Rice added that of course, Meles’s vision and impact never halted at Ethiopia’s borders. Across Africa, fellow leaders looked to Prime Minister Meles to help them and make peace and jumpstart their economies. He was instrumental in building the African Union. He made IGAD deliver. He confronted terrorism directly and countered violent extremists bent on undermining the state and the region. He did so much to build. He worked vigorously to end bitter conflicts – from Burundi to Liberia. He was crucial to the negotiation and implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended Sudan’s tragic civil war.
I also can testify personally how much Ethiopia, under Prime Minister Meles’s leadership, has given to the United Nations its lifesaving efforts – from preventing and resolving conflict to striving to meet the Millennium Development Goals, from combating climate change to serving in UN peacekeeping operations, most recently in Abyei. These contributions remind us that even nations facing their own challenges can make vast contributions to our shared security.

The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Jean Ping, The Commission will remember the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi for his exceptional contribution to the advancement of the objectives of the AU and the promotion of Africa’s interests in global fora. In particular, PM Meles played a critical role in furthering the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), whose Implementation Committee he was chairing. He also presided over with competence and utmost commitment the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC).

The Commission also salutes Ethiopia’s contribution, under Prime Minister Meles’s leadership, to the promotion of peace and security in Africa, both within the framework of the AU and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

He also added that PM MelesZenawi had also overseen the dramatic transformation of his country, which is today one of the top economic performers on the continent. In so doing, he has played an important role in pioneering a new era of hope and growth in Africa, driven as he was by the vision of Ethiopia and Africa’s Renaissance.

Jacob Zuma, South African President, expressed about Prime Minister MelesZenawi as Meles as strong leader, not only for his country but on the African continent, acting as mediator on numerous talks, particularly in the Horn of Africa region.

Similarly, South Africa's Ex-President Thabo Mbeki sadly described the late Meles as a man of remarkable intelligence and a rare commitment to the African continent.
Kenyan Prime Minister, Raila Odinga also stated that Meles Zenawi was a great leader, an intellectual, someone who was very dedicated to pan-Africanism. Everyone will remember him for the great effort he put in to transforming the Ethiopian economy.

President Rwanda Paul Kagame attributed for Premier Zenawi as he was not a leader for Ethiopia alone, but an eminent leader for the entire African continent, “He was a man of dignity,”

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia said Meles Zenawi was an economic transformer, he was a strong intellectual leader for the continent. In our regional meetings he stood out because of his intellect and his ability to respond and to lead dialogue on matters relating to African development. He will be missed in all of our meetings and our entire endeavor.

Barnaba Benjamin, South Sudanese Information Minister, on his part said it's a very, very sad day for the people of the Republic of South Sudan and the people of the East African region as a whole. PM Meles had been a tremendous nationalist leader, a president who had always let peace come to his neighbors.

Mr Rupiah Bwezani Banda, President of the Republic of Zambia, also described Prime Minister Mr Meles Zenawi as an intelligent and humble person who demonstrated a passion and love for the development of Africa. Mr Zenawi will be greatly missed and remembered for his hard work and loyalty to the people of Ethiopia in general and Africa at large, the President added.

Former President of Nigeria Olusegun Obasanjo had said the death of Ethiopian Prime Minister Menes Zenawi had robbed Africa of a “committed, forthright, visionary and fearless leader.” Somali landers had also expressed wised condolence to the Ethiopian people on the Death of PM Meles Zenawi. The Death of Meles Zenawi had robbed the Horn of Africa a great and visionary leader. The president of Somaliland, H.E Ahmed Mahmoud Silanyo said "Meles was a charismatic leader who campaigned for and ensured that peace and security prevails in the Horn ."
Yemini President, AbdRabbo Mansour Hadi also connotated that the absence of this political leader could pose a great loss not only to the Ethiopian people, but also to the region and the entire African continent. Hadi indicated that the relations between the two countries and the peoples of Yemen and Ethiopian are strong, historical and developed; stressing the need to work together in order to activate the functions and meetings of the Sana’a Forum so as to serve the objectives and the stability of the region.

Tanzanian President, Jakaya Kikwete, described Meles as Africa losing one of its greatest leaders. There are few leaders like him and to lose such a leader at so young an age at this critical moment in Africa's development is really tragic. Meles is credited with helping widespread economic development in Ethiopia, which has registered almost double-digit growth for the last few years.

Jakkie Cilliers, executive director for the Institute for Security Studies, a think tank in Pretoria wrote on The CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR “that Ethiopia's Prime Minister Meles Zenawi had been guiding his impoverished nation closer to prosperity through a steady economic progress. The looming question is whether Ethiopia will continue on the path set by the late prime minister, whose economic success had become widely admired in Africa even at the world. He's managed to do what no other African strongman has done. He was the living embodiment of the development state. Almost 95% of children now enter primary school, and the child mortality rate has fallen, according to U.S. AID. Though Ethiopia remains one of the world's poorest countries, its economy is now growing at a double digit.

Prof. Nicholas Stern once wrote on the African Report Magazine about Meles Zenawi as “Personally I had the privilege of working with him for more than a decade, as Chief Economist of the World Bank: writing the report of the Commission for Africa, of which he was a key driving force; working together in the run-up to Copenhagen 2009 and at the conference; on the UN Secretary-General's Group on Climate Financing in 2010; and, more recently, on ideas for a BRICS-led infrastructure development bank. “Meles was an outstandingly gifted, an
extraordinary and irreplaceable man; the most intelligent and committed man; that very rare person, a great mind and a great leader.

*Professor Stern states that*  “Mele is an indispensable man of global influence, an esteemed statesman, and a wielder of opinion. But above all, he was the greatest leader the country ever had, who left a transcendent legacy. Meles believed that economy is the “rising tide that would lift all the boats”. According to Meles, for Ethiopia democracy and economic development are inseparable. That is way Meles was striving to achieve democracy and economic development simultaneously.

It is three year since the death of Meles Zenawi, one of the world's and Africa's most remarkable leader. He was also an outstanding figure for Africa as a whole. He led the African Union on many issues and his analytical force, wisdom and intelligence were greatly valued in the councils of the world, at the UN, G20, G7/8 and elsewhere. Meles was also a tough man, in a tough place, ready to take difficult decisions.

On climate and environment and their relationship with development, he was visionary, determined and practical. Africa, for all its progress, remained poor and vulnerable to the vagaries of weather and climate. It was Meles who, in the run up to the Copenhagen UNFCCC conference of December 2009, insisted on and obtained the promise of $100 billion per annum from developed to developing countries. He saw the deep inequities in the facts that the rich countries had become rich on high-carbon growth and the poor countries were hit earliest and hardest on climate change.

It was Meles who argued for Africa “Carbon Credit”. He saw, as with so many other things, that Africa and the developing countries should take their future development, and their environment, in their own hands.

It was Meles who proposed Ethiopia's Climate-Resilient Green Economic Strategy (CRGE): he had a vision of Ethiopia being both a middle-income country and carbon-neutral by the second half of the next decade, and had concrete plans for getting there. He saw how to contain
Ethiopia’s double-digit growth rate and de-carbonize at the same time. He saw how degraded land could be restored to great productivity and how forests could be preserved and enhanced by the work of, and in the interests of, local communities. His ideas on environment and development are still embedded in Ethiopia’s plans for the future.

Meles’s commitment lifted millions of Ethiopians out of abject poverty and devoted himself to finding workable development policies. During his two-decade rule, Ethiopia went from being a byword for starvation to a substantial food exporter. We, Ethiopians, love our late PM; we never forget your legacy; Ethiopian Renaissance will be inevitable!