

**Welcome Address presented by H.E. Kassa Teklebrhan
Gebrehiwot, Chairman of ASSECAA
on the occasion of the 6th Retreat, held from 24th to 25th of
September 2014, in Amman, Jordan**



Your Excellency the Speaker of Al Ayan Council of Jordan,

Your Excellencies, Presidents, Speakers and other Heads of delegations,

Distinguished Government Officials,

Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure that I have the honour to welcome you all to the 6th retreat of the Association of Senates, Shoora and Equivalent Councils in Africa and the Arab World to deliberate on the theme “The Role of Parliaments in Combating corruption, Conflicts and promoting Regional Integration”.

It is again very pleasant that we are holding this event in this beautiful and magnificent city, the capital of this historic country - Jordan.

First and foremost, please allow me to remind ourselves that our second retreat which was held in 2007 was also in the Dead Sea area of Jordan was exceptionally unforgettable which I believe it to still be lingering in our memories. It would therefore be proper to express our sincere gratitude for everything done to support and facilitate our retreats in this beloved country, and among people who are not only neighbours but also brothers and sisters.

For the warm reception accorded to us and all the supports we have received from the Al Ayan Council of Jordan, we would like to say a big ‘thank you’ to the Speaker of Al Ayan Council, the Members, the Government, and the brotherly people of Jordan.

ASSECAA retreat is a time for the discussion of important and contemporary issues which are found to be common concerns Africa and the Arab World. It is again an opportunity to

share ideas and experiences, exploring variety of possible solutions for our problems. In other words, such retreats may definitely contribute towards ensuring more effective performance of our respective institutions in our different countries.

The subject matters proposed for discussion by our General Secretariat and got the blessing of those who responded on the proposal to my mind is very contemporary and quite relevant to our two regions. The noble objectives, intended to be attained through our deliberation, do deserve our attention and I would like to express my sincere satisfaction and appreciation to our Secretariat for making such fruitful efforts in selecting the theme of the retreat. Once again, thank you for a job well done!!!

DISTINGUISHED PARTICIPANTS,

The Role of Parliamentarians in combating corruption, preventing conflicts and promoting Regional integration cannot be over-emphasized. Parliaments are very close to their respective peoples and there is always more expectation from them, as compared to the other branches of government, in this respect. This is why that we need to keep on remembering the nature of our responsibility towards our respective peoples.

I am quite sure that we all agree that corruption is a type of worm that has eaten and continues to eat the fabrics of our society and, if left without any tangible action, the future of our different economies is bleak.

Many studies carried out recently, including those of the World Bank, IMF and other credible international institutions, reveal the negative impacts of corruption on the lives of our peoples. An estimated thousand of billions of dollars are being annually squandered in both developed and developing countries as a result of corruption.

Corruption could trigger political and economic volatility. Corruption has robbed us of a cardinal element of legitimacy. It can lead to widespread social unrest and discourage foreign

direct investment. Menacingly, it facilitates the pilfering of financial resources from the downtrodden into largely the pockets of the political leadership. We cannot continue to keep quiet and silent while our peoples continue to suffer because of such malpractices.

DEAR DELEGATES

Ladies and Gentlemen

Our regions (Africa and the Arab Countries) are in chaos. No day passes without a war or a rumour of war in one country or another. Our citizens are dying not in hundreds but in thousands in every event. What interpretation can we give to what is happening in Syria and Iraq, and to what has happened in Libya and Congo, to what Boko Haram has been doing in Nigeria and, as well as the tragic situation in Gaza? Religion has been given interpretations that suit these senseless killings and violence. We may deliberate on such apparently sensitive issues and share our respective experiences so that we may reach at reasonably acceptable and workable solution that may contribute positively to the well being and peaceful coexistence of peoples in our contemporary world.

As we all know, economic integration is part our shared visions which we expect to reduce or avoid barriers against effective economic and trade relations that would definitely be useful for our brotherly peoples in our two regions. Moreover, regional integration may require division of responsibility depending on our respective areas of comparative advantages. In short, we may deliberate on such issues from the perspective of our shared aspirations and concerns towards a more advanced level of cooperation.

We all are aware that our respective governments, both in Africa and the Arab World, are making a lot of efforts to promote the idea of economic integration as one of the possible forms of developmental partnership among the countries of the two neighbouring regions.

In this era of globalization, the issues of peace and development should be our strategic priorities. Without commendable achievements, in these two strategic areas, including peace and development, there can be nothing that we can achieve in the best interests of our peoples.

Thus, distinguished guests, I would like to reiterate the need for more effective deliberations on such timely concerns of our respective countries. I hope our deliberations may result in historic achievements.

Ladies and gentlemen, with this short opening remark, let me once again welcome you to this meeting and I wish us you fruitful deliberation.

Thank you.