

G20 Seoul Speakers' Consultation

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Speech delivered by



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Strategies for Successfully Developing Economies –

Lessons from Ethiopia

The spoken word prevails

*Your Excellency, Park, Hee Tae, Speaker of the Korean National Assembly,
Honorable Speakers,*

First of all I would like to express my appreciation for the organization of this meeting and the opportunity to share experience regarding development. I am very happy to participate in this meeting, especially as South Korea is a country with which Ethiopia is sharing an excellent and long-standing relationship based on various pillars. Korea is not only an excellent example of fast economic development from which we are happy to learn, but also one of great hospitality for which I would like to thank the Government and the people of South Korea.

Coming to today's topic, the way parliaments can learn from each other with regards to development, I would like to start by thanking our hosting country Korea and all our other partners for the technical and financial support, we have received helping us to improve our situation significantly throughout the past 18 years. While we are still in a learning and improving process, we are now also in a position to share some of the secrets of our success.

Mr. Chairman,

Honorable Speakers,

From our experience we can state that the most important precondition for any kind of development is ownership. To us, ownership is far broader than the narrow concept a number of international organizations are using. I am not talking about private ownership of resources. Ownership means that a nation seeking development, be it economic, democratic or any other kind of development, has to own this desire. The nation has to identify its own problems and to find its own ways to solve these problems

by setting their own priorities.

This does not mean that external help would be rejected. But, whatever strategy is decided to achieve development has to be generated within that nation and not outside. Any type of strategy which is not owned by the people is doomed to fail while only internalized and owned strategies will succeed. The extraordinary development of countries like South Korea, Germany or some of the developing countries like Ethiopia are very good examples. Literally raising from the ashes, these countries implemented their individual self-owned development strategies with high commitment and discipline.

As in many other developing countries, in Ethiopia, we started the process of development after a radical system change. The first step we undertook, was to deeply analyze the problems and root causes of our low level of development as well as the historical, cultural and geographical context we found ourselves in. Based on the assumption that people, institutions and societies usually learn more out of their own experiences than out of those of others, we studied the achievements and shortcomings of our nation. Having done this, we undertook a wide study of experiences of other countries with regards to development and poverty eradication.

Knowing about our problems and the vast experiences of other countries, we are also aware that not every strategy works in every context and no size fits all. Based on our priorities we then designed strategies fitting to our context. To accommodate our diversity, we first opted for a decentralized form of government and then a federal form of government. Secondly we determined that our main problem was a lack of capacity in many aspects. Accordingly, we designed strategies for sustainable and systematic

capacity building.

At this step the international community and development partners come into the game. As our lack of capacity also includes a lack of financial resources, we had to mobilize development partners to help us to implement our strategies. While we are highly appreciating the technical and financial support we received through this way, we have also made the experience that our strong sense of ownership was not well received by everyone at every stage.

Mr. Chairman,

Honorable Speakers,

Sustainable development does not only require ownership of the process by the government. It also requires the ownership of the strategies and policies by the people. In order to be successful, we have to participate the people in our strategies. The active participation and the support of the society as a whole and the different parts of the society is essential for the success of any development endeavor. This directly concerns parliaments as the representatives of the people. It is the mandate of the parliaments and its members to be in close dialogue with the society in order to maintain dynamic development.

A society being part of the development process will not only not resist change, but will an integral and active partner in the progress. This can be expressed through individual and community involvement in financial, technical or in-kind contribution to development projects or in playing important roles as change managers when it comes to attitudinal change or to eradicate harmful practices.

Since we came into power in 1991, we always shared the conviction that there will be no peace without democracy and no development without peace and democracy. For this reason we opted for a federal structure of government with a strong focus on the right to self-determination. Democratic participation is the foundation of development and we not only ensure free and fair elections and accountable governments on the federal and regional level. We are also very proud that half of the adult population is actively engaging in elected local councils and thus an important player in decision-making processes. Through this arrangement, the people literally become part of the government.

While benefitting from all development activities undertaken by the government, the people also contribute significantly in form of in-kind and financial support. These contributions do not stop at the physical borders of the country. Because of our close dialogue also with the Ethiopian Diaspora, large parts of them contribute significantly towards the development of our country. The recently expressed support for the construction of the Grand Renaissance Dam is only one example among many. Thus close dialogue and ownership are crucial elements of our success story.

Being fully aware, that we still have many problems to solve, we highly appreciate this conference and will be honored to continuously participating in further parliamentary exchange in order to pursue our common goal of achieving the Millennium Development Goals, for a secure and peaceful world as well as the protection of natural resources and the alleviation of environmental damages.

Mr. Chairman,

Honorable Speakers,

Coming back to the success factors for development, the strong commitment and discipline of the government in exercising its leadership role has to be mentioned. This includes regular assessments of the strategies chosen and eventually reviews, amendments and the adaption of modified or completely new strategies along the process. Based on assessments of our work, we have recently established a new and ambitious plan to move the country further forward. The Growth and Transformation Plan which we have already begun implementing will not only help to achieve the Millennium Development Goals but also to transform the country into a middle income economy within the next 10 to 15 years.

Through intensifying the industrialization of the economy while doubling the productivity of the agricultural sector and increasing access to services we are targeting a continued economic growth of 11 to 14% over the next five years. At the heart of the plan is an increase of quality of life of the people, especially women and youth.

Part of our new strategy is the increase of production of CO₂ neutral electric power. We will raise the production of electric power to 10,000 MW relying on renewable environmentally friendly hydro energy. All current and future hydro-power plants are based on environmental assessments and will not harm anyone. On the contrary, by meeting growing energy demands and leading the continent out of darkness, they will not only benefit the Ethiopian people, but also provide development opportunities for other African countries.

Successful development policy requires integrated approaches. In the same way we consider peace, democracy and development as fully integrated and inseparable, we also strive to integrate other policies in order to obtain sustainable growth and development.

One such example is our energy policy which is part of the struggle to reduce CO2 emissions. This policy is supplemented by an impressive program of improving the efficiency of energy transmission and usage as well as reforestation, the replacement of Green House Gas emitting production by Green House Gas neutral technologies, the enactment of further legislation to protect the environment as well as the contribution to global programs on CO2 reduction. I can assure you, Ethiopia is doing her homework regarding the alleviation of climate change effects and I call upon you to also meet the commitments you made.

Ethiopia is one of the countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. This is not a coincidence. Nor is our two digit economic growth we have been achieving for the last seven years a coincidence. Our success is based on the factors I described before. Today we are in a situation where we can offer very stable and secure conditions for national and foreign investment. Thus we have created a fertile ground for further development and cooperation and welcome you to take this as an opportunity.

Mr. Chairman,

Honorable Speakers,

Speaking about the roles of parliaments in development also requires to investigate

risks and dangers. A severe danger to all development are the security threats created by international terrorism and piracy emanating from failed or failing states. These dangers affect development all over the world and unfortunately the Horn of Africa is no exemption to this.

Ethiopia, a stable, peaceful and democratic country is surrounded by an unstable environment. In order to maintain our role as stable and secure country, we need partners and strengthened cooperation.

The death of Osama Bin Laden might reduced one risk factor of international terrorism. Unfortunately there are many more such risks which we need to contain.

The policies of the Eritrean government for example severely hamper peace, security and stability in the Horn of Africa and beyond. In the interest of securing lives in the Horn of Africa and in the interest of maintaining trade relations between Africa and the rest of the world, such policies cannot be tolerated any longer. We expect from our partners, especially the G20 members, to help to protect peace, security, democracy and development in the region by either convincing the Eritrean government to change their attitude and to become a partner or by taking other actions in order to prevent this state from failing.

Another instable country in the Horn is Somalia. Here the Transitional Government needs increased international support, not just to improve the situation for the Somali people, but also in the interest of peace, security and trade options in, with and for Africa. Peaceful and sustainable development in the Horn of Africa, the whole continent and beyond require more stability, more democracy and more accountability.

All this can only be achieved through mutual and trustful cooperation.

Ethiopia has proven to be a stable, secure and reliable partner. We are actively supporting peacekeeping and peace building processes through IGAD and the African Union. We also engage in parliamentary cooperation through different organizations. It is in the interest of the G20 to support us in maintaining conducive and peaceful conditions in order to guarantee continued economic growth and development.

Mr. Chairman,

Honorable Speakers,

Let me conclude by reminding us that all cooperation has to serve our common goals. Having agreed on the principles of ownership, integrated strategies, the value of national contexts and equity we can engage in joint ventures for our mutual benefits.

Parliaments play a crucial role in terms of development. We have learned a lot from parliaments from various countries regarding technical and political processes and procedures and we hope that this learning process will continue in the future.

In order to meet the challenges posed by previous injustices towards the developing world, environmental and security threats as well as globalization, developing countries not only need experience exchange. We also need the regularly promised support in form of direct investments and budget support to implement the policies designed for our specific contexts.

Parliaments of the developed world as the decision makers in their national contexts are in an excellent position to promote these ideas and to support our strive for development.

The G20 has made commitments towards the developing countries with regards to

environment protection and assistance to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. I call upon you to ensure that the partnerships are strengthened and the commitments made are being met.

I thank you very much for your attention.