

Renowned Politicians and Leaders Pay Tribute to Meles and Remember his Legacy

PRESS RELEASE

Tuesday 30th April 2013, LONDON

Tributes were paid to Ethiopia's exceptional leader, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, for his outstanding contribution to the renaissance of both Ethiopia and Africa during his tenure which spanned two decades.

The late Premier died in August last year and his funeral took place at Trinity Cathedral in Addis Ababa in the presence of tens of thousands of mourners including world leaders.

At lunchtime today (30th April 2013), an audience of over 700, including leading UK ministers and other politicians, diplomats, representatives of the business community, and members of the Ethiopian community paid tribute to Ethiopia's great leader at a commemorative occasion organized by the Ethiopian Embassy in London, at the Emmanuel Centre in Westminster.



Former UK Prime Minister, H.E. Gordon Brown, began with an electrifying speech saying that “no one did more to eradicate the evil of poverty than Prime Minister Meles.” Mr Brown praised the political change that Meles had wrought and the economic take-off that his policies had brought about. “But for Meles” he said, “growth had to have a purpose, economics was a branch of ethics”, this meant improving the lives of the many millions of Ethiopians with the opening of innumerable clinics, schools and the slashing of poverty rates. Mr Brown added “There will be statues, streets and schools named after PM Meles, but perhaps his best memorial will be the future millions of people in Ethiopia who will have chances that they could not have had without him.” He concluded “let us re-dedicate ourselves to creating opportunities for the excluded.”

Former Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Africa and Shadow Spokesperson on foreign affairs **Lord Triesman** said that PM Meles “a man of action” and a “fiercely independent thinker” who advocated “durable development” with the advancement of women and where “Ethiopian dynamism” would replace aid, which was “no substitute for real economic development”. Meles had a sort of “Roosevelt New Deal” approach wherein power could be used to enhance the basic commodities that Ethiopia has in abundance and on which a firm based economy can be established. “Meles studied for an Open University Masters in Business Administration while fighting in the bush, and gained the highest marks ever recorded”. Lord Triesman said. Meles’ “forensic intellect and ability to act effectively” came to the fore at Gleneagles in 2005. In understanding Somalia and the rest of the Horn region “he was far ahead of anyone else” Lord Triesman concluded.

Former Chief Secretary to the Treasury, **Lord Boateng** said that “Meles was the very best” and would take his place among the portraits of great African leaders on the walls of the African Union building. Meles kept alive the flame of PanAfricanism and the critical link between economic and political emancipation. The AU had fallen into the doldrums but is now asserting itself thanks in great part to Meles. Meles never accepted the perceived wisdom even if pushed by the World Bank and suchlike. He was proved right on both education and agriculture – Ethiopia built up higher education along with primary education against advice and prioritised agriculture, which the World Bank viewed as “not important”.

A poem by academic and writer **Dr Jenny Hammond**, for Meles, a “remarkable man” whom she first met in 1986 reflects the love and respect Meles felt for the peasant farmers of his home region, Tigray, and Ethiopia as a whole. Meles told Jenny “To see us as givers in the revolution is to have a totally false picture. We received training from them in how to survive in the forest, which wild plants are edible and useful and which are not. They showed us how to hunt meat, how to find cool water, how to identify different animals ...’ This bond deepened with the years.

LSE professor **Lord Stern of Brentford**, began by contrasting the “desperately poor” Ethiopia of 1967 when he travelled there as a student to when he returned as Chief Economist of the World Bank, over thirty years later. “Meles”, he said, “was half-way through his two decades of a leadership which saw a transformation of economic and human development of extraordinary proportions. Meles was, he said, supremely analytical and quantitative, as well as brilliantly political and strategic, and he would have wanted and expected some numbers at his memorial which Lord Stern duly cited – listing achievements which effectively prevented 5 million deaths of the last two decades. Meles was a key player at the climate change conference in Copenhagen in 2009. They worked together on the UN Advisory Group on Climate Financing in 2010, which Meles co-chaired and drove forward. Their last collaboration was on the BRICS-led development bank which was in large measure Meles’ conception and which he knew, before he died, was likely to go forward – the decision to do so was taken last month. Meles saw Africa as a continent of opportunity and playing its role in world leadership and he did so much to realise those visions. The world has lost an extraordinarily and irreplaceable leader and we have lost a precious friend.”



Former Secretary of State for International Development, the **Rt. Hon Clare Short**, spoke of her admiration for “the most intelligent politician I’ve ever met in my life”. She recalled setbacks that Meles had had to face, such as the conflict with Eritrea, and said that monumental progress has been made despite them with well-founded policies such as universal education for girls, fighting corruption and impressive economic growth. Meles championed the developmental state and Ethiopia is a model to other countries.

Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Ethiopia, **Laurence Robertson MP**, spoke of his admiration for the achievements of Prime Minister Meles and “the enviable growth in GDP” that Ethiopia had achieved under his stewardship. Writer and broadcaster, **Jonathan Dimbleby**, could not be present but pre-recorded a short film praising the progress that Meles had brought about despite the problems of living in such a tough region. He regretted that Meles had left so soon but was convinced that his legacy would be completed by coming generations who would further transform Ethiopia into a fully-fledged modern state.



Concluding the event, **Lord Malloch-Brown**, Former Minister of State for Africa at the FCO, spoke of Meles longing to retire and return to his studies. The amount of academic work Meles produced was so colossal that “it was difficult to believe sometimes that he was also running a country” he said. Meles believed in political liberalisation and it is a great shame that he didn’t live to see the full achievements of the revolution as he was taken from us before it was complete. But “Ethiopia is marching on” and he was a great foot soldier and a great African. And it is heartening that these feelings have been shared by so many today.

H.E. Berhanu Kebede, Ambassador of Ethiopia to the UK and the Scandinavian countries, lauded UK political leaders and personalities for paying tribute to the late Prime Minister and what he had achieved and further mentioned the political and economic transformation that had been brought about under the far-sighted leadership of PM Meles.

“It is in recognition of his outstanding leadership”, the Ambassador said, “that the people of Ethiopia recently launched the **Meles Foundation** to allow scholarly studies into his life and works, which inspired the reawakening and Renaissance of Ethiopia. The Foundation is dedicated to preserving and advancing the legacy of Prime Minister Meles’ lifelong commitment to peace, justice, economic development, good governance, and democracy for the Ethiopian and African people. It will provide a living memorial to his selfless struggle, to his statesmanship and to his perpetual support for the freedom and equality of the peoples of Ethiopia; a place for the study of the new life that Meles Zenawi breathed into Africa's aspiration for peace, democracy and development.”

The Ambassador concluded “we the people of Ethiopia, inspired by the vision and legacies of Meles, have expressed our commitment to give full support to Ethiopia’s Renaissance and work hard for the realisation of the Renaissance dam and other mega projects currently underway. The construction of the Renaissance dam, road and railway networks across the nation, hospitals, universities and other infrastructure will remain high on our agenda. Poverty will remain Ethiopia’s formidable enemy until such time that prosperity becomes the order of the day. Through dedication to his priorities, and in full appreciation of his legacy we, the people of Ethiopia, will keep Meles alive and among us.”



The prize winning London based music troupe, *Dankira*, sang in honour and remembrance of the late Prime Minister.

The Master of Ceremonies on the occasion was Myles Wickstead, former UK Ambassador to Ethiopia.

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