

BEN TV confers the Order of Kilimanjaro Award on the late PM Meles

LONDON, 24th November 2012

Bright Entertainment Network Television (BEN TV) conferred the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi with a posthumous award of **THE ORDER OF KILIMANJARO** - the highest honour to be bestowed on anyone by indigenous Africans resident in the UK – at a grand event held at the Holiday Inn Hotel in Bloomsbury on 23rd November.



The award, a tribute to the outstanding and life-long commitment of the great leader to the development of his nation and that of the African continent, praises Meles as “**The True Son of Africa**”.

In opening remarks at the event, the representative of Ben TV said “though we are deeply saddened over the loss of Meles, we are also here to celebrate achievements of this great son of Africa, who dedicated his life for the development of Ethiopia and firmly stood for African interests.”

Burundian Minister of Finance, Mr. Tabu Abdallah, who was the guest of honour at the event, handed over the award to H.E. Berhanu Kebede, Ethiopian Ambassador to Great Britain and the Scandinavian countries.



(left photo) Burundian Finance Minister handing the award to the Ambassador. (right photo l-r) BEN TV Chairman, Mr. Alistair Soyode, Burundi Finance Minister Mr. Tabu Abdallah and Ambassador Berhanu Kebede

The Minister who also received an award as Development Ambassador of the Year cited the dynamism and change taking place in Burundi and Africa, appreciated the role of BEN TV in promoting African issues and paid tribute to the late Prime Minister Meles for his leadership to both his country and Africa.

Upon receiving the award, the Ambassador Berhanu said Prime Minister Meles was a staunch freedom fighter and a man of the people who had always been at the forefront in the long and arduous journey to uproot the repressive regime and put in place a democratic order that guarantees equality and prosperity to the people of Ethiopia, now empowered to decide on their destiny.

The Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), and its predecessor, Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP), were massive blue prints produced under his leadership to ensure a faster economic growth that saw millions lifted out of abject poverty even at the time of economic meltdown elsewhere in the world.



For the Prime Minister, there is no greater indignity than poverty and that is why he underlined the imperative of defeating poverty for Ethiopia to be viable and honour the dignity of its people. He had a deep affection and unswerving commitment to the people of Ethiopia. But he was also a Panafricanist in deed.

He effectively argued for fair prices, for African commodities, for increased investment and financial flows, for payments in compensation of adverse impacts of climate change, and for fair regime of international trade. Indeed, he was, a True Son of Africa.

H.E. Ambassador Berhanu said the legacies of this great leadership are abound and multi-faceted. Ethiopia has been growing at an annual rate of 11 per cent over the past several years and projections indicate the trend will continue unabated. A democratic order has been put in place and democracy is taking roots in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Already, a peaceful and constitutional transition has taken place, bringing to the fore the new leadership which will see through the implementation of the strategies and policies crafted under Prime Minister Meles Zenawi

The ambassador expressed gratitude and appreciation to the management of BEN TV for its initiative to launch the BEN TV Diplomatic Awards in celebration of diplomatic achievements of the African, Caribbean, Asian and Pacific missions in the UK.

He also said the Ethiopian Embassy in London was greatly honoured to receive the posthumous award of the Order of Kilimanjaro, on behalf of our great leader, the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi.

Slides depicting tributes paid to PM Meles by world leaders and eminent personalities and highlights of his achievements and visions were shown at the grand event of the BEN TV Award.

Speaking at the event, Mr. Simon Hughes, Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrats and Member of Parliament for Southwark and Bermondsey, said, the late Prime Minister Meles “put his country on the map globally and diplomatically...He changed the culture and perception of Africa by arguing against, not just for the poor at home, but for planned change to be controlled for people, to understand the need for international global responsibility and we need more African leaders like him.”



He said “...we need to make sure more and more African countries are still practicing good governance, anticorruption governance, democratic governance and representative governance...and that every country in Africa in our lifetimes will become an example of good governance and good leadership, like the one given to the late Prime Minister of Ethiopia [by BEN TV]...this is a time for celebration of talents and for looking ahead with ambition and optimism.”

He further said that [Africans] have phenomenally changed the outlook of the UK and we are much more focused on Africa than we have been at any time and there is now a much greater consciousness of the potential of Africa. The UK government, he said, is determined to increase our trade and links with every part of Africa.

A minute of silence was observed in memory of the prime minister and tributes were paid by high commissioners and representatives of various countries. The High Commissioner for Malawi praised him for his outstanding leadership not only of Ethiopia, but also in matters of great significance for Africa.

Award winning musical troupe, Dankira, staged a drama highlighting the construction of the Renaissance Dam, one of the legacies of the late Prime Minister, and showcased the rich Ethiopian cultural dance to the delight of the audience.

At the conclusion of the event, the Ethiopian National Anthem was played.

BEN TV is a British television channel founded by Alistair Soyode. It is aimed mainly at expatriate Africans living in Europe and North Africa and prides itself at being the first and longest-running African and Caribbean-focused television channel in the United Kingdom with its tagline of “Bridging the Gap”.



Present on the occasion were Government representatives, parliamentarians, members of the diplomatic corps, companies and businesses, representatives of the Ethiopian community in the UK, as well as invited guests.

---ENDS---

For more information, please contact the Press Office on 020 7838 3883; info@ethioembassy.org.uk