

Your Excellency Ato Abate Sitotaw, Deputy Mayor of Addis Ababa;

Your Excellency Ato Eristu Yirda Coordinator of the economic cluster and Head of Trade Bureau with the rank of Deputy Mayor;

Your Excellency Mr. Borja Martinez Delcerro Spanish Ambassador to Ethiopia;

Mr Ricardo Zapatero CEO of Fairra Barcelona;

Ambassador Juan Antonio March Senior Advisor-Fira Barcelona and former Spanish Ambassador to WTO

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is my joy and privilege to make a welcoming remark on behalf of the President of Addis Chamber on this important occasion and welcome our distinguished guests from Barcelona.

As you may be all aware, the history of formally organized trade fairs and exhibitions in Ethiopia is much recent phenomenon compared to other countries. It was during the mid-sixtieth that the idea of organizing trade fairs and exhibitions emerged in Ethiopia in fair ground situated here in Addis Ababa. Even then, it was interrupted for several years after the downfall of the Imperial government in 1974.

The entire business of trade fairs have been downplayed owing to the command economic policy adopted by the communist regime until the change of government in May 1991.

The reintroduction of market economy and emergence of business competition prompted Addis Chamber to organize the first international exhibition at the Addis Ababa Exhibition Center before twenty years. The trade promotional event that started under the brand name Addis Chamber International Trade Fair has now reached its twentieth edition. The initiative taken by the chamber has become an eye opener to all other event organizers. Today, the fair ground is almost fully occupied with various trade promotional events all year round.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

When we celebrate the official opening of the 20th edition of Addis Chamber International Trade Fair in February this year, we were also commemorating the partnership between the Addis Ababa City Administration and the chamber that has successfully run for two decades.

The relationship that started by allowing Addis Chamber to use the venue for organizing trade fair has grown into the establishment of the first Public Private Partnership in just eight years' time. The partnership was born when the City Administration commissioned the chamber to administer the Addis Ababa Exhibition Center on contractual basis. Much to the credit of the leaderships of the two parties, the management contract brought the desired change in terms of promoting business

and investment as well as revenue generation. The new arrangement had proved the importance of Public Private Partnership that served as a showcase to initiate new areas of cooperation.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The economic growth registered by the country over the past thirteen years, growing demand for trade promotional events and increased interest of foreign companies in the growing Ethiopian market prompted the leadership of Addis Chamber to think of building exhibition and convention ground that can respond to the needs of the new times.

Addis Chamber then initiated a project to construct what we call Addis Africa International Exhibition and Convention Center. The City Administration promptly responded by providing 11 hectares of land with very cheap lease price. With a view to empowering the private sector, it was also decided to reestablish the project as a share company to which the city administration bought share that worth 150 million Birr to bring to another level of partnership. For this that chamber is very much grateful to the leadership of the city administration. Today we are very close to witnessing the beginning of the construction phase in few months' time.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

As you may all imagine, the realization of Addis Africa International Exhibition and Convention Center will take some time owing to the size of the project. We cannot expect to limit the ever growing demand for extended and standard exposition venue either. We had to therefore travel to some countries like UAE, Italy and Turkey to share from their experiences and shape our ideas for transitional arrangement. Finally, our lucky chance landed us at Barcelona.

We saw lots of things at Dubai, Istanbul and Milano Exposition venues. In Barcelona, however, we found not only new ideas but also new partners. Allow me to express my at most joy and happiness to meet you people at Fairra Barcelona. Encouraged by our first deliberations with officials of Fairra Barcelona, we organized a high level visit led by H.E. Mayor DiribaKumma that eventually resulted in the cooperation agreement between the two parties for the renovation and expansion works of the Addis Ababa Exhibition Center.

On behalf of Addis chamber and the private sector at large, I also wish to express my gratitude to the Addis Ababa City Administration and particularly, Mayor DiribaKumma for his commitment and leadership towards the realization of this project. His decision shall be remembered in good faith by the chamber and the business community in the years and decades to come.

Unlike other African Capitals, Addis Ababa was not built by colonizers. It is virtually a homemade city infrastructure. Nevertheless, if you drive through streets of Addis, you will observe what it benefited from the architecture of the Greece, Armenian, Italian, the Korean and Chinese. When this project is done, it will be another monument that depicts the figure print of the Catalonians.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

One of the great ideas we have shared from Fairra Barcelona is the significance of partnership between the City Administration of Barcelona and the City Chamber in owning and managing Fairra Barcelona. It is my sincere belief that we can also apply the same model for the future of the Addis Ababa Exhibition Center. This is because we believe the private sector is the catalyst for city growth and development. The private sector is the beauty of cities. To this end, there is nothing that we reserve behind to realize this glorious purpose of enhancing the level of our partnership to the highest level possible.

I understand that such partnership shall be in the interest of the public and the private sector and the nation at large.

Let me welcome once again our most valued guests from Barcelona and wish good end for the project.

Thank you for listening!

Getachew Regassa

Secretary General of Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations (On behalf of the President of the Chamber, Elias Geneti)

- Your Excellency Mr. Abate Setotaw, Deputy Mayor of the Addis Ababa City Administration
- Your Excellency Mr. Erestu Yierda, Coordinator of the Economy Cluster with a Rank of Deputy Mayor
- Your Excellency Mr. Elias Genetti, President of the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations
- Your Excellency Mr Borja Montesino Martinez del Cerro, Ambassador of Kingdom of Spain in Ethiopia Permanent Observer Representative at the African Union
- Mr. Ricard Zapatero CEO of Fira Barcelona and Mr. Juan Antonio MARCH, Senior International Adviser-Fira Barcelona International and Former Spanish Ambassador to the World Trade Organization
- Higher Officials from the Addis Ababa City Administration
- Board of Directors of the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations and the Secretariat
- Mr. Getachew Regassa, Secretary General of the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations
- Invited Guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

We are delighted to have you here to attend the Ceremonial Function of the signing of Agreement between the Addis Ababa City Administration and Fira Barcelona for the Feasibility Study of the new Addis Ababa Exhibition and Convention/Congress Center as a historic transformation.

The relations between Fira Barcelona and Addis Ababa City Administration began when a Delegation led by H.E. Miguel Angel MORATINOS, former Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation came to Addis Ababa on the 4th and 5th of February 2015. Subsequently, another delegation, which comprised Mr. Ricard and his colleagues, came to Addis Ababa. The core objective for both delegations was ***"Reconstructing the Addis Ababa Exhibition Center as a state of the art taking into consideration its Strategic Importance, growing economy, the presence of the African Union Head Quarter, many embassies and international organizations in Addis Ababa."***

Then, it was time to the Ethiopian Delegation lead by Mr. Shesema G/Sellase from Addis Ababa City Administration and Mr. Elias Geneti of Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations to go to Barcelona Invited by Fira Barcelona from 26-30 July 2015. A turning point for the process was when a Higher Level Delegation lead by H.E. Mr. Diriba Kumma, Mayor of the Addis Ababa City Administration visited Fira Barcelona invited by Her Excellency Mrs. Ada Colau, the Mayor of Barcelona, the opportunity of which laid the foundation for today's tangible function.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

The existing Addis Ababa Exhibition Center and Market Development Enterprise was established in 1982 with about 23,536 m2 space comprising four pavilions, one cultural restaurant and four cottages.

During the last 11 years, noticeable changes have been registered by the Exhibition Center. Just to mention some:

- The annual income raised from about 4.1.million to about 50 million Birr serving a total of over ten million customers annually.
- We have created job opportunities for five Micro and Small Enterprises along with temporary job opportunities for thousands of people.
- We also have created enabling environment to the surrounding community, hotel and transport sectors as direct beneficiaries.

- We fully support the annual exhibition programmes of the Micro and Small Enterprises, Cooperatives, and the events of other governmental bodies as far as possible driven by our Corporate Social Responsibility and partnership motives.
- We are also contributing a lot in terms of the generation of foreign currency and image building. In general it is the hub for the promotion of trade and investment of our country.

Although the Exhibition and Convention Sector in our country is booming as one of the key success indicators of Ethiopia's economy and development at large, the services do not qualify minimum standards. As a result we have failed to maximize the expected benefits from the major portions and multiple benefits of business drives of Exhibition and Convention Industry.

Our experiences and the global trends show that such gaps can be filled in by means of effective developmental strategies like "Public-Private-Partnership for Sustainable Developmental Changes" a motto which has integrated the Addis Ababa City Administration and the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations through the Addis Ababa Exhibition Center and Market Development Enterprise since the last 11 years with track records all the years round.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate Fira Barcelona Officials for their contributions while securing the progress of this vital project and accordingly express our commitment and readiness to work in partnership with full sense of belongingness and sense of urgency aiming at making this vital project a success.

Thank you all!

Tamrat Admassu

General Manager of Addis Ababa Exhibition Center and Market Development Enterprise