

**Inaugural Address**

**by**

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**on behalf of**

**H. E. Ato Hailemariam Desalegn**  
**Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of**  
**Ethiopia/FDRE**

**at**

**First ICWA Africa-India Academic Conference**  
**on**  
**“Africa and India: A Partnership for Development and Growth”**

**at**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**  
**May 11, 2011**

**Your Excellencies,  
Distinguished Scholars, Delegates  
Ladies and Gentlemen**

I feel deeply honored to be present here today to inaugurate this conference on the theme of “The African Union and India: A Partnership for Development and Growth”. With India-Africa Forum Summit being held here next week, it could hardly be more timely, and I would congratulate the organizers: The African Union Commission, the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) and the Ethiopian International Institute for Peace and Development (EIIPD). The ICWA deserves special credit for its initiative for this first Africa-India Conference by bringing such outstanding and relevant speakers together to reflect on an issue of high importance to both Africa and India.

It is also an exceptionally long-standing issue. The relationship between Africa and India dates back at least two thousand years, and the civilizations of India and Africa have been united by the Indian Ocean over many centuries. They have been bonded together by long traditions of friendship and more recently by their common struggles against colonialism and the ideological stances shared in the Non-Aligned Movement since the Bandung Conference of 1955, and in the Group of 77 (G-77). Over the last century, India’s relationship with Africa was largely based upon political issues. Today, this has become the basis for strengthening our partnership in areas of economic cooperation, in science and technology, in cooperation in social development and capacity building, as well as continued political cooperation.

**Distinguished Guests  
Ladies and Gentlemen**

The rapid emergence of India as a major power in the globalized world has prompted a growing interest in the relationship between India and Africa. Both Africa and India have realized the need to give a new dimension to existing cooperation in the present international economic environment. India has implemented numerous initiatives to support Africa’s peace, stability and development, reinforcing efforts to promote trade and industry, Foreign Direct Investment, development of small and medium-scale enterprises, and Africa’s regional integration. India has been generous in offering lines of credit, and providing significant amounts of aid, collaborating in health, water and sanitation, culture and sports projects, and contributing significantly to poverty reduction. Thousands of African students are studying in Indian institutions. Here I must single out the then Minister of Finance, Mr. Jaswant Singh, who took the decision in 2003 to turn India into an aid donor.

Bilateral trade has grown rapidly. Worth some forty-five billion dollars a year currently, this is expected to rise to around seventy billion in 2015. Nigeria and South Africa are the two largest trading partners for India in Africa. Indian business investments in Africa have created a large number of employment opportunities for Africans. Indian entrepreneurs have invested more than twenty five billion dollars in Africa, in agriculture, manufacturing, telecommunications, infrastructure and other areas. In Ethiopia, Indian investment has risen from five hundred million dollars five years ago to nearly four and a half billion dollars today. And I am pleased to note that His Excellency, Ambassador Bishnoi, suggested in a recent interview that this flow of investment could be attributed to sound macro-economic policies and good governance!

**Mr. Chairman**

**Distinguished scholars and delegates**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

Ethiopia and India have always maintained friendship and cooperation going back to a trade in spices probably as early as the Maurya empire and the rule of the Emperor Asoka. Close trading and cultural ties certainly extended for thousand of years. These longstanding relations more recently provided the basis for cooperation on issues of North-South dialogue, and of South-South cooperation in various international fora. Ethiopia greatly appreciates India's role in the Non-aligned Movement and its sympathetic attitude towards the problems of economic development in Africa. In recent years, our relations have deepened significantly. Our cooperation, a classic example of South-South Cooperation, is based on mutual respect and benefit. Our economic and trade relationships are progressing well. We co-operate closely on regional matters and work together to contribute to peace, stability and mutual understanding throughout the world.

In this context, Ethiopia sees the Africa-India Forum as an important strategy for increased cooperation between Africa and India. It is a valuable instrument for promoting economic progress and political stability. The increase flow of technical and financial resources to Africa will build infrastructure, increase industrialization, expand employment opportunities and promote free and fair trade among our countries. It is an exceptional effort that will strengthen the economic growth of Africa and contribute to the growth of the world economy.

**Mr. Chairman,**

**Distinguished delegates,**

I have every confidence that this conference, in the spirit of the Africa-India Forum, will contribute largely to the fostering of relations between Africa and India. I am delighted to officially inaugurate this meeting. I wish you all valuable and stimulating discussions, and to reading your conclusions, recommendations and suggestions. I can promise you I will read them with care!

I thank you

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