

Third meeting of the Committee on Human Development and Civil Society

Speech by

Minister of Labor and Social Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

4 May 2005, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Mr. Chairman!

Your Excellencies!

Government Officials!

Representatives of the UN agencies!

Distinguished Participants!

Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and on my own behalf, I would like to welcome you all to Addis Ababa. I feel very much honored and delighted to address this crucial and timely conference, which will dwell on "Participation and Partnership for Improving Development and Governance in Africa. "

As most of you know, full participation by all citizens in socioeconomic and political policy making institutions and mechanisms that link human financial resource and government is considered key to building and sustaining democracy, reducing conflict and achieving human development and social equity. People's participation in policy making leads to greater accountability, openness and transparency and builds up social reciprocities characterized by equity, inter-group tolerance, as well as inclusive responsible and active citizenship. Bringing all stakeholders from all sectors and perspectives together is a good response to the challenges of globalization and development. It is believed that partnership will effectively combine the private sector with the resources and inputs of the public sector.

Mr. Chairman!

Distinguished Participants!

Ladies & Gentlemen.

With the changing global business environment and the implication of globalization, there is a need to redesign Africa's approach to development. In recent years the emphasis has been on establishing consultative mechanisms between government and other stakeholders. You may recall the issues of participation have been on debate of Africa's development for some time, until it culminated with the adoption of the Charter on Popular Participation, in 1990 transformation of the organization of African Union (AU) in 2001. And this led to the adoption of the strategic development initiative of the continent, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), as an economic instrument of the new continental organization. The NEPAD programme recognizes the importance of participation as one of the preconditions for sustainable economic growth and development in Africa. In addition to this the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) also recognizes the importance of participation by all stakeholders in the process of development and governance as prerequisites for Africa's development.

Mr. Chairman!
Distinguished Participants!
Ladies & Gentlemen.

The Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia having recognized the value of entering into partnership and participation in pursuing its goal of promoting rapid and sustainable development, has created conducive environment for the realization of full partnership and participation thereby ensuring good governance and democracy.

To this end it has issued different policies, which were developed with full participation of the community at different levels, among which the Agriculture Led Industrialization Policy is worth mentioning. To the successful implementation of the policies the government has put in place the civil service reform programme. The programme was designed to identify and mobilize constituencies for reform to improve the performance of civil service institutions and promote the implementation of the development policies. Decentralization is another crucial measure taken by the government towards empowering people's direct participation in their own affairs and develop sense of ownership in implementation.

Due to these crucial steps several encouraging changes have taken place over the past few years, which are manifested in the remarkable achievements registered so far in the development direction. The debate of the contesting parties for the forthcoming election broadcasted through the mass media is the result of the dear sacrifice paid to ensure the prevalence of democracy and freedom of expression.

Mr. Chairman!
Distinguished Participants!
Ladies & Gentlemen.

These are but small steps in the long and challenging journey we have to undertake so as to ensure partnership and participation to bring about the desired development. Partnership takes time to develop. Experience has shown that each of the partners should develop mutual trust through continuous and transparent dialogue. Partners should be willing to share information freely, contribute time and resources to ensure sustainability. In time both the public and private sector will be responsive to each other's needs and the population at large will benefit from a vibrant economy.

To this end we need to scale up our efforts in an integrated manner. Hence, I would like at this juncture, to urge all Africans to recognize the value of strengthened partnership, like that of NEPAD to make Africa prosperous.

I hope the conference will address a number of issues that are in significant importance to African countries. I certainly hope the conference will make a valuable and innovative contributions to the governments represented here.

I look forward to rich and interesting deliberations with all of you and declare the conference open.

Thank You.