



MELES SAYS ISSUE OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION PREMIER POLITICAL, ECONOMICAL CHALLENGE FOR AFRICAN

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Addis Ababa, March 05, 2002 (WIC)- Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has said that African leaders must act beyond signing documents, and truly engage in practical actions in the realization of regional integration.

Meles' remark came yesterday at the opening of the Third African Development Forum (ADF) which has come to be described as Africa's Davos.

Meles said the issue of Regional Integration, the theme of this year's conference, is "a premier political and economic challenge that African's are facing today".

"All successful efforts at regional integration have been underpinned by political will, not merely expressed in documents, but of no less importance, by practical commitment in carrying out obligations assumed by political leader," the Prime Minister said.

Meles who also reminded delegates of Ethiopia's eminent role in African unity, underlined his country's continued commitment to regional integration and African Unity.



"We do so not only because of our dedication to the unity of our continent, but also because of our conviction that this is also in the interest of Ethiopia, as it is in the interest of all countries at the individual level" Meles said.

Mr. K.Y Amoako, the Executive Secretary of the ECA, on his part under scored that economic integration must foster enterprise at all levels, by supporting informal sectors, and facilitating the growth of small and medium firm.

Amoako also emphasized the effective creation of what he called "public goods" through coordinated efforts, including peace and security, social development, and addressing common environmental challenges.

"National, civil society and business need to be involved with governments, in discussions aimed at shaping policies, on what integration steps should be taken", he said.

This year's forum, which brings together more than 1000 participants, is built around five thematic clusters: Economic Policies for Accelerating Regional Integration; Physical Integration through Infrastructure Development; Regional Approaches to Regional issues; institutional Arrangements and capacity; and the Peace and Security Architecture.

The conclusions and recommendations of ADF III will be conveyed, through the OAU, to the Summit of Heads of State and Government, due to be held in Pretoria, South Africa, in July 2002.

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