



MELES SAYS NEPAD PROVIDES BEST OPPORTUNITY FOR AFRICAN INTEGRATION

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Addis Ababa, March 08, 2002 (WIC)- Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has said that those very factors that militate against Africa's integration are also the source of most of the evils that continue to depress Africa's progress.

Meles' remark, which he said was his personal view, not that of his government, came during a remark at a session designated for African Heads of state and government at the on going Third African Development Forum, ADF III

The Prime Minister said there exists in Africa the Uniformity of economic and political systems as evidenced by the similarity of the economic policies being pursued by most of the African nations, and their professed commitment to human rights and democracies among others.

Meles cited three major factors which he said encourage African countries to remain cautious to integration. These factors, according to him, are the fact of Africa's economics being based on the extraction of natural resources, not on the creation of value from these resources, and the fact that these economies thrive on formal and informal protection.

The Prime Minister also took note of the system of "International Patronage" perpetuated by countries and groups who pay to "independent States" for the right of influencing them, so that they can act in a way consistent with the values and interest of their patrons.

Meles said the three factors, which he emphasized are important sources of livelihood to the elite in each of the African Societies, are impeding economic integration.

"If we remove the boundaries and we have one state, the international system of patronage that had been the sources of livelihood to a significant portion of the elite in African societies, will begin to disappear" he said.

"Yes we have the same political system, the same economic system, but beneath there is political and economic system, we have structural impediments to integration and good

governance. I believe this is also the base of our poverty, backwardness, instability and lack of good governance", he added.

Meles said NEPAD, an African driven initiative that aims to transform these relationship of patronage and rent seeking, provides a best opportunity to pull Africa from its current state, and forge ahead towards integration.

"NEPAD says that we should have free access to the developed market, and that we should be assisted to exploit the opportunities created by such access" he said.

South African Vice President Jacob Zuma, who was one of the speakers at the session noted that the difficulties and challenges African Countries are experiencing in their March to integration were not peculiar.

"Developed countries went through similar problems, but with time and effort they were able to find solutions," he said.

Zuma also commended the delegates to the ADF III for their insightfully deliberations, which he said would be a great service in the realization of Africa's integration.

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