

STATEMENT

BY

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FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF EHTIOPIA**

AT

**THE 120th SESSION OF THE INTER-
PARLIAMENTARY UNION**

(IPU) ASSEMBLY

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**Honourable Dr. Pheo-Ben Gurirab,
President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union,
Honourable Parliamentarians,
Excellencies Invited Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a great honour for us to welcome you all to Addis Ababa for this 120th Session of the General Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. I wish to thank you once again for choosing Ethiopia as a venue for this session and for having honoured us to be your host. It is a great privilege for which we are deeply thankful.

**Honourable President,
Honourable Parliamentarians,
Dear participants,**

The IPU could not have convened its General Assembly at a more appropriate time to discuss the role of parliaments in building peace, democracy and development in times of crisis. The theme you have chosen is indeed extremely relevant to the period we are in and allows you to focus your attention on the implications of the unprecedented global crisis for our mode of existence, at present and in the years and decades to come.

What the present world-wide economic downturn has underlined so emphatically is the fact that in no area of existence can nations ensure the protection of their fundamental interests through unilateral initiatives that allow no possibility for co-operation and coordination, and for the pursuit of common purposes. On the other hand, periods of crises, and the present economic crisis the world is going through is no exception, have a way of tempting nations to go their separate ways and to seek unilateral advantageous that always eventually prove to be short-sighted. It is also possible, and more likely, that during periods of crises such as the one the world is experiencing today, some vital issues may be allowed to fall, or may end up falling, through the cracks. This should not be today the fate of the developing world and that of Africa, in particular. This is also why your gathering here in Addis Ababa, the seat of the African Union and the seat also of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, at this difficult period in the economic history of the world, is so historic.

Given your roles, as influential parliamentarians in your respective countries, and the collective voice of the IPU which cannot be ignored, you are placed in strategic positions to ensure that the interests of the developing world and that of Africa would not be allowed to fall through the cracks as ways and means are sought at present to limit the damage being

caused by the world-wide economic crisis. Indeed, we have now better reason to be hopeful after the Summit of the G 20, both in terms of greater co-operation at the international level to try to address the causes and consequences of the financial crisis in general, and also to prevent the developing world, and the most needy, from falling through the cracks.

**Dear Parliamentarians,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

What we saw over the last few years was a new hope in Africa. These were years when it became evident that Africa could also have its own new period of economic take off, if not miracle. Many have been waiting if this new trend could be sustained, thus providing the foundation for durable peace and stability in the continent and a firm basis for deepening the democratization process, as well.

This rather optimistic prognosis may not apply to virtually all African countries without exception, but since it is true for a great number of African states, it does represent more or less the general situation in Africa.

Our own country, Ethiopia, has been, and is, part of this process of renewal in our continent. Never in the modern history of our country have we had the opportunity until recently to register double digit economic growth, not just for a

year, but for more than four consecutive years. It is obvious that there is now real possibility for putting our country on a trajectory of rapid and sustainable development which would have enormous multifaceted positive implications not only for our people but for the peoples of our region in general. Ethiopia is not simply a country with a large population, the second largest in Sub-Saharan Africa, but it is a country with the exceptional attribute of sharing common border with virtually each and every Horn of African State.

It is indisputable that, no matter how modest it may have been, what Africa has been able to achieve in the economic area in the past few years would not have been registered without the relative peace that the continent has experienced. The story is similar in our country, confirming the general trend in Africa, though it would be foolhardy to claim that Africa is out of the wood as far as ensuring sustainable security is concerned throughout the continent. This is work in progress which, apart from enhanced solidarity among Africans, requires the sustained support of the international community, all the more so because not always are African security concerns entirely African in origin, or in complexity.

As for Ethiopia, it can easily be overlooked that it was not too long ago that many had predicted that the nation could be torn asunder and could not withstand the manifold internal

divisions whose inappropriate and undemocratic handling had engendered so much violence. But the doom Sayers have been proven wrong and Ethiopia has over the last decade and half been set on a course of building sustainable peace which has provided the basis for the gains we have made in laying the foundation for the economic transformation of the country.

One thing needs to be underlined here. Whether in Africa as a whole, or in Ethiopia, the progress made both in the area of peace and that of development, could not have been conceivable without the substantial, but, in our own judgment not all that satisfactory, progress we have made in democratization. Despite the recent seatbacks in a few African countries, and a few exceptions here and there, the general trend in Africa has been towards greater democratization and the strengthening of the rule of law.

The situation in Ethiopia, here as well, is no exception to the general rule in Africa. Our peace and the very consequential progress we have made in the economic area, as well as in many social sectors, would have been beyond realization without the real and concrete progress we have made in putting the country on an irreversible path towards democratic governance and the supremacy of the rule of law. Let me emphasize here that neither our peace nor our development and democracy have a chance to succeed without

the successful nurturing and strengthening of the tradition of the rule of law.

**Honourable President,
Honourable Parliamentarians,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It would be less than honest to claim that we in Africa have done enough in all these areas --- consolidating our peace, speeding up our development and ensuring faster pace in the further deepening of our democracy. In all these areas, our situation is delicate and, no doubt, success demands, careful handling, nurturing and a great deal of commitment. Moreover, all three are intertwined and inextricably linked. Precisely for this reason, they need to be looked at holistically with the full knowledge that the neglect of one of the three would have consequential impact on the rest. As much as they are mutually reinforcing, it is also inevitable that setback on one front, say development, would inescapably undermine peace and democracy.

That is why, as I said earlier, the theme of your General Assembly is so relevant to this period we are in. The progress that Africa has made over the last years in laying the basis for greater possibilities for peace and stability and for the further deepening of the democratic process, need to be safeguarded. Indeed, while few have remained unaffected by the current

downturn in the world economy --- rich or poor, powerful or weak --- that the consequences of this development for the developing world and for the least developed among them and for Africa in particular, would be exceedingly grave, should be obvious and indisputable.

I personally am encouraged by the attention that the G-20 summit has given to this matter not only in terms of additional resources promised but also in terms of the conditions under which support is made available and in terms of future representation of Africa in forums such as the G20. But this is only the beginning. Whatever has been promised by the G 20 summit and more, can be pursued effectively and achieved only when you parliamentarians take the lead and add your voice to the call for protecting the gains that have been made by Africa in recent years from what otherwise could be the ravages of the current economic downturn.

Honourable President,

Dear Parliamentarians,

All this appeal to you is perhaps unnecessary because you yourselves in your good wisdom have taken the initiative to make these concerns partly the theme of this 120th Session of the General Assembly of the IPU. I wish to thank you for this wisdom and vision. We all look forward to the conclusion of

your deliberation. I wish you success in this endeavour and a pleasant stay in Addis Ababa.

I Thank You