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የጠቅላይ ሚኒስትር ጽሕፈት ቤት
Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

Your Excellency Xi Jinping President of the People's Republic of China

Your Excellencies Heads of State and Government

Honorable Ministers

Heads of International Organizations

Ladies and Gentlemen

I want to express my heartfelt appreciation to President Xi, the Chinese Government and its people, for the warm invitation and welcome. I come with sincerest greetings and well wishes from the people of Ethiopia. On the occasion of the second Belt and Road Forum, I am delighted to be here in Beijing to share my thoughts with you.

Ethiopia and China have long enjoyed strong bilateral relations rooted in progress. Our formal relationship has lasted for the past 50 years. And the role of Chinese investments in infrastructure development and other areas is one such measure of our continued cooperation. China has stood by Ethiopia's side at all times. Today, our collaboration has reached new heights, and our friendship has blossomed. Ethiopia is therefore a grateful partner and a beneficiary of the Belt and Road Initiative.

The Belt and Road Initiative, in my view, is a grand global initiative. It is China's answer to the challenges of growing unequal development in the world. It is indeed a powerful platform that anchors our close cooperation with China. With its investment in physical and digital interconnectivity – from roads and bridges to ports, reliable power and fiber optic networks – the Belt and Road Initiative has targeted and addressed our binding constraints to development while respecting our legal framework. In today's world, we constantly see a trend of rising protectionism and unilateralism. Yet, China's effort through the Belt and Road Initiative symbolizes a wise and forward leaning effort to build a more fair and equitable international order.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Like China, Ethiopia made progress in bringing a significant proportion of our citizens out of poverty. However, unlike China, the foundation of Ethiopia's economic transformation has yet to evolve. We believe China has set a successful model in which sustained investment in infrastructure and manufacturing, coupled with focused and competent leadership have played a transformational role. These are also Ethiopia's priorities today. For our economic transformation project to succeed, we have come to realize that our politics also needs fixing. Hence, this has also been one of my priority areas since I took office just over a year ago.

In efforts to shape a comprehensive political and economic reform program which we launched in April 2018, we introduced our philosophy of **MEDEMER** - an Amharic word for "synergy". This home-grown philosophy challenges all of us to complement each other and to build on our individual and collective strengths. This for the purpose of securing our future together.

When I say we are inspired by China's leadership and its Belt and Road Initiative, we have good reasons behind it. Projects such as the Addis Ababa - Djibouti Railway, part of Belt and Road Initiative, are essential for the economic progress and prosperity of the two countries. But, for us, they are more than that. They are investments in closer relations between neighbors; they are investments in peace. By allowing us to trade together, these projects make each one a stakeholder in the peace and prosperity of the other.

Ethiopia is also actively working towards ensuring peace and security in the Horn and similarly pioneering sub-regional integration. Our determination and commitment to peace has enabled the ceasing of hostilities between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The often-volatile Horn of Africa region is looking more stable politically, and more attractive economically than ever before. And Ethiopia, for the first time in its history, has become a founding member of the highly promising African Continental Free Trade Area which is expected to be launched in July 2019.

Finally, Ethiopia is firmly following on the path of investment-led economic policy, ready to invite private capital in public enterprises such as telecommunications, shipping and logistics, transport by road or rail, and power. We invite more Chinese companies to participate in investments within state-owned enterprises operating in these sectors.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ethiopia considers China, a reliable friend in the course of our national development and reform agenda. I stand here committed to doing my best to make Ethiopia a beacon of hope for its citizens, a source of stability and opportunity for its neighbors, light for the continent, and a responsible member of the community of nations in the world.

I want to register my appreciation once again to the people and government of China and President Xi Jinping for your principled leadership and of course for hosting us at the Belt and Road forum so warmly.

I thank you.