



**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**

**Eighth African Development Forum (ADF VIII)
Plenary Session 1**

Welcoming Remarks

by

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Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me begin by welcoming you all to this first Plenary Session of the African Development Forum. My purpose this morning is not to make a speech since I had the privilege of doing so at our Opening Ceremony yesterday. My task is instead to welcome His Excellency, Ato Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia who will deliver the Keynote Statement.

The Prime Minister needs no introduction to those who have been actively engaged in the cause of African development over the past decade. Prior to assuming his current functions, Ato Hailemariam was Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of this great country. Working closely with his predecessor, the late and highly respected Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, the Prime Minister was a key contributor to the visible and credible transformation process in Ethiopia as well as its foreign policy posture which has gained this country many friends and admirers.

This is Prime Minister Desalegn's third visit to the ECA compound in less than one week. We know that his schedule is very onerous and sincerely appreciate his presence here today. It demonstrates the Prime Minister's commitment to promoting the intellectual exchange that must underpin Africa's development. We are similarly encouraged by this indication of continued leadership from Ethiopia on matters of crucial importance to our continent. Mr. Prime Minister, let me take this opportunity to express heartfelt appreciation for the support that you are giving to ECA and its partners, the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank.

The theme of this 8th ADF clearly resonates here in Ethiopia. The natural resources sector is an integral part of this country's Growth and Transformation Plan. Issues relating to the leasing of land for agricultural investment, the use of

the hydro potential of the waters of the Nile River, and the extraction of solid minerals are at the fore-front of public policy discourse in this country. As a highly regarded water engineer in his own right, the Prime Minister has direct experience of the issues that will shape the discourse at this Forum.

As highlighted by the speakers at yesterday's Opening Ceremony, there are a number of salient issues, which must be urgently addressed to transform Africa's natural resource curse into a blessing. For instance, the lack of economic ownership of these resources; the fact that African countries do not share in the significant profits generated; and the lack of forward and backward linkages to the national economy, among others, must be corrected if we are to truly achieve the theme of this conference in the long-run.

We are therefore keen to hear the Prime Minister's views on the matters set before us at this Forum. His insights will certainly enrich the outcome of this ADF and will help to further enhance the governance and harnessing of natural resources on our continent.

With these few words, it is now my distinct honor and pleasure to call on Prime Minister Desalegn to deliver the Keynote Address.