

**Statement**

**By**

**H.E. Ambassador Redwan Hussien of the Federal  
Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in Ireland**

**At**

**Meeting with the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs  
and Trade and Defence on the Account of Irish Aid  
Ethiopia**

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## **Statement On the Account of Irish Aid Ethiopia, Embassy of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.**

**Your Excellencies,  
Members of the Joint Committee of  
Foreign Affairs and Trade,  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am honoured and privileged to make a presentation on the account of Irish Aid Ethiopia. This presentation doesn't purport to capture all the details of invaluable contributions Irish Aid Ethiopia has been rendering in the last 25 years. For the same reason then, I would like to make it clear that only the significant nature of the partnership could be under lined.

Let me begin by high-lighting some facts about the country Ethiopia. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is located in the horn of Africa. It is the second largest populous nation (104 million) next to Nigeria. Ethiopia is a federal republic of nine regional States. A parliamentary system is embraced for about the last couple of decades and half with a five year first past the post periodic election. It has a bi-cameral system. The lower house is called House of Peoples Representatives (Parliament). The upper house is House of Federation where each nationalities have a minimum of one seat and continues to add one on every additional million. Ethiopian federal system therefore is based on multi cultural pluralism.

Ethiopia and Ireland have been enjoying a robust relationship since the commencement. It is to be recalled that both countries opened their embassies soon after the agreement on diplomatic relations Ireland in 1994 Ethiopia in 1995. Several exchange of visits have been made by various levels of the leadership of both countries. The exchange of visits by leaders of the two nations is worth noting as a testimony of the cordial relationship. Ethiopia took the lead and the late Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Meles Zenawi visited Ireland in 2002. H.E. Michael D. Higgins also visited Ethiopia in 2014 which further uplifted the cooperation and during which 3 pivotal

agreements namely:- Air Transport Cooperation, Avoidance of double taxation and tax evasion and Development Cooperation of the next 20 years were signed.

Ethiopia has been one of the priority countries and major recipient of Irish Aid. Ethiopia has always been appreciating the nature of Irish Aid for it has not been hedged by a maze of conditionalities. Ireland also has been considered as a true friend for it stood with Ethiopian people through thick and thins. The relationship is based on mutual respect and cooperation. The nature of Irish Aid thus, is considered as manifestation of such a cordial vibe.

To come to the specifics of the relevance of Irish Aid, it is imperative to touch up on the economy of Ethiopia. Ethiopian Economy is largely agrarian. Agriculture is mostly based on small holding farming where a farmer has on average 0.5 - 1 hectare. Apart from the smaller size of the land, productivity had been very much lower. Moreover, besetment of erratic weather makes crop seasons unpredictable. Therefore, to offset the subsistence produce hampered due to the meagre size of land and the freak nature of rain, recourse to water harvesting mechanism has been a matter of no choice. Such undertaking allows to produce 2-3 times a year. Despite the fact that it was theoretically believed and practically proved that such a mechanism helps farmers to produce surplus, it is not widely practiced yet by the majority. Regardless of all the coddling and prodings, it's not yet scaled up as much as the matter calls for even though encouraging trends are witnessed. Hence still it requires an aggressive awareness creation and capacity building . The need for Irish Aid comes in here, and there it is.

Community health is a variable that can be factored in when productivity of a community is a subject in question. It is believed that 80% of diseases have to do with personal hygiene and environmental sanitation. Hence the government of Ethiopia believes that the community and every house hold could produce its own health. It was therefore with such a profound conviction that the government of Ethiopia came up with an all encompassing community health extension strategy where about 40,000

front line health extension workers are trained and helping the community going house to house. The plank of the strategy is prevention of diseases than treatment. Because time is crucial and resource is scarce. Irish Aid also is a partner in such a fundamental health sector development and is widely appreciated.

Another crucial aspect to development is education. It is both the engine and the result of fighting poverty apart from the fact that it is a development on its own right. Just 2 and half decades ago access to primary education was about 20% and there were only two universities in the entire nation. Today MDG goal in primary education has been achieved in a breakneck fashion. The number of Universities has grown to 45. There are about 30 million Ethiopians attending in schools. It has been stupendous achievement alas, a lot still remains to be done in secondary education in particular and insuring quality in general.

Overcoming a challenge doesn't end there. A success only poses yet another challenge. Success in creating access to education coupled with diminished size of land engendered unemployment pressure. Therefore recourse to off -farm job creation schemes has become vital. Irish Aid also plays a role as a partner in the above solutions which are meant to boost resilience and productivity.

Ireland is known for its success in education and the ongoing endeavour to support Ethiopian universities is worth mentioning. Such a support could be more fruitful if Irish universities are encouraged to twin with Ethiopian counter parts with the aim of building institutional capacity. taking a University in its entirety. The are signs of such initiatives by individual Universities.

Poverty alleviation could not be materialized without improving the productivity of such small sized land, improving health of the population, ensuring access to education and without investing heavily on infrastructure. These are deemed pro-poor sectors and the bulk of the budget in Ethiopia goes to those sectors. Irish Aid, to underline here again what has just been mentioned earlier, is playing its fair share of improving

farmer's productivity and building resilience. The people of Ireland have also been extending their right hand for the millions of Ethiopians struggling to extricate themselves out of the rut at the bottom of socio-economic ladder. The safety net programme and relief aid are also to be mentioned.

Ethiopia has made significant strides and has become one of the fastest growing economies in the world, 8-10% growth for the last 15 years and one of the best performers in human development even though it began from a very lower base. Those who used to live below poverty line were half the population, about 46% in 1996 and it has been successfully brought down to 23% in about 20 years time. Irish Aid also has been playing its fair share in such an achievement.

Ethiopia's current performance of rapid economic growth is aimed to continue under climate resilient green economy. Massive re-forestation and community based nationwide water catchment treatment is undergoing aggressively in all regions. Also the supply of energy efficient technologies to avoid using more fire woods is under implementation. Generation of energy from renewable sources like hydro power, thermal and wind energy has become the focus of the government and has been heavily investing. Irish aid's support in energy efficient technology for households is also worth noting.

To cut the long story short, it wouldn't be an overstatement to attest that Irish aid's support goes in line with Ethiopia's priority. Irish Aid's successive Country strategic plans address and buttress the Ethiopian national successive five year plans of poverty reduction, poverty alleviation and Growth and transformation plans I and II. For the aforementioned reasons Irish aid is believed to contribute positively in the nations endeavour to bring about betterment for the many poor.

### **The way forward**

Ethiopia has made commendable strides in the last two decades. Rapid social and economic growth has been registered. Nevertheless it is not yet out of the woods given the level of poverty and the dire need to ensure

structural transformation of the economy. Ergo, Irish aid has still a bigger role to play. A continuous support for the small holding farmers to boost their productivity remains crucial in this regard.

The support which is has begun in potato in the Southern region has been proven to be successful and needs to be broadened. Ireland can also extend its support to help Ethiopia make the best use of its huge but hitherto unproductive livestock. Ethiopians are under the age of 30 years and 30% of the population is considered youth. Rapid educational access, though is a significant success and is an aspect of human development in itself, it is posing an increasing pressure. Both skilled and semi skilled labour needs jobs.

To rub salt into the wound, land in the Central, Northern and parts of Southern Ethiopia has become too small to be further divided among the coming new generations of family members. Thus, creating a mounting and urgent pressure. Off-farm job creation has become noneletive. It would be much if Iris Aid could in any way possible widen its support in this regard.

Universities in Ethiopia could serve as incubation centre for innovative job creations making use of growing access to tertiary education. University college Dublin has began an impressive initiative with Wolita Sodo University of Ethiopia which has got EU funding under BRTE Horizon 2020. And such partnership needs to be nurtured and scaled up.

Ethiopia has become one of the growing destinations of FDI. Private sector investment both in manufacturing and agriculture is growing but not up to the potential. There had been a missing link of small and medium enterprises which could have broadened the industrial base of domestic private sector. Therefore Irish Aid could encourage the Irish Private Sector to venture out in investment with myriads of joint venture possibilities. Ethiopia is massively investing on special investment zones where by an investor can just rent a shade and start manufacturing without the need to tie up its start up capital.

In addition to enhancing aid in the ongoing sectors, job creation through private sector engagement would have many fold advantage. Therefore the initiative which is already begun by Ireland to enhance trade and investment partnerships with Africa needs to be accentuated. In addition to Africa Ireland business forum, it seems more practical if a tailored one could be considered bilaterally where business communities between the two countries can have opportunities of acquaintance and partnership. The commencement of the frequent Ethiopian Air Lines passenger and cargo flight could be considered as a colossal augmentation.

A point worth mentioning in conjunction with such a case is the need for rapid in- and-out travelling of the private sector. The time elapses to secure a visa to come to Ireland for our business community is a bit longer. It would further beef up the cooperation if some sort of ways could be considered to expedite the process.

In the final note I would like to reiterate the appreciation for what Irish Aid and the people of Ireland have done to help Ethiopia. Ethiopia has now become also an opportunity for business and investment which benefits itself and others. Therefore keep the assistance and broaden the gates of opportunities.

**I Thank You!**