



**Statement by H.E. Mr Hailemariam Dessalegn,  
Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia  
4<sup>th</sup> World Coffee Conference  
Opening Ceremony  
Addis Abeba, Ethiopia, 7 March 2016**

Excellencies, Heads of State and Government;

Excellency, Mr Erastus Mwencha, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission;

Excellency, Mr Iván Romero-Martínez, Chairman of the International Coffee Council;  
Mr Robério Oliveira Silva, Executive Director of the International Coffee Organization;

Distinguished delegates;

Dear coffee growers, exporters, sector experts and stakeholders;

Dear participants;

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the birthplace of coffee!

It gives me great pleasure to warmly welcome you all to the great city of Addis Ababa, the seat of the African Union and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. Also welcome to the 4<sup>th</sup> World Coffee Conference.

We are very pleased to host this important Conference in the presence of all of you; the critical stakeholders of the world's coffee industry. The fact that this Conference is held in Addis has much more meaning to us and, equally, I am sure, to other coffee producer and consumer countries.

Here in Ethiopia, coffee is not a quick pick-up and certainly not just a cup of something to grab on the run. It is rather part and parcel of our social fabric. If you stay a day or two, you will certainly feel the strong coffee culture deeply embedded in the identity of the Ethiopian people. People across Ethiopia not only drink coffee, but take part in a unique coffee ceremony.

While coffee in its many ways reflects our respective traditions and cultures, its economic values from which most of the livelihood of people in coffee producing countries depend on is of great significance to our development. In our culture

when someone makes a good cup of coffee she or he receives blessings from everyone around who enjoyed a cup or two. Today I want to encourage you all to ask yourselves this question: “How much blessing, and by blessing I mean fair remuneration, is going to the farmers whose labour fills the nearly 500 billion cups the world consumes every year?” Unfortunately, the answer is: Very little! The gains of coffee farmers from this multibillion dollar industry, which ranks only second to crude oil are trivial.

This Conference provides the right platform to discuss the critical question of how to ensure the coffee growers a fair financial return so that their hard work leads to a decent and stable life. We need concrete and realistic recommendations for action. A fair distribution of the proceeds from coffee is not only a matter of improving the lives of coffee farmers and their families, but is also essential to maintaining a sustainable supply of the highest quality coffee beans.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The poverty of small coffee growers is not the only threat to coffee production. Rising temperatures, a decline in rainfall and an increase in resilient pests and plant disease all endanger the coffee industry. Climate change is a serious threat to the coffee industry and the impact of climate change is felt most severely by small coffee growers and their families.

The Paris Climate Agreement established the foundation for a collective action to curb global warming. Ethiopia's Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) strategy, which we began implementing in 2011, is one example to foster a responsible action Ethiopia has taken to encourage major greenhouse gas emitters for common but differentiated responsibility. In so doing to protect agriculture and forestry from the effects of climate change. Within this strategy, we are working relentlessly to make sure that coffee, which amounts to 24% of our exports, is protected from the effects of climate change.

The task of mitigating the impact of climate change, however, should not only be left to governments and to the small farmers whose livelihood is threatened; coffee exporters, processors and retailers have the responsibility to support efforts to protect coffee growers from the effects of climate change. It is within all our best interest to deal with climate change together. Thus, I call up on all of you in this Conference to help create a coffee industry that can stand up to potentially disastrous effects of climate change.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Economic inequality and climate change are not the only threats to the coffee industry. For coffee farmers across the globe, the volatility of world coffee prices is a major challenge. The scenario is even worse for small coffee growers whose profit margins are already very thin. A drop in price does not simply represent a decline in quarterly profits, but it also threatens small coffee growers ability to feed and care for their families.

I am hopeful this conference will come up with meaningful solutions to foster a stable global coffee market that helps ensure a successful future for everyone involved in the coffee industry.

In spite of the challenges, a new horizon has opened up through which we collectively can address some of the difficulties we are confronted with. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals as well as recent Paris Climate Agreement to which we all subscribed to are very important frameworks to address the problems affecting the coffee industry.

The 4<sup>th</sup> World Coffee Conference is taking place amidst these unprecedented economic, social, environmental and political frameworks. I am confident that the Conference will come up with concrete recommendations to improve the stability of the coffee sector. Such recommendations are very important to enrich our country level programmes and strategies targeting the coffee industry. For instance, I am very optimistic that the coffee sector development strategy, which my country has made an integral part of its Five-Year Growth and Transformation Plan could benefit enormously from the fruits of this Conference.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm Ethiopia's commitment to creating a more profitable and sustainable coffee industry that benefits everyone from the small growers who work the fields, to the processors, exporters and retailers across the world.

Before I conclude, I would like to thank the International Coffee Organization and the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources for organizing this Conference. I would also like to thank all the collaborating partners including local associations of coffee exporters for their support to make this important gathering a reality.

Finally, I hope you will all enjoy fresh cups of Ethiopian coffee accompanied with a traditional ceremony which is an expression of the warmth and hospitality of the Ethiopian people.

I wish you all a fruitful deliberation in the two days ahead.

I thank you!