



**Statement by Mr Hussein Agraw,
President of the Board, Ethiopia Coffee Exporters Association (ECEA)
4th World Coffee Conference
Opening Ceremony
Addis Abeba, Ethiopia, 7 March 2016**

His Excellency Dr Mulatu Teshome, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia;

His Excellency Mr Aba Dula Gameda, Speaker of the House of Representatives;

His Excellency Mr Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia;

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

Mr Iván Romero-Martínez, Chairman, International Coffee Council;

Mr Robério Oliveira Silva, Executive Director, International Coffee Organization;

Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me first, on behalf of the Ethiopian Coffee Exporters Association and myself, to welcome you all to this 4th World Coffee Conference. I am in particular delighted to extend a warm welcome to our guests and business partners who have travelled a long way to take part in this Conference held in the land of the origin of coffee Arabica.

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you may recall the Ethiopian Coffee Exporters Association had initiated and successfully organized the last three consecutive annual international coffee Conferences held in Addis Ababa. Encouraged by the success of those Conferences and driven by their outcomes, the Association has been promoting Ethiopian coffee to the outside world. Most importantly, the association, in collaboration with the Ministries of Trade, Foreign Affairs, Agriculture and Natural Resources that have recognized the socio-economic importance of coffee, has once again succeeded in bringing this historic Conference to Ethiopia.

Coffee is still a valuable crop to our economy. Over four million farmers make their living on the crop and more than 10 million people deal, directly or indirectly, with the sector in transporting, trading, processing, roasting and exporting.

In view of these economic and social benefits and coffee being our ancestral legacy, it is appropriate that we hold this Conference in the homeland of coffee Arabica.

Yet, the most significant reason is Ethiopia's vast and suitable land for coffee plantation with excellent climate conducive for coffee. Its special varieties are least promoted and not marketed well. Close to 90 per cent of the varieties of Arabica are found in Ethiopia and more varieties are expected to come to light as ongoing researches indicate.

Ethiopia expects to benefit more from coffee by increasing production and productivity and also by focusing more on agro-processing.

In this regard, the growing role of the private sector in the national economy at large and that of coffee sector in particular is very crucial.

As we all know, the global coffee price has been declining and by February this year, it dropped to 119.25 US cents, which is the lowest for the last seven years.

This high volatility of the international market, coupled with domestic challenges, has increased the level of risk and eroded the benefits generated from the sector. In view of this, it has become important for the Association and pertinent governmental institutions to work together and galvanize efforts to look for all possible means to face the challenges of the price decline.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Please allow me again to thank our distinguished guests and business partners for accepting our invitation to participate in this unique and one-off event that takes them to some of Ethiopia's historical cities, a virtual excursion into the coffee paradise and a full immersion into the coffee culture.

Before concluding my statement, at this juncture, I would like to bring to your kind attention that our next annual International Coffee Conference would be held in November 2016 here in Addis Ababa.

Wishing you a pleasant stay in Addis Ababa,

I thank you.