

## **Ethiopian Delegation - Sharing their thoughts**

*“Eritrean people have shown us how truly they love and respect the Ethiopian people and above all their commitment to peace”*



**Workneh Gebeyehu**

***BY: Sirak Habtemichael***

An Ethiopian delegation led by Dr. Abiy Ahmed, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, has conducted an historic visit to Eritrea and returned home following a two-day successful summit with President Isaias Afwerki. Interview with members of the delegation, Mr. Workneh Gebeyehu, Ethiopian Foreign Minister and Minister of Office of Communication Affairs of Ethiopia, Mr. Ahmed Shide Mohammed follows.

**Q: Mr. Workneh Gebeyehu, welcome to Eritrea. How was the public reception in the streets of Asmara? Was it anywhere close to what you expected?**

**A:** I cannot find the words to describe what we have seen today, even if I do it would be understatement. I don't think anything like this could happen anywhere else. It is like a family reunion who have parted for two decades. From what I have seen on the faces of the people, it is not something they did to

welcome a leader, but a genuine welcome of love and peace. Not only the popular enthusiasm, but I am not even sure if I could express what I have felt at the moment. These two peoples missed each other a lot and this historic event has opened the door. I am glad that I am a part of this delegation.

***Q: How do you express the Eritrean people's readiness for peace?***

**A:** There is nothing that matches peace. Imagine how far both peoples would have gone if the two nations had lived in peace over the past 20 years. I can only say that we both lost precious decades of brotherly developments in every sector.

***Q: So what will we expect in the times to come?***

**A:** The first thing is peace. Peace has come and prevailed today. We are lucky that both our peoples are hard-working and I am sure they would seize this opportunity to compensate for what they have missed over the past two decades. On our part, I believe nothing can stand on our way in undertaking our tasks hand in hand both mutual and international activities.



***Mr. Ahmed Shide***

***Q: Mr. Ahmed Shide, welcome to Eritrea and thank you for your time. How was the public reception in the streets of Asmara?***

A: It was way beyond our expectation. When we took off from Addis Ababa Airport in the morning, all we brought with us was the hopes for peace, love and unity. Hence, we were sure the public welcome would be enthusiastic, because both our peoples share similar values and together we could march towards development. But the public welcome in the hundreds of thousands that the residents of Asmara accorded to us was unbelievable and very emotional at the same time. It was a day that marked a new chapter in the history of both nations. Every single one of us was touched deep and I am sure there was no one who didn't shed tears of joy for that matter.

What the residents of Asmara did was a testimony to their love for peace and longing to live in harmony with the people of Ethiopia. We will take this message and what we have seen here with our own eyes to our people. This popular welcome will also add momentum to the lasting and comprehensive peace agreements. Indeed, we will toil hard to live up to the expectation of both the people of Eritrea and Ethiopia.

***Q: These peace initiatives have been taken after 20 long years. How bad do you think has the past 20 years affected both peoples?***

A: The impact was bad beyond comparison. From what we have seen in the streets of Asmara, we have come to realize how eagerly the people waited for this day to happen. It shouldn't have waited this long. The Eritrean and Ethiopian people have for centuries lived in harmony and it is easy for them to maintain this peace for the times to come. Both our peoples have shown us what they really want and as their leaders, we need to facilitate the ongoing peace process and work hand in hand for the development of both our nations. Reopening Massawa-Asmara-Addis Ababa road as well as Assab-Addis Ababa road, including the promotion of development programs along the Ethiopia-Eritrea border is among our priority tasks. The unfolding developments will not only benefit our peoples, but the entire Horn of Africa region will be a part of these developments.

***Q: What message do you want to convey to the people of Eritrea, especially those who went out to the streets to welcome your arrival?***

A: I would like to express my sincere respect over the people of Eritrea. They have shown us how truly they love and respect the Ethiopian people and above all their commitment to peace. Hence, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the people of Eritrea. I was overwhelmed by the popular welcome and I consider myself a very lucky man to be a part of the first delegation to set foot in Eritrea after 20 years. I am sure we all share similar feeling on this matter.

***Q: And what message do you have to the people of Ethiopia?***

**A:** We are here representing our people and on behalf of all Ethiopians we have witnessed the genuine reflection of true love and respect from the Eritrean people. Conscious that both our brotherly peoples need peace, we will take the message with us and tell our people that Eritreans are looking forward to work for peace and development alongside their Ethiopian brothers.

**Eritrea Profile,**

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