



🌐 Interview with H.E. Mr Teshome Toga Chanaka – Ambassador of Ethiopia to the Kingdom of Belgium, the Netherlands, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and Head of the Mission to the European Union



H.E.M Teshome Toga Chanaka Ambassador of Ethiopia & Mrs B.R

DW: Your Excellency can you present your professional path to our readers? Since when have you been appointed here? What cooperation have you been able to build with Belgium? What are the relations between your country and the EU? What cooperation is in place and in what areas?

Mr Teshome Toga Chanaka: First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for arranging this interview. I am very privileged in that I have a professional path that took me from diplomacy to the Executive and legislative branch of the government. I was in leadership position in all the areas I served. My diplomatic career started in 1992, in Ghana as Ethiopia's Ambassador Extraordinary and plenipotentiary. I had very brief stay of only for a year and then moved to Cairo in the same capacity. After 3 years in Cairo. I then moved to Nairobi where I had a tour of duty for six years. In 2001, I returned back home and was appointed Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture for four years. From 2005 to 2010, I was Speaker of the 3rd House of the Peoples' Representatives, the highest authority of the federal government. My parliamentary experience goes back to 1995 when I was elected as a member of regional council and the selected to be a member of the House of Federation.

I represented my constituency to times in regional council and two times in the Federal parliament. In 2011, after nine years, I returned to back to my diplomatic career appointed to Paris, France, with concurrent accreditation to Spain, Portugal and the Vatican and Permanent delegate to UNESCO. And it was in October 2013

that I was transferred to take charge of Ethiopian Embassy in Brussels covering the Benelux and Baltic countries and mission to EU.

With regards to Ethiopia's relations with the Benelux, we have a good friendly relations with Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. Our cooperation is growing and we are working to deepen the existing relations to a level where the potential of both sides is released fully by strengthening the private sector investment and trade. We have cooperation as we have signed several bilateral agreements with each of the Benelux countries. The Embassy's task is mainly geared towards promoting Ethiopia's investment opportunities and priorities areas.

Efforts have been made to also strengthen the economic cooperation between Ethiopia and the Baltic countries. I have had a chance of meeting with several private sectors of the Baltic countries and they are convinced to invest in Africa in general and Ethiopia in Particular. We have identified investment priority areas where the private sectors of Baltic countries could invest in Ethiopia like agro-processing and construction areas. However, compared to Ethiopia's investment potential and Baltic countries private sector capability, there is much to be done. The government is highly committed to closely work with our counterparts to intensify the public and private engagement.

Apart from the bilateral relations, the Mission is also accredited to EU institutions. Ethiopia's relations with EU is based on strategic partnership, mutual respect and benefit. The cooperation is essential for peace and security and socio economic development of Ethiopia. The cooperation is governed currently by The Cotonou Agreement, which is a very important agreement for Ethiopia, as it defines the relations between the European Union and the ACP countries. This agreement has replaced the 1975 Lomé Convention and signed by the 79 ACP Group of States with the European Union. The agreement aims at reducing and eventual eradicating poverty and gradually integrating ACP countries in to global economy.

Similarly, the Cotonou agreement has got political aspects. The signatories have assumed mutual obligations to respect human rights, democratic principles based on rule of law, transparent and accountable governance. Similarly maintaining peace and security, social, economic and human development is also important pillars of the agreement. So far these are the main framework of cooperation we are promoting and working with EU. As a member of the ACP group of states, Ethiopia's bilateral relations with EU has been managed with all the framework of the Cotonou agreement, where we a conduct regular political dialogue.

We are beneficiaries of the European Development fund; today we have reached the 11th EDF allocation. Ethiopia with its over 90 million population is now the second largest country next to Nigeria and recipient of one the largest EDF in terms of volume.

DW: Addis Ababa is considered as the political capital of the African continent. What are implications of this statute for the city and for the country?

Addis Ababa, is a seat of the African Union, the successor of the Organisation African Unity which was established in 1963. Ethiopia played a major role to assist fellow Africans under colonialism to gain their independence and has always been in the forefront for the realisation of the objectives of Organization of African Unity. Ethiopia discharged its African responsibility and championed the cause of Pan-Africanism diligently and gained the respect of our African brothers and sisters to become the diplomatic and political capital of Africa, like Brussels is for EU.

For us, it was not only symbolically significant but an enormous honour to be the host country of our continental body. The Au is growing from strength to to strength Addis hots several Heads of States and Government Summits of the African Union and several continental and international conferences.

Addis is also a seat of the United Nation Economic Commission for Africa UNECA and the city is a residence for quite a number of Embassies and other Regional and International organization. Nowadays several prominent institution recommend Addis Ababa as one of the Cities which should be visited and acknowledge its prominence among the emerging cities of the world.

This is mainly because the city has witnessed amazing infrastructural development favourable to become a hub for conference tourism. This in turn creates job opportunities both in construction and service sector. Now we are able to host any kind of international conferences with the state-of-the-art facilities in the city and it also helps promote the culture and image of Ethiopia.

The opportunity of hosting the African Union and other international conferences has opened the door for us to improve the overall management of conference tourism and the hospitality sector. Addis Ababa with its Amharic meaning (official language), new flower, has in deed become a beautiful city and a melting pot of culture and traditions. The city is under constant development expanding really fast and it is a must see city along with all Ethiopia's several cultural, historical and natural tourism destination. It only takes seven hours from Brussels to Addis with Ethiopian Airlines, the best airlines in Africa with its 49 African and 84 international and 20 domestic destinations.

DW: Ethiopia is bordered by many countries, namely Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti, Kenya and Eritrea, where, even recently, regional conflicts have weakened the region. What challenges is Ethiopia facing nowadays? What consequences remain deeply rooted in today's society?

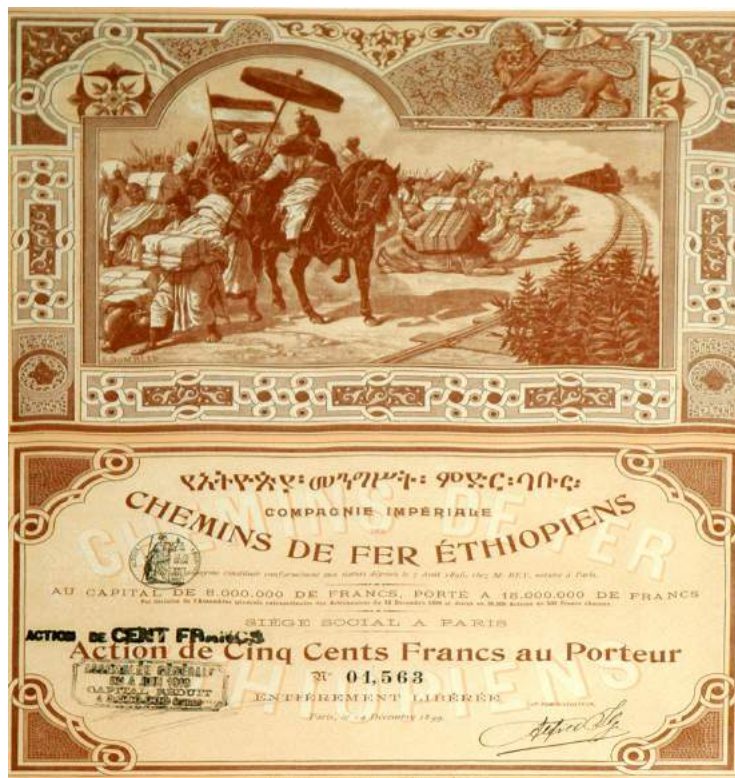
That's a very important question. You are quite right, Africa has been in multifaceted problems and its people suffered from protracted civil war, natural and man made disasters and abject poverty. The Horn of Africa has similarly been portrayed as a region in crisis and civil war, and trapped into continuing state of despair. It has been the case for a long period that Ethiopia was part of the problem as we had also our own share of the crisis. However, two decades have passed since we started investing a lot to remain peaceful nationally and creating peaceful neighbourhood. Ethiopia that has been part of the problem, is now trying to be

part of the solution for the region. Several results have been achieved to peacefully settle conflicts through dialogue, negotiations and reconciliation with countries in our neighbourhood under the umbrella of the regional organisation, IGAD.

Ethiopia played an active role in initiating IGAD's priority areas meaningful for strengthening the cooperation among the member States focusing on peace and stability, economic integration, infrastructural development and food security. However, the horn of Africa still is facing major security and instability challenges.

The peace process of Somalia is slowly making progress especially the relations between regional administrations and the Federal Government of Somalia is developing positively. The peace process of South-Sudan is facing major hiccups as the conflicting parties did not honour their commitments and the agreement they signed. Ethiopia as the current chair of IGAD has led and continue to lead the negotiation.

Ethiopia therefore took a leading role and worked very closely with IGAD countries, with the African Union, the EU, the United Nations and the United States to make sure that the problem in South Sudan is resolved amicably. Unfortunately the agreement has not been respected by the parties. And this has created destruction of human lives and caused enormous humanitarian crises in which Ethiopia heavily affected by influx of refugees. We have over 200.000 South Sudanese refugees and over 640,000 refugees from neighbouring countries.



We have open door policy. One can imagine the consequences of such huge refugee population for a country like Ethiopia. The region is heavily affected by Islamic extremist groups like al-Qaida affiliated al-shabab. Because of the destabilizing role of the Eritrean government in the region, the UNSC imposed sanction is worth mentioning. In general, Ethiopia is committed to maintain its peace and economic development by closely working with its neighbours and partners to tackle the challenges of the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia a leading peace keeping force contributor in Africa.

We have peace keeping mission currently in Somalia with AMISOM, Sudan, South Sudan. We participated in missions in Burundi, Rwanda, Liberia and Sierra Leone in the past and that is a clear commitment of our country to sustain peace and security and realise the fast economic integration of Africa. Even if the recent situation of the Horn of Africa remains challenging, we leave no stone unturned until the present socio-political status is positively disposed.

DW: Ethiopia is one of the most popular origins in the world. What involves the coffee tradition for your country? Can you explain the different ways and types of coffee beans cultivated?

I would like to share with you legend about how coffee is discovered in Ethiopia and then will also let you know how it made its way to Europe. Historically coffee is discovered in Ethiopia. The most popular legend is related to Ethiopian goat herder in Kaffa called Kaldi. He was herding his goats through a highland area near a monastery and seen them behaving strangely. He then found out that the source the excitement of his goats was a small shrub with a bright red berries.

He actually tested the berries for himself and the result was the same, Kaldi felt the energizing effects of the coffee cherries. His wife advised him to go to the nearby monastery to share these "heaven sent" berries with the monks. However Kaldi's coffee beans were not greeted with elevation rather considered to be the work of devil and tossed in to a fire and the aroma of the roasting beans convinced the monks to accept it. The monks found out the uplifting effect of coffee, keeping them for their spiritual practice.



Lalibela, window

In 17th Century, coffee had made its way to Europe and was becoming popular across the continent. With the coming of coffee in Venice in 1615, the clergy condemned it. The controversy was so great that the pope clement VIII was asked to intervene. Before the decision however, he decided to taste the beverage himself. He found the drink so satisfying that he gave a papal approval. All plants of the coffee specie Arabica around the world are descendant of plants from southern Ethiopia. Today Europe has the highest per capita coffee consumption in the world. According to the European coffee federation, consumes 2.5 million tons of coffee per year and every day some 725 cups of coffee are drunk in the EU.

Ethiopia has a suitable altitude, ample rainfall, optimum temperature to sustainably produce and supply fine specialty coffee. Ethiopia produces a range distinctive Arabica coffee and has a considerable potential to sell a large number of Specialty coffee. Ethiopia produces a number of coffee types including the Sidama, Yergacheffe and Harar Varieties.

The varieties are identified by their distinct characteristics, flavor aroma and test and they are commonly used for blending with coffee of other origins. Recently the need in specialty coffee having especial origin, special test profile, a special story that qualifies it as more or less exclusive is growing in Europe. Coffee is Ethiopia's major source of export revenue, generating about 20-30 percent of the Country's total export earnings.

The Coffee production is increased by 0.3 percent over the past year. Ethiopia remains the largest producer and consumer of coffee in Africa and is fifth largest coffee producer in the world next to Brazil, Vietnam, Colombia and Indonesia contributing about 4.2 percent of the world coffee production. Coffee is mostly harvested during the period October to December. About 15 million people directly or indirectly deriving their livelihoods from coffee production and about 95 percent

the country's total production comes from the small holders farmers. 95 percent of the coffee produced as organic as most of the coffee grows in the traditional organic system without the use of pesticides and fertilizers. These factors gives Ethiopia a comparative advantage in the international specialty coffee market. A sizable amount of foreign Exchange accounting up to 30 percent of the total yearly export income is derived from coffee.

There are many types of coffee Arabica, many varieties, the main are Ethiopia Sidamo and Harar. I cannot tell you which one is the best, because it depends on the taste of the taster and every single variety has its particular mode of preparation and roasting. A very important part of our coffee culture is Coffee Ceremony in which the coffee is actually roasted, it makes to coffee different and releases its aromas.

DW: What institutional framework and farmers organizations to protect Ethiopian's coffee production are in place?

The Government of Ethiopia has enacted several proclamations with the view promoting and supporting farmers' cooperatives. The Government has been in the forefront in getting the right value for the premium coffee brands of Yirga-Cheffe, Sidamo and Harar, and others enabling farmers to get the right value for production and improve their lives. Similarly, the Ethiopian Commodity Exchange market, the first of its kind in Africa to modernize coffee trading adapting to the current global practices and initiatives such as traceability and specialty issues. ECX eliminated huge number of middlemen involved in coffee distribution and to enable coffee farmers to benefit from prevailing market prices.

The ECX functions as a security for those in the commodity markets, providing a reliable end-to-end system. The Government has worked tirelessly to secure Starbucks agreement to market, distribute and in some cases license Ethiopia's range of high-quality coffee brands. Ethiopia hasn't a label on Ethiopian coffee, but some companies that have it and use it. For instance, Starbucks has an Ethiopia coffee label as well as the Delhaize supermarket on its coffee capsules.

DW: Can you state the rank of the country as regard to worldwide and African's productions?

In terms of quality we think our coffee is the first one. Coffee production is increased by 0.3 percent over the past year. Ethiopia remains the largest producer and consumer of coffee in Africa and it is the fifth largest coffee producer in the world next to



Lalibela Church

Brazil, Vietnam, Colombia and Indonesia contributing about 4.2 percent of the world coffee production.

Ethiopia exports its coffee to fifty to fifty-three countries in the world, and the main importing countries are USA, Japan, Sudan, Saudi Arabia and of course, Germany and Belgium. We are proud to avail the world with our specialty coffee of Arabica with its special aroma and a unique flavour typical to Ethiopia. And if you are happen to be in Ethiopia you will be served a cup coffee along with the unique traditional coffee Ceremony.

DW: Coffee is one of Ethiopia's main exports but the dependence on exporting primary agricultural products is often cited as obstacle to more inclusive sustainable growth for the country. What was the impact of the most recent coffee crisis? What is undertaken at a national or local level to tackle this dependence?

The coffee crisis depends on production and supply and demand equation based on world coffeemarket. It happens when the market conditions change. The export depends on the production quantity , quality and the price on the market. We don't determine the world's coffee market price; Ethiopia has to take what the market offers. The highest peak has been in 2011, when our share was 8%, after which many factors have changed in the international market, consequently, the prices have changed as well and coffee prices fluctuate.

Recently its production is growing, farms are expanding and we are introducing large investments in coffee production due to the encouraging coffee price in the world markets. For several years 50% of our source of revenue was derived from coffee. Recently its share has dropped to 28 percent. My government has designed a policy and strategies suitable to diversify export commodities of the country.

Hence, Oilseeds, Pulses, Spices, gold, cut flowers textile and garment and leather products has also become the source of our revenue. The reason for our annual economic growth to 10-11% is due to diversifying our source of revenue other than coffee. By the same talking, our industry is taking its fair share for our economic development. However compares to the country's potential the sector remains untapped.



One of the most promising country in Africa
Éthiopia: population 90 873 739 million
Capital: Addis-Abeba - population: 4 585 129 million
PIB: \$ 40,05 billion

DW: What Ethiopian project would you like to highlight?

Well I would like to take this opportunity to say a few things about Ethiopian Tourism sector . Ethiopia is a must see country as it holds history, culture and nature beyond your imagination. Ethiopia is a great tourist destination endowed with untapped wealth of historical monuments, natural habitats and archeological attractions coupled with diverse people's preserving their cultural way of life. Moreover, we have our diversity to promote as we are a country of nations and nationalities having 80 different languages with 200 dialects. If you travel from North to South of the country, you will be able to witness the diversity our people coexisting peacefully, and that is something we offer to the world. Indeed Ethiopia is a country where Christians and Muslims coexist in the spirit of respect and harmony. It is a known fact that Ethiopia has been referred to as the origin of human being as it holds the earliest hominoid skeletons of Lucy 3.4 million and Raditus 4.4 years old. And with its nine inscribed world heritage sites by UNESCO, Ethiopia remains number one in Africa. Words can't simply explain the 11 awe- inspiring ancient churches of Ethiopia curved



African Union Headquarters, Ethiopia



Malachite Kingfisher

out of bedrock. The spectacular Simien Mountains, inhabits the endemic wild animals such as Walia Ibex, the bleeding heart Gelada baboon. The Dirre Sheik Hussein mosque of the 10th century, Axum, Harar, the Nechisar, mango and omo national parks, the active Erta ale volcano in Afar regions are among several tourism potential of Ethiopia. Ethiopia is politically stable, safe and secure for touristic movement. The Government is striving to the country to be one of the top tourist destinations of Africa, and we are witnessing an increase in tourist inflow annually due to the conducive environment for tourists. And this has created a job opportunity for our citizens. That is worth mentioning.

DW: You mentioned diversity; a high percentage of the population is Christians. Recently, they have suffered attacks and Ethiopian Christians were killed, would you like to share a statement on that serious event?

It is true that on the 19th of April, 30 Ethiopian Christians were slaughtered by Daesh in Libya. The whole world was deeply saddened and condemned this barbaric act of terrorism and I certainly hope it will never happen again. We, in Ethiopia, strongly believe that it should never have happened to any human being. It has no cause at all, we have to condemn it but condemnation is not enough. This was a terroristic act perpetrated against humanity by those who are nothing but criminals. The world needs to stand together to not only condemn their action but also persistently work against their dangerous move. Those were our nationals who went to Libya in transit to Europe in search of better opportunities. And after the horrendous criminal action, my government in collaboration with its friends in the region has managed to return our nationals back to their country. To address this problem from its root, the government undertook several policy measures and actions. To properly address the economic needs of its young population, we have managed to register impressive results, however, a lot remains to be done. We are speeding up our effort to create a convincing environment for Ethiopians to stay and work and generate income in the country. We want to offer opportunities for young people. We specific programs designed to cater for their needs. We have SME programs employing millions of our youth.

We need to convince them that they don't need to go elsewhere, they can actually stay home and that the strategy we have put in place will offer them opportunities. We cannot do everything at once; it's a process that requires time and determination of maintaining our economic development. We are expected to put in place a mechanism where we could convince our people from leaving home illegally by creating ample job opportunities and a better life conditions. Many of our youngsters have been subjected the evils of human trafficking and smugglers of migrants. In this regard, we have concluded labor agreements with several countries with the view of encouraging a legally approved and institutionally recognized movement of people in search for better opportunities and greener pastures. We shall continue working with countries at destination to protect the rights of our citizens.

Similarly, we are also working to dismantle the network of the practices of human trafficking and bring criminals to justice. In parallel with this, we are working on creating awareness on the precarious consequence of illegal migration by using our media outlets and grassroots movements. Actually the issue of human trafficking is

a global challenge that needs a global remedy. Ethiopia joins hands together with the countries of the region and with EU to address this global challenge.

DW: Are Christians in danger in Ethiopia?

Absolutely not, as I have tried to mention to you earlier Ethiopia is certainly a country that constitute Christians, Muslims and other religious groups. The constitution grants freedom of religion for all. They have lived in harmony, peacefully and respectfully for centuries. There actually is no danger for followers of any religion in Ethiopia. The incident you mentioned was totally isolated, and Ethiopians Christians will never assume this as something against Christians. This is an act of heinous crime, so there's no sense of revenge, absolutely not. This was in deed a unifying factor for both the Christians and Muslims as Ethiopian Muslims share the pain and the grief perpetrated against their Christian brothers. The two major religion of the country gathered at the Mesquel square in Addis Ababa to denounce the inhuman killings of Ethiopian Christians. With this, once again we demonstrated to the world that Ethiopians are united regardless of their diversity. We shall maintain our history of peaceful coexistence.



Ethiopian wolf

DW: What message would like to pass to Diplomatic World's readers?

Once again, I would like to thank Diplomatic World for this opportunity. Secondly, I would like to draw attention of your readers to Ethiopia with its ancient civilization has got a lot to offer to the world. Like any country, we have our challenges but we are in the path of transformation. Recently Ethiopia is enjoying one of the fastest economic growth in the world and this has created several opportunities in Ethiopia. Today many entrepreneurs from the world are showing keen interest to invest in Ethiopia. Ethiopia offers opportunities in all possible sectors opened up for investments or business. There are several sectors for investment including, agriculture and agro-processing; manufacturing and construction, tourism, health and education are lucrative areas for business in Ethiopia. Moreover, I would like to call up on tourists to consider Ethiopia as their tourism destination ready to warmly welcome our guests, visitors and tourists with the unique Ethiopian way of hospitality. Now there is actually no reason whatsoever not to visit Ethiopia. I wish to take this opportunity to invite all Europeans to visit and experience the wide range of tourism attraction that Ethiopia is endowed with. **Ethiopia is a country where it all began so you have all the reasons to go back to Ethiopia where humanity originated.** Let me leave you what Nelson Mandela once said about Ethiopia. "Ethiopia has always held a special place in my own imagination and the prospect of visiting Ethiopia attracted me more strongly than the trip to France, England and America combined together".



KAFA : La légende de l'origine du café.

Celle du berger Kaldi, relatée dans un des contes des Mille et Une Nuits, reste certainement la plus fameuse. Alors qu'il faisait paître ses chèvres dans les montagnes d'Arabie, Kaldi découvre des arbustes couverts de petits fruits rouges. Ayant remarqué l'excitation qui s'emparait de ses bêtes après avoir brouté sur les collines, le berger choisit d'en parler aux « moines » soufis (ascètes musulmans) présents dans la région. Ces derniers décidèrent d'aller cueillir ces fruits, les firent sécher et préparèrent une infusion qu' »ils burent avec délice. Bientôt, ils furent gagnés par une agitation fébrile qu'ils assimilèrent à une révélation divine .

De l'Orient à l'Occident, le café connaît une formidable ascension.

Au XVIème siècle les Européens découvrent le breuvage grâce aux Ottomans. Ces derniers, depuis leur expédition en Egypte en 1517, en ont fait un mets délicat apprécié de la "Sublime Porte", Istanbul, capitale de l'Empire Ottoman. Son succès est immédiat. Dès 1615, le café se diffuse sur l'ensemble du continent, soit cinq ans après le thé et de nombreuses années après le cacao, introduit par les Espagnols en 1528. C'est indubitablement dans la ville de Venise, prospère grâce, notamment, à son commerce avec l'Orient, que sa consommation est la plus répandue. Il en est de même dans la Cour du Roi Soleil, où "l'eau noire", don de l'ambassadeur Ottoman Soliman Aga, fait son entrée officielle en 1669. Son succès est tel que certains religieux italiens ont demandé son excommunication, pensant qu'il ne pouvait être que le fleuve du diable. Le pape Clément VIII (1592-1605) a même proposé de le faire baptiser afin d'en faire un vrai breuvage chrétien! De la légende à l'histoire, le café n'en demeure pas moins une préparation reconnue et appréciée. Après le thé, puis le cacao, le café acquiert, à son tour, ses lettres de noblesse. C'est à la Mecque que l'on voit apparaître les premiers débits de café, les "Maisons de café, où consommer l'eau noire" sont sources d'ouverture vers l'autre avec ses échanges, ses rencontres et ses parties de jeux d'échecs. Dès le XVIIème siècle, ces "maisons de café" font leur apparition dans la plupart des villes européennes.

"Thé et café donnent de l'esprit à ceux qui en ont et des insomnies à ceux qui n'en ont pas."

Pierre-Jean Vaillard

