

**Networking for Environment and Biodiversity Conservation in Ethiopia**  
**Residence of the EU, 17 May 2011**  
**Message of H.E. Girma WoldeGiorgis, President of the Federal democratic**  
**republic Ethiopia**

Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentle men,

First all, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Delegation of the European Union to Ethiopia for organizing this especial event to form a platform for networking, exchange of lessons learnt and best practices and identifying priorities for the environment and biodiversity conservation work in Ethiopia under the leadership of the government.

I would like also to take this opportunity to thank Ambassador Xavier Marchal, Head of the European Union Delegation to Ethiopia for giving me the privilege to patron this important event.

Even though, I couldn't take part in this especial event due to my other prior commitment, I can sincerely assure you that I am with you in my spirit and thought.

As one of the victims of global warming; Ethiopia knows well that environmental and biodiversity protection is not a luxury, but rather a necessity. Sound environmental stewardship is essential to the people's quality of life, the country's economy, and the well-being of future generation.

Environmental challenges do not exist in isolation. Global warming, loss of biodiversity, air and water pollution, waste, recycling, management of chemicals, monitoring the impact of new technologies, and other environmental issues are all inter-related, making protection of the environment one of the greatest challenges facing the world today.

The planet's natural and nature-based assets from individual species to ecosystems such as forests, coral reefs, freshwaters and soils are declining at an alarming rate. Biodiversity loss costs billions to the global economy every year, undermining economies; business prospects and opportunities to combat poverty.

Concern for environmental degradation in Ethiopia has been growing in recent years. The Ethiopian Federal Democratic Republic Constitution provides basic and comprehensive principles and guidelines for environmental protection and management. The Constitution states that everyone has the right to live in a clean and healthy environment and the Government will make every effort to provide a convenient environment.

The Constitution also holds the Government and the people of Ethiopia responsible for the preservation of natural resources and maintenance of ecological balances. A number of proclamations and supporting regulations were made that contain provisions for the protection and management of the environment which reflect the principles of the Constitution.

Ethiopia's Environmental Policy is predicated on a growing concern for the degradation of the natural resource base, and takes into account how that base is affected by, and affects, the overall productivity of the agriculture sector in the country. The 'overall policy goal is to improve and enhance the health and quality of life of all Ethiopians and to promote sustainable social and economic development through the sound management and use of natural, man-made and cultural resources and the environment as a whole so as to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'.

It is unthinkable to achieve sustainable economic development without giving due attention to environment and biodiversity conservation. Natural environment and biodiversity resources are indispensable assets for food security and sustainable economic development. As I have said it earlier, the need to give prime attention to conservation of natural resources with a view to enabling the country to benefit from the resources is a must to do issue.

The ongoing activities to conserve forests as well as soil and water resources should further be strengthened. The government has been undertaking activities to intensify such activities in

collaboration with concerned bodies; however, a lot remains to be done. Therefore, it is our collective responsibility to contribute share towards conservation of natural resources.

As one of Ethiopia's major development partner, EU attaches especial importance to the conservation of natural resources and biodiversity in its development assistance. This is evident in the different food security and rural development projects. Ethiopia greatly valued this ever increasing development partnership.

It is known that European Union is at the forefront of international efforts to deal with global environmental concerns, convinced that major challenges such as Climate Change have to be tackled through the multilateral process. The EU has played a key role in developing international treaties addressing climate change.

It is my sincere belief that this partnership will be further strengthened in the years to come.

At last, I would like to thank once again the European Union Delegation to Ethiopia and Ambassador Xavier Marchal, for organizing this event and urge all stack holders to further strengthen their effort in the conservation of natural environment and biodiversity resources of the country.

I thank you.