

Honourable Chief Guest Ambassazdor Taye Atsekeselassie, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs

Excellencies

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Namaskar and Goodafternoon to all

Today we are celebrating the 67<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Republic Day of India. On behalf of the Embassy of India, I welcome you all on this auspicious occasion and convey our greetings to the African Union, the friendly people, Indian community and governments of Ethiopia and Djibouti.

Ambassador Sanjay Verma had to unexpectedly return back to headquarters to assume the position of Chief of Protocol. He and Mrs Verma extend the very best wishes to their many friends in Ethiopia and Djibouti.

Excellencies, India shares excellent bilateral relations with Ethiopia and Djibouti and I am happy to report that this bond got even stronger in the last one year.

India is now Ethiopia's second biggest trade partner and in the top-three foreign investors list. Indian companies are now investing here demonstrating the confidence; the Indian business community has in Ethiopia.

Our partnership with Ethiopia in human resources development and capacity building are also on track. About 300 Ethiopians go to India every year for training opportunities or on scholarships in various universities in different subjects. Three sugar factories being built under concessional funding are all producing sugar and are approaching completion.

Friends, as some of you may know, earlier this year India evacuated 7000, including 2000 foreign nationals from war torn Yemen. All this was done in about a week with the support and cooperation of the Djibouti. We are grateful to the people and government of Djibouti.

Excellencies, The Third India-Africa Forum Summit was held in New Delhi in October last year, which was attended by 43 Heads of State or Government. H.E. Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn the Honourable Prime Minister led the Ethiopian delegation. H.E. President Ismail Omar Guelleh led the Djiboutian delegation to

the Summit. The Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and the Commissioners from AUC were central to this, the biggest multilateral summit ever hosted by India. The participation, declaration and announcements during the Summit will set the tone for India-Africa ties unto 2020.

I also take this opportunity to acknowledge and appreciate the role of the Indian community, some of whom are present here with us today. Indian investors, academics and professionals are the actors who enrich the bilateral narrative with Ethiopia and Djibouti on a day to day basis.

To conclude, I would like to thank all of you for attending this reception and sharing our happiness.

Now I would like to invite Honourable Chief Guest Ambassador Taye Atsekeselassie State Minister of Foreign Affairs to say a few words on this occasion.

Jai Hind.

**25<sup>th</sup> January, 2016.**