

Toast delivered by His Excellency Evariste Ndayishimiye, President of the Republic of Burundi, on the occasion of the State Banquet offered in honour of Her Excellency Madam Sahle - Work Zewde, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Bujumbura, February 9, 2021

Your Excellency Madam President and Dear Sister,

1. First and foremost, I thank God Almighty who created our country Burundi and who has been protecting it to this day. Let us praise him for bringing us a distinguished visitor Her Excellency Madam Sahle-Work Zewde, President of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

2. On behalf of the Burundian people, the Government and in my own behalf, I express my gratitude for choosing our beautiful country at this exceptional and uncertain time caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. I express to you, Excellency Madam President and Dear Sister, and to your delegation, a warm welcome to the land of milk and honey, the country of the southernmost source of the Nile, Burundi.

3. My country, Burundi is renowned for its welcome and its legendary hospitality; its landscape, its rivers and its lakes, especially the famous Lake Tanganyika which abounds in very good fish. Take your time, Excellency, and enjoy the variety of our culture, our dances and our folk songs and especially the sacred drum, INGOMA, listed as part of UNESCO World Heritage. So welcome, because Burundi and Ethiopia are sister nations.

4. Our joy to receive you is at its highest level because Burundi is a land blessed by God, and God has been placed at the heart of our life and in the first place in all our actions. It is a great honour for us to have Ethiopia as our sister nation repeatedly cited in the Bible, including the famous writings about the Queen of Sheba's visit to King Solomon in Israel.

5. Africa as a whole pays homage to Ethiopia, one of the oldest African civilizations to have maintained its sovereignty by facing invaders, whoever they are and whatever their size. Valiant Ethiopia ended all doubts in 1896 when it defeated colonial Italy in the Battle of Adwa, resuming its heroism in 1935-36 when it was invaded and occupied by fascist Italy. One of the first independent African nations, it ultimately became the champion of decolonization and Pan-Africanism. The Organization of African Unity was founded under the leadership of Ethiopia and is headquartered in Addis Ababa, the capital city.

Your Excellency Madam President and Dear Sister,

6. Burundi's historic sisterhood with Ethiopia is of inestimable value to our respective peoples. Your visit to Burundi, the first since the installation of new institutions resulting from the 2020 elections, is a very eloquent sign of the strong links between our two Peoples. I sincerely thank you.

7. Dear Sister, your two-day stay in this land flowing with milk and honey will allow us to share experience and expertise, not to mention examining all aspects of our business and investment potential. We will examine, at the Highest Level of our respective States, all the development possibilities that will bring our Peoples together in mutually beneficial programs and initiatives.

8. We do appreciate your continued efforts to strengthen democracy and we wish the Ethiopian people the best elections in 2021. We cannot thank you enough for leading by example across Africa in ensuring that your country remains a united Nation, and we are with you in your fight against negative forces of all kinds that want to violate the territorial integrity of Ethiopia. Such forces who are preaching terrorism, divisions, secession, whether based on sects, religion, colour or creed, have no place in the 21st century in Africa or the world.

9. In Burundi, after having worked for political stability and the preservation of national sovereignty, we are working on socio-economic development to build a prosperous and peaceful Nation, by mobilizing all the vital forces of the Nation. I never cease to call on friends of Burundi and both bilateral and multilateral partners to accompany us in this noble process.

10. We started by developing our agriculture to make sure that the citizens have enough to eat and the surplus they can sell locally or export in order to obtain money to meet their daily needs. We have also made a point of creating and offering attractive conditions to investors with one of the most competitive business climates.

11. To this end, Ethiopia is an icon, even beyond our continental borders, when it comes to business. The airline industry in your country, with an unbeatable experience spanning more than half a century, is an African pride. Therefore, Burundi has a lot to learn from your knowledge and skills, not only in this field of aviation but also in other various sectors.

Excellency Madam President and Dear Sister,

12. Burundi, like Ethiopia, valiantly recovered from acts of destabilization in 2015 that sought to overthrow democratically elected institutions. These despicable acts which cost the lives of several of our compatriots, in addition to the vandalism and demolition of public

infrastructure, were accompanied by a vast campaign of calumny and demonization to tarnish the image of the Burundian authorities in the concert of nations. Unfortunately, some Western powers are to blame for having sponsored and orchestrated this barbarism.

13. Helped by her friends and pan-Africanist countries, including Ethiopia, Burundi was therefore able to defeat neo-colonialism and imperialism and defended the dignity of its people. We are therefore comforted by the fact that we are not alone in this struggle. African solidarity has been of great use to us and that is why we also stand ready to respond to all requests for support, to bring our help to other peoples.

14. Indeed, my country plays an important role in regional and continental affairs, especially in the consolidation and peace-keeping, and will spare no effort to provide assistance wherever necessary to achieve stability, the source of all human decency. We have heard and continue to receive the echo of the gratitude and testimonies from the people of the countries to which we have been able to provide assistance, from Haiti to Somalia, including the Central African Republic, to name but a few.

15. Burundi and Ethiopia have cooperated in various international fora, including the United Nations and the framework of the ACP-EU countries, which have also started talks to ensure that fairness, legality and integrity are respected in the relations between the two geographical parts of the world that are united by trade. Indeed, the two countries share a common commitment in favour of pluralism, inclusiveness and equity in the world. The opportunity is offered to us here to thank all those who have supported Burundi over the past five years, whether directly or indirectly, in our fight against unfair treatment within the UN, a fight which has resulted in the withdrawal of Burundi on the periodic agenda of the UN Security Council. Special thanks go to Ethiopia.

16. I am convinced that our bilateral cooperation in the new areas of intervention that will be identified during this visit will unite us even more in a lasting partnership. As we are still at the beginning of the year; I take this opportunity to wish you a happy new year 2021. Let it be a year full of joy and happiness for you and the brotherly people of Ethiopia. May God Almighty bless your initiatives and efforts to further develop your beloved country.

17. It is with these words, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, that I ask you to join me in raising your glasses in a toast:

- to the health, happiness and well-being of Her Excellency Sahle-Work-Zewde;
- to the well-being and prosperity of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia; and
- to the lasting friendship between Burundi and Ethiopia.
- God bless you!