

H.E. Amb. Fatih Ulusoy, outgoing Ambassador of Turkey

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Diplomatic relations between Turkey and Ethiopia was started in 1896 with the exchange of delegations during the rule of Sultan Abdülhamid II and Emperor Menelik II. Following the opening of the first Ottoman-Turkish Consulate General in Harar, in 1912, the first Embassy of the Republic of Turkey in Sub-Saharan Africa was opened in Addis Ababa, in 1926. The Ethiopian side opened its Embassy in Turkey in 1933. The Embassy of Ethiopia in Ankara was closed in 1984 during the Communist Derg regime and it was re-opened on 21 April 2006.

Mutual high level visits, the inauguration of Ethiopian Airlines' direct flights to Addis Ababa as of April 2006, the establishment of the first TIKA (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency) Office in Addis Ababa in 2005, the first in Africa; furthermore, a continuous increase of development aid programs towards Ethiopia have been significant steps which have contributed to the development of relations.

From the time Ethiopia and Turkey started diplomatic relations several diplomats and Ambassadors have played key role in fostering the smooth functioning of diplomatic relationship of the two countries.

Today's Herald guest is the outgoing Turkey Ambassador H.E. Fatih Ulusoy who has played a key role in fostering diplomatic relationship of the two countries.

Herald: Your Excellency, thank you for such wonderful opportunity?

H.E. Amb. Fatih Ulusoy: Thank you for the interview. I believe media has an important role in raising awareness about the strength of Turkey-Ethiopia bilateral relations and partnership.

Herald: How was your stay in Ethiopia?

H.E. Amb. Fatih Ulusoy: I spent three years in Ethiopia, witnessing an important era which I believe will take its rightful place in history. In Ethiopia, I found many similarities between Turkish and Ethiopian cultures. I can say that I felt at home in Addis Ababa.

Herald: How do you explain the diplomatic relation of the two countries?

H.E. Amb. Fatih Ulusoy: Turkey and Ethiopia has centuries long relations, however, our diplomatic ties date back to 1896 when Sultan Abdülhamid II and Emperor Menelik II exchanged envoys. Turkey opened its first Embassy in Sub-Saharan Africa in 1926 in Addis Ababa. This is no coincidence as Ethiopia was the only non-colonized country in Sub-Saharan Africa at that time. Turkey and Ethiopia enjoy a partnership where both countries are like-minded on many policy issues such as fighting terrorism and applying open-door policy for refugees. We also exchange support in many elections for international candidates. For instance, Turkey has supported the candidature of Ethiopia for the United Nations Security Council non-permanent seat two years ago. Turkey-Ethiopia relations have passed the test of time. In July 2012, Ethiopia was the first country to officially express support and solidarity with the people and Government of Turkey following the terrorist coup attempt perpetrated by FETO (Fetullah



Gülen Terrorist Organization).

The same year, Turkey stood with Ethiopia against all challenges which took place inside Ethiopia and continued its investments without any pause. This is very important to us as we proved that we will stand by each other, not only in good times but also in challenging times. Now we look forward to even strengthening our relations in multiple areas including trade, faith, health tourism, education, defense industry, etc.

Herald: How do you explain the economic and political transformation of the country while you had been here in Ethiopia?

H.E. Amb. Fatih Ulusoy: Ethiopian Government has been taking key measures to strengthen the economy. One of them is establishment of industrial parks. The launch of industrial parks will serve to increase the number of investors in the country. This has been an important step and it will be even more productive if the views of potential investors could be taken on board with regard to the design of the industrial parks and pricing of sheds. I also look forward to the implementation of the privatization plans which would bring foreign capital into the country. If the modalities of privatization could be shared with interested parties, that would help bring more capital into the country. I would like to express my appreciation to all Ethiopian ministers and high level dignitaries for their solid support to encourage our investors to come to Ethiopia. On the political scene, we have seen a big change in Ethiopia, particularly in the past few years. We took good note of the government's commitments with regard to upcoming elections. The gender balance in the current cabinet and election of a female president highlighting the role of women in decision-making. The efforts towards reconciliation and bringing unity are also key components of the reform agenda. We support the reform agenda and hope to see that this will continue in an inclusive manner.

Herald: Do you think Ethiopia has properly tapped the fertile economic opportunity of growth Turkey offers? If not, where is the gap?

H.E. Amb. Fatih Ulusoy: Turkey has more than 2.5 billion USD foreign direct investments

logistics will also get better. And this is another important criterion from an investor's point of view.

Herald: What special things did you witness in Ethiopia within the last seven months?

H.E. Amb. Fatih Ulusoy: Ethiopian government started a new approach in many avenues right after coming into power. The reform agenda has been impressive. I think the messages of unity by the Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed immediately after coming to power were important. However, as a diplomat, among all the new steps taken by the government, I feel that the normalization with Eritrea was probably the most striking move. Turkish Government delivered two official statements welcoming the normalization and supporting these breakthroughs by both leaders.

Herald: How do you see the role of Ethiopia in regional integration? Do you think Ethiopia has done its assignment in this regard?

H.E. Amb. Fatih Ulusoy: Ethiopia is a key partner for Turkey in the Horn of Africa. It is also the seat of the African Union. The normalization with Eritrea has brought a new momentum in the region. Furthermore, Ethiopia made crucial contributions in bringing peace in South Sudan through its key role within IGAD. Now we also see that there are trilateral mechanisms being established in the region. We fully encourage Ethiopia to keep its efforts towards bringing peace and stability to the Horn of Africa. Turkey also enjoy special relations with many countries in the region and is ready to support Ethiopia in that regard.

Herald: What is the trade balance between the two countries?

H.E. Amb. Fatih Ulusoy: The trade volume between Turkey and Ethiopia was 370 million USD for year 2017. We hope to see an increase with 2018 figures. Although there are challenges in Ethiopia on foreign currency reserve, we are working hard with our Ethiopian counterparts to keep its efforts to increase our trade.

Herald: What are economic areas where Turkey investors are participating in Ethiopia?

H.E. Amb. Fatih Ulusoy: The initial wave of Turkish investors reached Ethiopia through textile sector, however now we see that Turkish investments are diversified into new sectors such as agricultural materials, beverages, shoes, etc. Furthermore, new Turkish investments are also underway in the field of textile. I believe that Ethiopia will continue to attract investments from Turkey. I met a number of interested companies who are focusing on Ethiopia in the field of energy and construction. Turkish companies are very successful in mega construction projects in African countries such as Sudan, Tanzania, Algeria, Senegal, Rwanda, Somalia etc. One example is in Ethiopia where a Turkish company has been building 400 km long railway on Awash-Kombolcha-Hara Gebeya route. This company has introduced European railway technology and standards in Ethiopia, they are also planning to start the most geographically difficult terrain full of mountains and valleys, so they had to build a high number of tunnels and viaducts. I hope there will be more opportunities for Turkish contractors to display their

skills and high standards in Ethiopia.

Herald: How do you see the future of the two countries?

H.E. Amb. Fatih Ulusoy: Turkey is working hard to enhance our partnership with Ethiopia. Turkish Cooperation Agency TIKA, built two important projects in Tigray and Harar. Restoration of the tomb of King Nejaish will attract faith tourism in Tigray and I hope the official opening will be done during a high level visit from Turkey to Ethiopia. The restoration of the Ottoman Consulate compound in Harar has also been a significant contribution to the old Harar City. TIKA will continue its development projects as well as humanitarian efforts for the needy people. Turkish Maarif Foundation is established in Ethiopia and will operate schools in the country. That would be a great support for education sector and future of Ethiopia. Anadolu Agency having its Africa headquarters in Addis Ababa, reflects the developments in Ethiopia and within African Union not only to Turkey but to the whole world. Anadolu Agency has become an important part of African media and it is making its important contribution for having Africa's voice heard by the globe. Due to the similarities in our culture, I see that more and more Ethiopians are enjoying Turkish TV dramas.

I hope to see that Ethiopian TV channels and film directors will exchange and work more with their counterparts in Turkey, so this could be a new area which brings our people together. I would like to encourage Ethiopian businesses to visit Turkey more to attend trade fairs and meet their counterparts. I also would like to see more Ethiopians visit Turkey facilities, for example, or just to learn more about Turkey.

I believe firmly that the future holds an even better partnership and strengthened relations between our countries. Ethiopia is a key partner for Turkey and there is good potential for this partnership to grow even further. Today, we will exchange and work more to realize the importance of multilateralism.

Turkey and Ethiopia remains like-minded on this issue and this could be a new area for cooperation especially in the multilateral scene. Besides, the solid partnership on investments, both countries have a great potential to work together on many regional and global issues. Both sides are improving their relations in providing peace and security not only within their borders, but in their respective regions. In the past three years, although there have been domestic challenges, we were able to bring new avenues to Turkey-Ethiopia cooperation. Furthermore, we were able to increase people-to-people contacts through initiating new forms of tourism, training and scholarship projects in cultural events like sports festivals, concerts, dance shows. On top of these, when we include the ongoing interest of major Turkish companies towards Ethiopia, I rest assured that the bonds between us will further grow.

Herald: If you have anything to add you are welcome.

H.E. Amb. Fatih Ulusoy: We will introduce a very efficient visa application system here in Addis Ababa soon. So Ethiopian passport holders will not need to come to Turkish Embassy for application. Once the new system takes place, announcements will be made.

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