

Excellencies Heads of State,

Dear friends and relatives of our Great leader,

Distinguished participants of the founding congress of the Meles Foundation,

Invited Guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to all of you here amongst us today for joining us on this historic day. Let me also take this opportunity to express how I feel deeply honored to make the opening remarks to the Congress.

There are myriad reasons why we should maintain the legacy of this great leader and fighter and memorialize the great accomplishments he had achieved throughout his life.

I am not going to go to great lengths trying to exhaust all the rationales behind the decision to launch this foundation, as I know this will be quite a tall order. I cannot nonetheless overemphasize the fact that properly understanding and indeed adopting the values he had always stood for all his life, will go a long way in ensuring the continuity of the democratic developmentalist path that we embarked on under his leadership and putting Ethiopia on a solid basis of prosperity.

The far-reaching positive impact of Meles's countless achievements and myriad works during and after the armed struggle is quite obvious. I have no doubt you will agree with me that it is not by any means easy to try and exhaust the countless teachings and practical principles of this great man. From his early age until his premature demise without a single day of rest, Meles has accomplished tremendous achievements. He has led and fought alongside millions against tyranny. He designed strategies that were instrumental in extricating Ethiopia and its peoples out of the quagmire of poverty and lack of democratic governance. He had set example to others thanks to his exceptional performance and his impeccable discipline and personality.

Meles was not only an architect of successful strategies and sound theories; more than anything, Meles was a practical leader who worked tirelessly and succeeded in making sure that these theories and strategies are in equal measure owned and implemented by the party and government he led.

Meles has accomplished a lot, and left so many great works behind in his various capacities: as a dedicated and loyal fighter of EPRDF; as far-sighted leader capable of identifying the challenges his party faced and designed a way out well ahead of his peers; as a Prime Minister who saved his country from the brink of disintegration and put it on a solid basis of democracy and development; as the true son of Africa who championed the cause of Ethiopia and indeed Africa in international fora; as military strategist; as a writer; as a voracious reader; as a world class intellectual; as a loving partner and father; and above all, as a fighter who gave his all for the cause of his people and country with the rarest selflessness imaginable.

In a word, Meles is a treasure trove for those who are interested in an in-depth research and study on his life. That is why not only our generation but also posterity should learn from his works as well as from his exceptional work discipline.

**Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

Properly studying Meles's values and works is also very important if we are to truly appreciate and understand his vision and that of his party.

I would like to stress at this juncture that truly understanding Meles's vision is not something that was naturally bequeathed to those of us who are currently in the EPRDF leadership by virtue of our position. The true essence of his vision is not something that can be understood through arbitrary analysis by anyone in the leadership who by some historical accident happened to have come to share seats with him in the crucible of party or government. It should be borne in mind that it rather needs to be mastered with the help of rigorous and continuous study and practically reflected in our day to day conduct and discharge of responsibility. More than anything, members and the leadership of the party should strive to master it through the time-honored practice of mutual learning and engagement.

There is also another reason why we say his vision should not be considered the sole inheritance of those of in the leadership; Meles's vision is now shared by millions of Ethiopians whose lives have changed for the better or saw light at the end of the tunnel thanks to his exceptional leadership.

There are certain qualities that make Meles stand out in a crowd and that are quite distinct from and more sublime than what is often said in many utterances during meetings. Meles always had an unwavering stance on protecting peoples' interest. He was resolute in his position against rent-seeking or corruption. He was consistent to a fault in his pursuit of knowledge-based, wise and democratic approach towards bringing others on board on any issue. That is of course why this Foundation is being independently set up in order for it to carry out in-depth studies on the numerous qualities and works of Meles. Far from being confined to debates among party members and the leadership, Meles's vision and ideas must be topics for academic debates and similar intellectual exercises in the public.

It is imperative that Meles and his works must continue to be topics for debate and research. Such an in-depth study and research will go a long way in creating clarity on the party of the current leadership and the ones to come in the future as to the correct path to ensuring ultimate success in our endeavors.

Finally, I would like to thank all members of the organizing committee who have done all they can to make this day a reality. I would also like on behalf of the government of the FDRE and that of myself to express my heartfelt gratitude to all Heads of States and Government, foreign dignitaries, renowned personalities and researchers, and Prime Minister Meles's friends and relatives who despite your busy schedule were able to attend this Congress to pay your respect to this great leader.

I thank you.