

Remarks by
H. E. Mr. Seyoum Mesfin Gebredingle,
Ambassador of the Federal Democratic Republic of
Ethiopia to The People's Republic of China,
on behalf of the Chair of the INBAR Council
and Ethiopia
at the
Launching Ceremony of the Center for
China-African Agriculture and Forestry Research
(CAFOR)

16 December 2012
Zhejiang Agriculture
and Forestry University,
Lin'an, Zhejiang, China

**Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good morning to you all,**

At the outset, on behalf of the Chair of INBAR Council - the Government of Ethiopia, and INBAR as African member countries, and that of my own, I wish to congratulate warmly Zhejiang A&F University (ZAFU) and the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR) for their commitment and relentless effort to the establishing of the Center for China-Africa Agriculture and Forestry Research (CAFOR) which we are launching this morning. I also wish to thank sincerely the People's Government of Zhejiang Province for welcoming us all and for its continued support to INBAR's work in the Province for over a decade and a half.

We, all are honored to witness the launching of CAFOR at the Zhejiang A&F University in Zhejiang Province. Zhejiang Province is one of the global models in bamboo industry development that helped tens of thousands of people to extricate themselves out of poverty and in extending forest cover and environmental protection.

Therefore, today's ceremony is not just about the establishment of one additional research center at ZAFU. It is not about a research center that sits on an ivory tower and that keeps itself out of the reach of people. It is about a

research center that gives focus to improving the daily life of people. It is about a research center for defeating poverty and backwardness. Defeating poverty is also about defeating slavery, because poverty denies human dignity and subjects one to slavery. It is a ceremony about a research of cleaning the lungs and the respiratory system of humans and of our common mother, the earth by expanding the forest cover of landmass both in China and Africa as carbon stock including for economic and eco-system services. It is about a research for enhancing and promoting socio-economic development through environmental friendly strategy and practices. It is also a ceremony about bringing the people's of China and INBAR'S African countries much closer by further strengthening the bonds of culture around the bamboo industry, forestry and environmental protection. That is why we congratulate ZAFU, INBAR, Zhejiang Province and congratulate our selves by launching CAFOR.

The mission of the establishment of CAFOR is to promote cooperation between China and African countries and their research institutions in agriculture and forestry research and development including bamboo, and bio-resources. I do believe the Center will serve as a bridge of knowledge for experience sharing, technology transfer and capacity building for China and African countries in the field of agriculture and forestry.

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With regard to reforestation and environmental protection, allow me to mention quite a few facts about Ethiopia. About six decades ago 45% of Ethiopia was covered with forest. However, due to many natural and man-made disasters that resource was devastated and reduced to a mere 3.6%. The impact of deforestation, land degradation and the extension of desertification has posed a major challenge to Ethiopia. The country's heritage of flora and fauna and its rich bio-diversity are under threat. In recognition of these and other related challenges, today's Ethiopia has since the last decade and a half put in place proper policies and strategies to arrest and reverse the situation. The country has promulgated national laws that fully mobilized the entire population, government and non-governmental institutions and other resources to meet the challenges.

Consequently, the country has been undertaking concrete and encouraging steps. The biggest and the most important legacy event to mention is "2 trees for 2000", launched on the occasion of Ethiopian Millennium; Meskerem 2000 (September 2007) that ushered in a paradigm shift in developing the country's strategy for environmental friendly growth and transformation. During that year alone, almost 1.5 billion trees were planted in the whole country. The

program of tree planting and water and soil conservation which began in the 90s has been scaled-up nationally and integrated with the country's Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) Strategy. For the last five years an average of 2.6 billion trees per year were planted throughout the country. During this period, the average rate of survival of planted trees is 64.5%. The country's current forest coverage has thus improved by more than three-fold, (from 3.6% to above 11%). To further strengthen and enhance Ethiopia's environmental friendly growth and development the Government has launched its "Climate-Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) strategy that placed Ethiopia among the first tier countries in the world which have committed themselves to take concrete steps by adopting environmental friendly development strategy.

Distinguished participants,

China is a country with rich experience and advanced research and technology in the fields of agriculture and forestry. Furthermore, Africa has rich agricultural and forestry resources, as well as a strong base of both traditional and modern knowledge and technologies. Agriculture and forestry plays an essential role in African social and economic development. I believe African and Chinese agriculture and forestry are complementary and have a lot of potential to learn from each other and share in mutually beneficial cooperation.

Thus, the launching of CAFOR provides those who work on agricultural and forestry education and technology in both China and Africa communication platform. I hope that this ceremony and the visit to ZAFU will serve as an opportunity for all attendants to earn a greater understanding of Chinese agriculture and forestry, especially the bamboo industry. I also hope we can ultimately contribute to the development of both China and Africa through enhanced cooperation and communication between the member countries of INBAR and the Chinese scientific and technological community working on agriculture and forestry.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to provide you some coincidence that I took note before concluding my remarks. The acronym for “Zhejiang A&F University”, ZAFU, gives a special meaning in the Ethiopian federal language, Amharic. ZAFU means THE TREE. It is an exciting coincidence. The launching of the Center for China-Africa Agriculture and Forestry Research (CAFOR) Center, at this university, I can say, is about forestry and protecting the environment and humans by promoting ZAFU, THE TREE, the leading ZAFU of course, will be BAMBOO. We all must pledge to jointly promote ZAFU, THE TREE, including BAMBOO.

Finally, on behalf of all of us from INBAR's Africa member countries present here, I would like to take this opportunity once again to thank Mr. Cheng for his warm reception. We sincerely look forward to Zhejiang Province's ongoing support to CAFOR. I believe, with the support of the Government of Zhejiang Province and INBAR's member countries, CAFOR is bound to develop and continuously strengthen its role of contributing to world green development.

I thank you.