Your Excellency, Mr. Abdulfetah Abdulahi  
Minister of Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs  
Your honour, Mr. Tadele Yimer,  
President of the Ethiopian Employers’ Association  
Your honour, Mr. George Okutho  
Director of ILO Country Office for Ethiopia and Somalia  
Distinguished guests  
Brother and Sisters

I am very pleased and honoured to be here and deliver this keynote speech at the launching of a project on Improving Industrial Relations for Decent Work and Sustainable Development of Textile and Garment Industry in Ethiopia. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the International Labour Organization Country office for Ethiopia and Somalia, SIDA and H & M for working together and come up with an interesting project at the time when we Ethiopian workers are in dire need of such projects.

It is crystal clear that the Ethiopian government has attached utmost importance to the textile and garment sector as part and parcel of its policy to transform the existing agricultural based Ethiopian economy into the industrialized one. In effect, the sector is attracting significant foreign direct investment and creating thousands of new employment opportunities. This is something that gives the unemployed, but bright and energetic, Ethiopian youth a ray of hope.

Despite these commendable efforts of the Ethiopian government, we, as trade union organization, have serious concerns regarding the protection of human and trade union rights in textile and garment industry. It is not uncommon to observe workplaces where workers’ right to organize and collectively bargain is totally
unheard-of. The size of brothers and sisters who are coerced into toiling under a precarious working condition deprived of their constitutional and conventional rights is not insignificant. Besides, questions are frequently raised in relation to the situation of occupational safety and health and the wage and salary of workers. We therefore firmly believe that the employment relations in textile and garment industry should be improved so as to ensure decent work and enduring industrial peace.

Distinguished guests

Brother and Sisters

When I am here today to witness the launching of this project, my sincere hope is that this project will play a vital role in improving the industrial relation in the sector; thereby the Ethiopian workers will get their fair share from the rapidly growing textile and garment industry. Bearing this in mind, I would like to assure you that Confederation of Ethiopian Trade Unions will make every effort to help the implementation of the project.

I thank you for your attention.

Berhanu Deriba

Secretary General, CETU

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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