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Remarks to the Ethiopian Community of New South Wales

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President of the Crown Council of Ethiopia*

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Greetings and blessings on you, my beloved countrymen, and my profound thanks for the warm welcome you have given me tonight. As you know, I have flown a day and a night to get here to be with you, and I did not wish to sleep until I had the opportunity to be with you, and to thank you for being here tonight, and for your continued pride in the three millennia of our Solomonic history.

Let me speak to you tonight in English, because it is the language of your adopted homeland, and our wonderful host country, Australia. But I am happy also to talk with you in our own *lingua franca*, Amharic, as we progress.

Firstly, let me thank Ato Daniel Abebe for the work he undertook to get us all together tonight. And to thank him, and all of you, for never forgetting the unique and inspirational character of our shared past, even as you embrace the freedoms and opportunities offered to you by this great country of Australia. I am here tonight with you because my Grandfather, His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I, also felt a great kinship with Australia, which is why he arranged with the Prime Minister of Australia at the time, Sir Robert Menzies, for the State Visit to Australia in 1968, a half-century ago next year.

But I cannot also proceed without thanking the incredible generosity in time and material support given to us by a number of people and organisations who are not Ethiopian. They have enabled us to be with you. Some of these Australians and Americans do not even wish to be thanked publicly, but just want to help the Crown's mission of reuniting and healing our sacred Ethiopia. What has been wonderful, however, is that companies have donated services — airline travel and accommodation — which means that

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the Crown is not diverting funds away from charitable work to be with you. Virgin Australia — a wonderful and very Australian airline — kindly donated my travel to and from Australia. Globetrotter Travel and their partner company, Penny Inc., found and donated accommodation for us around Australia, and have indicated a desire to work to create opportunities in Ethiopia. A very good Australian supporter of the Crown, Mr George Bougias, of Melbourne, has devoted time, energy, and personal funds to ensure that I could meet with you tonight, and with the Ethiopian communities in Canberra and Melbourne as well.

He, like so many of our supporters (and particularly the Americans who helped make this trip happen), are motivated solely by their admiration for Ethiopia and the Emperor, and for the reality that the Solomonic line represents the history of all of Judeo-Christian civilization.

You, as Ethiopians far from our homeland, can only begin to imagine the level of interest and support which people around the world are beginning to pay to our country, its history, and its ancient values and civilization. We Ethiopians, so preoccupied are we in rebuilding our lives and our country — and our new countries — that perhaps we are unaware of the extent of respect which our unique heritage has created around the world.

I do not wish to make these prepared remarks very long, because I want to interact with you personally and do not want to take time away from that. But my message with this trip to Australia is this:

Remember that — with all of the ethnic, linguistic, religious, political, and geographic differences in our vast Ethiopian tapestry — we have one overriding point of pride: we are Ethiopians. We have a unique and complex set of cultures. We have a unique and singular historical line since we emerged from the Cushitic civilization and into the Solomonic era. These factors are far more important, far more unifying, far more inspirational than all of the small, temporary issues which have divided us for the past few decades.

You all know that what we had in Ethiopia for the past few thousand years set us apart from the rest of humanity. We were also the great inspiration for Africa. Our great sagas, including the Kebra Negast, tell of how much we love and honour our sacred country.

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Remember, even as you become Australians, that your Ethiopian heritage and qualities mean that you have great things to give to society. To the world. Your Ethiopianness sets you apart and gives you pride and duty; your Ethiopianness will help make Australia an even greater country.

My beloved Grandfather, who raised me in the Palace after the passing of my Father, saw in Australia a special friend. Australians and Ethiopians fought together, of course, in the Korean War, and saw in each other similar values. Emperor Menelik may have begun the relationship when he brought eucalyptus trees from Australia to regrow the forests around Addis Ababa. But Emperor Haile Selassie also grew to love the horses which the Australians brought to the Middle East in World War I: the hardy Waler horses which the Australian Light Horsemen had to leave there when they went on to fight in Gallipoli in 1915. These horses and their heirs became the mounts for the Imperial Guard Regiment.

But there were many points of contact between Australia and Ethiopia. And Australian Prime Minister Sir Robert Menzies sent a famous Australian cricketer, Bert Oldfield, to Ethiopia in 1965, with a team of Australian schoolboy cricketers, to play the students from the Wingate School in Addis. The Prime Minister sent a cricket bat to the Emperor as a gift, and this began the process by which the Emperor started thinking of his State Visit to Australia, which was to take place in 1968.

What is wonderful today is that the cricketing legend, Bert Oldfield, had a nephew, Dr Paul Scully-Power, AM, who was Australia's first astronaut. And Dr Scully-Power is today one of the Crown Council's advisors on science and technology. He is one of the Australians who is returning the affection which the Emperor showed Australia.

The Crown Council's strategic advisor, Gregory Copley, is also an Australian, and he works with us —like Dr Scully-Power and many others — out of love for Ethiopia and its history. Both of these Australians work at the highest levels of government around the world, and yet donate their time to Ethiopia. So have no doubt that Australians have a great love for our homeland.

Look at the enormous charitable contributions of Australia to Ethiopia, exemplified by the commitment of obstetrician and gynaecologist Dr Elinor Catherine Hamlin and her New Zealander husband, Dr Reginald Hamlin,

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who co-founded the Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital. The former head of the Australian Liberal Party and the former Chief Minister of the Northern Territory, Shane Stone, has thrown immense effort behind the Ethiopian Crown's charitable activities, and has been one of the main reasons why this visit to Australia has been possible.

Ethiopia has great friends in Australia. Australia and Ethiopia can do great things together. Australia can be a great home for Ethiopians, and Ethiopians in Australia can contribute immensely to this country's success.

My fellow Ethiopians, the world is moving on. We have endured many hardships through the centuries, perhaps few so difficult as the punishments we all suffered under the Dergue. But we have survived. Now we must prosper. Now we must come together. Now we must love and respect each other, and understand that our differences are unimportant when compared with the values, history, and dignity which we share.

Let me begin to conclude my remarks by saying that the time for Ethiopia to come back together, and to return to its core beliefs, has arrived. Your Crown Council has been working on some practical issues for some time, like developing water purification technologies which can be sustained in remote areas of our country. But something which may be more important is now open to us. We must restore, and we can restore, our identity as Ethiopians.

To achieve this, we plan to build — in Addis Ababa, we hope — The Emperor Haile Selassie I Library and Conference Centre, as a focus for the gathering of documents and artefacts on the Solomonic line, and to promote the re-birth of national understanding of who we are, and what Ethiopia stands for.

You and I know that we have taken Ethiopianness into the diaspora. We are now a world people. You should know, too, that the Crown of Ethiopia has become — because we are scattered around the world — the Crown of all Ethiopians, as well as the representation of the Solomonic values we give to the world. The Crown today wants what my Grandfather wanted: a dignified and democratic Ethiopian society. The Ethiopian diaspora has preserved the flame of Ethiopian identity and history through the storms which beset our country, beginning in 1974. Now is the time for our diaspo-

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ra to take our identity and pride back to Ethiopia by inspiring our countrymen at home to learn about their unique and historical civilization.

The Crown wants Ethiopians to choose their own destiny. And the Crown will always exist, as it has done since King Solomon and Queen Makeda, to serve you and to serve the Almighty.

God Bless You All. I look forward now to talking more with you.